

A busy election year is on tap for Alabama in 2018. See Page 3 for details.

Donations to Bank Independent's annual Toy Share toy drive exceeded expectations.



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# Ambulance contract rolls over

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Unlike past years, when the topic of the county's ambulance service came up at last week's Franklin County Commission work session, the news was all positive.

Bruce Carson, Keller EMS director, attended Monday's meeting to give commissioners a report on the first year of his company's countywide ambulance service.

The commission partnered with Keller EMS in late 2016 on a three-year contract for Keller to provide ambulance service for Franklin County. The contract began on January 1, 2017 and rolled over as of December 31, 2017 for another year.

"We had a pretty successful year," Carson said. "We turned 4,028 calls for service in Franklin County."

Keller was one of three companies to bid on the contract after the commission approved rebidding the contract in September of 2016 after continued violations by then-provider Shoals Ambulance Service. First Response of Decatur and Life Guard Ambulance of Birmingham also submitted bids.

Keller EMS is a not-for-profit company founded in 1982. Keller provides emergency and non-emergency ambulance transport for Colbert County as well.

The company staffs a 24-hour ambulance in both Red Bay and Russellville and staffs an additional 12-hour ambulance in Russellville during peak hours. A second ambulance is stocked in Red Bay and can quickly be brought into service with an on-call crew.

Keller EMS transported 3,300 patients in Franklin County last year, including 58 of those with the stand-by request ambulance, Carson said.

"We had up to six ambulances running at one time, and that's pretty unusual to see that many ambulances in a rural county," Carson said. "The specialty care truck came down and performed its service 36 times to keep the Franklin County ambulances from being tied up on private patient transport calls.

"Volume has been good, and the service is healthy. I thought 2017 was a successful year, especially since the service is so young."

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore congratulated Carson and his company on a successful first year and praised the job they were doing.

"Y'all have done an excellent job so far, and we appreciate it, as do the citizens of Franklin County," Moore said.

# RHS named 'School of Distinction'

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

After three years as Russellville City Schools superintendent of education, Heath Grimes likes what he sees from the students, faculty and administration in his system.

And he wanted the rest of Alabama to know what's going on in Russellville. That's why Grimes nominated Russellville High School to be considered as a Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools 2017 School of Distinction.

"Obviously, it's a thrill to be selected as a School of Distinction," Grimes said. "It's really due to the work of administrators and teachers and the direction they go in making sure to do the best for our kids."

And last week, RHS principal Jason Goodwin received word that his school was selected as one of a handful of Alabama schools to receive that honor.

Along with Florence High School and Howell Graves Preschool in Muscle Shoals, RHS was one of three schools to receive the honor in Alabama District Seven.

The CLAS Banner School Program began in 2001 as a way to recognize Alabama schools that showcase outstanding programs and service to their students. Of the 107 schools nominated for School of Distinction status, 24 were selected from across the state.

Russellville High School will be recognized at a luncheon in February in Prattville that will honor all CLAS Banner Schools.

"CLAS facilitates professional learning and educational best practices," Grimes said. "I nominated our school because I think we do something at the high level that



Heath Grimes  
Superintendent

See 'SCHOOL,' Page 7

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**Loyd Eugene Burfield**, Phil Campbell, age 83  
Died Thursday, January 10, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

**Pauline Fuller Grillon**, Tuscumbia, age 87  
Died Monday, January 8, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

**Jessie Lou Bishop Ledlow**, Phil Campbell, age 89  
Died Tuesday, January 9, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Phil Campbell City Cemetery.

**Hansel McNatt**, Cleveland, OH (formerly of Russellville)  
Died Wednesday, January 10, 2018. Funeral services had not been announced at press time.

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# Busy election year on tap for Alabama in 2018

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Now that the calendar pages have turned to 2018, campaign season has once again arrived in Alabama. Primary elections will take place Tuesday, June 5.

It will be a lengthy ballot for voters to consider in June, with a large number of state and local positions up for election in 2018.

Both the Republican and Democratic parties opened candidate qualifying on Monday, January 8. The qualifying period runs through Friday, February 9 for both parties.

State and federal candidates must complete and file a declaration of candidacy with their respective party's state office by February 9. Additionally,

state candidates must file a statement of economic interests to the Alabama Ethics Commission by that date.

Completion of an appointment of principal campaign committee form must also be done within five calendar days of qualifying, with either the state party or the local party chairman.

More information on the qualifying process is available at the following web sites:

•Republican: <https://al GOP.org>.

•Democratic: [www.aldemocrats.org](http://www.aldemocrats.org).

State-level offices that will be decided in 2018 include: Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice and four other justice positions; three seats on the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals; three seats on the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals; Governor; Lieutenant Governor; Attorney General; Secretary

of State; Auditor; Treasurer; and Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries.

Voters will also decide on all seven Alabama U.S. Congressional seats. Neither of the state's two U.S. Senate positions will be on 2018 ballots.

Locally, Franklin County voters will elect: Alabama Senate District Six; Alabama House District 18 and District Seven; Probate Judge; Sheriff; Circuit Judge; District Judge; Franklin County Circuit Clerk; Franklin County Coroner; and Franklin County Board of Education Districts One and Five.

For more information on qualifying in Franklin County, contact Republican Executive Committee chairman Jerry Mays at 256-810-2551, or Democratic Executive chairman Eddie Britton at 662-279-1160.

## Isbell, Rockwood water systems seek to disband

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission was expected to vote Tuesday on a request from the Isbell Water Authority and Rockwood Water Authority to disband and merge into service from the Russellville Water and Sewer Board.

Isbell and Rockwood manager Frank Bishop addressed the commission at its January 8 work session and made the request. The boards of both systems signed resolutions asking to transfer their systems to the Russellville system.

Rockwood Water Authority is operated through authority of the Franklin County Commission, while Isbell Water Authority is a corporation. But Bishop asked the commission to approve the resolutions of both systems to make sure all legal bases were covered.

Both systems receive water through the Russellville Water and Sewer Board already, but handle billing and service themselves. Bishop said

Isbell Water Authority customers approved the proposed transfer by an 81 to 19 percent majority.

"We're asking the commission to approve the resolution to transfer both systems to the City of Russellville Water Board," Bishop said.

Bishop said that it was not economically feasible for the water systems to continue operations. Isbell serves approximately 340 customers, and Rockwood serves 85.

"They get their water from the city already. We've got reserves in both systems, and they will be used for updates to both water systems," Bishop said. "Each system would be dissolved upon transfer to the City of Russellville Water Board."

Russellville Water and Sewer Board manager Doug Clement and his board attended Monday's work session. Clement said his board supported the proposed move and that the transfer would mean better service and less cost for Rockwood and Isbell customers.

"Our goal is to immediately turn their money into radio tech meters and get that water loss under

control," Clement said. "I think it's a match made in heaven. Their customers deserve this and will see their water bills go down three to four dollars per month."

Rockwood Water Authority was established in 1975 and Isbell in 1965.

Clement said the two systems face increasing costs for water sampling and testing and they have gone up on water cost to customers as much as was feasible.

"We offer water at a different rate," Clement said. "Customers will get service from our staff on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When we get notice of a leak, we'll respond to get that leak fixed promptly."

Clement said customers in Isbell and Rockwood would eventually see the installation of AMR radio metered technology, which allows reading of gas, water and electric meters electronically.

"The service will be more streamlined for these customers, and they should save a few dollars each month on their water," Clement said.

## Area businesses earn satisfactory health ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

When a customer walks into a restaurant or other food serving establishment, the big red number posted on the wall can either reassure them of their decision or have them question why they ever walked in the door.

These big, red numbers represent cleanliness and food health scores graded by Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) inspectors on a 100-point scale. The scores, by Alabama law, must be posted in plain view.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours.

Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed. Areas of inspection by the ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment, utensil and linens cleanliness; water, plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

Given the most recent health scores, patrons of Franklin County restaurants and other food serving enterprises can be confident that when they walk in to dine, the area will be sanitary and the food will be prepared and served properly. None of the 15 Franklin County operations listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment health ratings scored below 85, making them all within satisfactory compliance.

The highest score for a food service establishment was 98, given to Piggly Wiggly in Red Bay, Vulcan Food Mart on Highway 24 in Russellville, and La Cabana on Hwy. 75. The lowest grade among food service establishments went to N&F No. 2, Inc., 9224 Hwy. 243, in Phil Campbell. That business graded at 89.

These scores are based on inspections done from January 1-8, 2018. Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

•N&F No. 2, Inc., 9224 Hwy. 243, Phil Campbell - 89. (Improper insecticide used—discarded).

•Vina Convenience Inc., 7454 Hwy. 19 - 89. (BBQ sandwiches out of temperature range).

•Price Less Foods #493, 15160 Hwy. 43, Russellville - 92. (Cleaner stored above drinks—moved).

•Piggly Wiggly #87 Deli, 3625 Broad St., Phil Campbell - 92. (BBQ and hot dogs out of temp—now in temp or using time instead of temp).

•Burger King #10859, 15455 Highway 43, Russellville - 95.

•Little Caesar's Pizza, 13655 Hwy. 43, Ste. A, Russellville - 95.

•J&L Convenience and Bait, LLC., 23791 Hwy. 24 West, Russellville - 95.

•Los Primos, 105 Marion St., Russellville - 95. (No tissue in restroom).

•Piggly Wiggly #87, 3625 Broad St., Phil Campbell - 96.

•Marty's Meat Market, Inc., 85 Scotty Moore Dr., Russellville - 97.

•B&J Cafe, 1327 Shellnut Loop, Phil Campbell - 97.

•Piggly Wiggly Market #93, 518 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay - 98.

•Vulcan Food Mart, 28485 Hwy. 24, Russellville - 98.

•La Cabana, 10047 Hwy. 75, Russellville - 98.

Of the 19 businesses inspected the first week of January, 2018 in Colbert County, all but two received scores of 90 or above. The two that scored below the satisfactory range were:



# Honey Do: Plumbing pipe

As the temperatures are still lingering near the lower end of the thermometer, let's continue to look at plumbing pipe.

PVC/CPVC has been around for a while now. Both are easy to handle and install with "glue-in" fittings. I say "glue-in" because the pipe doesn't actually stick together; rather, it chemically melts together when the proper glue is administered. Basically, you apply PVC glue to the end of the pipe, slide on the fitting, give it a slight quarter-turn, and in minutes you have a connection that is ready for water pressure to be applied.

Some common mistakes made with PVC/CPVC are:

- Applying glue to both sides that are being put together. This can result in too much product, and the fitting may not hold.

- Using PVC (white pipe) on hot water applications. CPVC should always be used for hot water. It can typically handle water temperatures up to 200 degrees.

**Using PVC (white pipe) on hot water applications is a common mistake. CPVC should always be used for hot water. It can typically handle water temperatures up to 200 degrees.**

- Using threaded CPVC fittings to add on to a metal threaded pipe. Plastic and metal expand and contract at different rates, and this connection may leak. There are special factory-made fittings that are made for this.

- Using the wrong glue. CPVC pipe is chemically different from PVC pipe, so make sure the glue you purchase is rated for the pipe you are using. Cleaner and primer are recommended for a sure connection. There is also glue that is used in wet applications. If you can't get the water flow completely stopped, look for the "blue glue."

- Failure to insulate properly. This pipe needs insulation if it is used in any exterior situation. Wind is our greatest enemy, so if the pipe is exposed in any way, insulate it. Many times pipes are forgotten that run close to a foundation vent.

PVC/CPVC pipe is very common, but its days may be numbered. Next week, we'll look at the new PEX pipe and Sharkbite fittings.

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



Doug Green



## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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# Expectations for elected officials must be high—election year or not

By Taylor Dawson

Most of the talk I've heard this legislative session has been preceded with, "Well, you know it's an election year. . ." as if to indicate that we shouldn't expect too much from our lawmakers in 2018. Rather, our expectations for our elected officials in 2018 should be just as high as usual, if not higher.

Many of our elected officials are running for reelection for their current office or entering an election for a new office, and four years have passed since the last time most of them were elected. Before we cast our ballot, it is important for each of us to understand how our candidates will view the issues put before them during their term. The Alabama Policy Institute is prepared to ask the tough questions, and we want to know what you will be asking, too.

Over the course of the next few months, through our "Candidate Call" series, we'll be exploring topics from good governance and fiscal responsibility to education and protections under the first amendment. And we will be proposing questions to candidates on those issues.

Here are a few examples of the questions we will be asking.

- What foundational principles will shape how they will govern and consider policy decisions if they are elected? Hundreds of bills on a wide array of policy issues are introduced each year. While the issues may change, the lens of principle through which we see these issues should not. API views each issue through a lens of

strengthening free markets, defending limited government and championing strong families. How will your candidate use their core convictions to make decisions?

- What do the candidates think is the best way to see Alabama rise in national education rankings? As I've said before, education is one of the most important things our state can give to its schoolchildren. We need candidates who are willing to stand for all students and not be swayed by the direction of the political wind of the moment. Do they support efforts to increase school choice? Will they hold the state school board accountable?

**Most of the talk I've heard this legislative session has been preceded with, "Well, you know it's an election year. . ." as if to indicate that we shouldn't expect too much from our lawmakers in 2018. Rather, our expectations for our elected officials in 2018 should be just as high as usual, if not higher.**

- How would members of the executive branch work with the legislature and local leaders to ensure fiscal responsibility to taxpayers? For example, take the gas tax. If the gas tax is increased, lawmakers should strongly consider decreasing or eliminating another state tax to make the policy revenue neutral. What is the best way to balance meeting the state's needs and being responsible with the resources that taxpayers already provide?





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**Renting to family?**

Dear Dave,  
I have cousins who are thinking about moving back to Connecticut from Virginia. They'll be renting for a while, and I have an unoccupied rental house. Do you think renting to family is a bad idea?

Katherine

Dear Katherine,  
Renting to family can work out just fine, as long as there are clearly understood rules and boundaries in place ahead of time. Both parties should understand there must be a landlord and tenant relationship with regards to all aspects of the rental agreement.

Tenants have the right to expect a landlord to make needed repairs promptly, pay the taxes and insurance on a property on time, and do all the other things a landlord should do as outlined in the rental agreement. As a landlord, you have the right to expect the rent to be paid early or on time, and for the tenant

to respect the property and guidelines in the rental agreement. A landlord also has the right to evict a tenant through fair, legal process if they violate terms of the agreement. When it comes to these business dealings, you're wearing the landlord cap, and they're wearing the renter's cap. At Thanksgiving, Christmas and other family events, the caps come off and you're family. But you don't get to play the cousin card as a way to keep from paying rent, and you don't get to play that game to avoid your duties as a landlord.

Phrases like, "Well, I just thought because you're my cousin..." have no place in these situations. Make plans to have a full-blown, in-depth conversation about every aspect of the rental agreement and relationship before anything is signed. If you don't, there's a possibility someone will develop a sense of entitlement about something.

And that's no good in any type of relationship!

Dave

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



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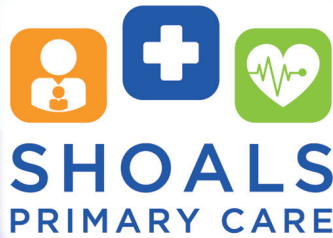
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## What's Happening

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

**R**ussellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling 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.

**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.

**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 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.

**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.

**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 February 8.

**T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, February 10 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. Call 256-335-4356.

**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.

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# Franklin highway budget tops \$3 million mark

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A review of the budget for the Franklin County Highway Department shows total anticipated revenues for fiscal year 2017-18 in the amount of \$2,958,983.65 and anticipated expenditures of \$3,338,244.96.

The resulting shortfall, of approximately \$379,000, is expected to be made up with a fund balance carryover totaling \$383,957.

There are two primary sources of revenue for the Franklin County Highway Department: The seven-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax and a four-cent-per-

gallon gasoline tax. Franklin County engineer David Palmer explained that there are different restrictions on how monies can be used from each of these taxes, with broader discretion on the seven-cent tax.

Within the revenue sources on the seven-cent tax, which accounts for \$930,000 of the \$1.323 million, are transfers from the four-cent tax of \$150,000 for equipment rental and \$55,000 for materials, Palmer said.

Other revenue sources are:  
•\$73,782.24 from the State of Alabama for the engineer's salary  
•\$35,000 for project engineering and inspection

- \$58,000 for sale of petroleum projects
  - \$10,000 for sale of other county property
  - \$5,000 revenue from local governments
  - \$4,328 from national forestry receipts.
- Salaries and wages comprise \$719,956.33 of the \$1.970 million of expenditures on the seven-cent tax. Other primary expenses include:
- Equipment (\$135,000)
  - Health insurance (\$108,869.36)
  - Gasoline (\$90,000)
  - Overtime pay (\$73,681.10)
  - Retirement (\$62,046.91)
  - Social Security (\$64,149.37)

See 'HIGHWAY,' page 9

## 'OFFICIALS' from page 4

•What qualities are most important for a leader to possess in order to be most effective? Seeing meaningful reforms accomplished in Montgomery will require both sides of the aisle working together, humility and willingness to consider other perspectives, and wisdom to put politics aside in the best interest of our state's future. Do they have a record of exhibiting the traits you want to see in a leader, whether in public office or elsewhere?

These are just a few examples of the types of questions that we'll be digging into this year. Send us a message on Facebook, tweet at us using the hashtag #candidatecall, or e-mail me at [taylorlord@alabamapolicy.org](mailto:taylorlord@alabamapolicy.org) to let us know what questions you want candidates to answer.

Heads up: The first installment in this series will come on the week of January 22-26, which is National School Choice Week. If you have any

school-choice related questions to ask our candidates, let us know!

API is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to strengthening free enterprise, defending limited government and championing strong families. If you would like to speak with the author, please e-mail [communications@alabamapolicy.org](mailto:communications@alabamapolicy.org) or call (205) 870-9900.

## 'SCHOOL' from page 1

others can replicate and benefit their systems with.

"Obviously, it's a thrill to be selected as a School of Distinction. It's really due to the work of administrators and teachers at the school and the direction they go in making sure to do the best for our kids."

Russellville High School was named last year as a School of Excellence from the A-plus College Ready program.

"We've seen success taking place here," Grimes said, "and with the transformation with the AP process at RHS, I just thought that was a success that needed to be shared with others."

CLAS was founded in 1969 as the Alabama Council of School Administrators, an organization formed as a professional association focused on children, professional development and the needs of school administrators. The organization changed its name to the Council for Leaders in

Alabama Schools (CLAS) in 1998.

CLAS awards recognize educational schools and programs, like Russellville, that serve as models for schools across the state. Three exemplary schools are selected from each of Alabama's eight school board districts, for a total of 24. Eight Banner Schools will be selected from the Schools of Distinction, one from each district.

For more information on the Council for Leaders in Alabama, log onto [www.clasleaders.org](http://www.clasleaders.org).

## 'HEALTH' from page 3

•Darby's Deli, 401 Cox. Blvd, Sheffield - 78. (Kitchen hand sink inaccessible, no hot water at kitchen hand sink, prep cooker holding various deli meats, tomato basil soup and queso dip being held at 90 F, hands not properly washed prior to handling).

•Foodland Plus Deli/Bakery #130, 104 Town Plaza Shopping Center, Sheffield - 84. (Spray bottle of Lysol stored with food items, open deli case holding various deli items).

Health ratings are available at [www.foodscores.state.al.us](http://www.foodscores.state.al.us) and may be viewed by city or county.

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# Library hosting author for special program Thursday

Submitted to the FFP

The Russellville Public Library will host a program with author Clara Ruth Holt this Thursday, January 18.

Holt's late husband, John Hayman, Jr., was the author of seven books and more than 60 academic articles. Two of his books were *Bitter Harvest* (an authorized biography of former attorney general Richmond Flowers) and *A Judge in the Senate* (an authorized biography of former U.S.

Senator Howell Heflin, coauthored by Holt). Both books were the recipient of the Coley Award, given by the Alabama Historical Society every two years for the best Alabama history book during the previous two years.

*Bitter Harvest* has recently been released in paperback. A new book in the works before John's untimely death was *The Jemison Cafe: Reflections on an Alabama Boyhood*, the true story of his family's struggles, traumas and successes during the Great Depression, World War II

and the aftermath. The family moved from Arkansas to Alabama, eventually purchased the Jemison Cafe, and the book's stories revolve around the happenings there--the social center of Jemison. Sixteen years after John's death, Holt edited the book, and 17 years later it has been released by NewSouth books.

For information on Thursday's program and book signing, please contact Ashley Cummins, director, Russellville Public Library, 110 East Lawrence St Russellville, AL 35654. Call 256.332.1535.

# NW-SCC students place second at math tourney

Submitted to the FFP

MUSCLE SHOALS — Northwest-Shoals Community College (NW-SCC) Calculus students finished in second place overall after competing in the Alabama Mathematical Association (AlaMATYC) math tournament last fall at Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa.

The Alabama Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges is an affiliate of AMATYC, The American Mathematical Association of Two Year Colleges.

The Northwest-Shoals students were Hunter Bales (from Haleyville), Chance Hunt (from Florence), Josh Pinkard (from Russellville) and Nick Richardson (from Killen).

The competition consisted of an individual calculus test and a team competition. There were seven colleges represented at the competition.

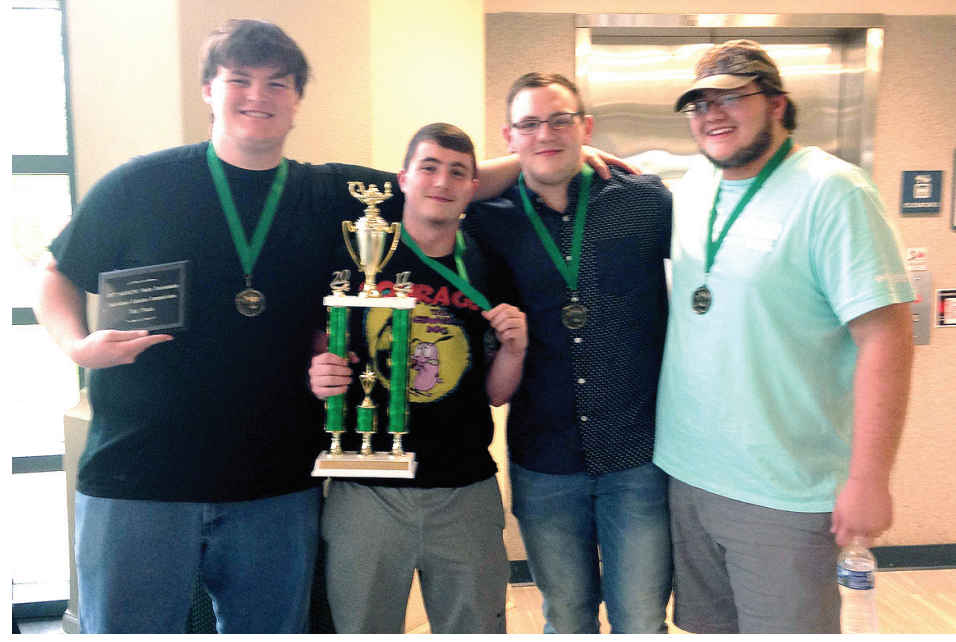
The NW-SCC team received the following awards:

- Chance Hunt had the third-highest score on the individual calculus test (out of 28 students).

- NW-SCC placed third in the team competition.

- NW-SCC placed second in the overall competition. (The overall winners were determined by combining the individual test scores with the team competition score.)

All four students plan to attend engineering school at the University of Alabama in Huntsville next year.



COURTESY PHOTO

NW-SCC students placed second overall at a State Math Competition last fall. Pictured (from left to right) are Chance Hunt (from Florence), Nick Richardson (from Killen), Josh Pinkard (from Russellville) and Hunter Bales (from Haleyville).

# Four tips for reducing money-related stress, worry

By Rachel Cruze

We all have stress in our lives, especially when dealing with money. But there are habits you can incorporate into your life that will reduce money-related worries. By applying these tips, you can be well on your way to gaining control of your finances.

**1. Quit comparing yourself to others.** This is the most damaging money habit we have. Comparing yourself to others not only steals your joy, but also your paycheck. If you don't get comparison spending under control, it's easy to spend more money than you can afford in order to live a lifestyle you think everyone else is living and that you're missing out on.

**2. Steer clear of debt.** When you have debt, you don't get to decide what you do with your money. You lose the ability to make your own choices about your finances. Debt can't be part of your plan! You must avoid using credit cards or getting car loans and student loans at all costs. Instead, save up and pay cash for items so you don't have to worry about the debt.

**3. Make a plan for your money.** Many people think that having a budget means having no life at all, but that's just not true. The purpose of a budget is to give you freedom—with some boundaries. Create a written budget at

the beginning of each month. Figure out how much income you have to work with and list every expense you have. Assign every income dollar an outgo name. This is called a zero-based budget and it works!

**4. Save for emergencies and the future.** It's important to make saving a priority, because having nothing in savings adds to the stress during crisis moments. That's why having a \$1,000 starter emergency fund is key. After you pay off all your debt, increase that to three to six months of living expenses. It's also important to save for big life events like weddings and retirement. The sooner you begin putting money away for these things, the more prepared you'll be when it's time to pay for them.

We all want a life without added financial worries. By taking these key steps now and creating good financial habits in your life, you can feel confident and less stressed about your finances in the future!

*\*Rachel Cruze is a seasoned communicator and presenter, helping Americans learn the proper ways to handle money and stay out of debt. She co-authored the #1 New York Times best-selling book Smart Money Smart Kids with her dad, Dave Ramsey. You can follow Rachel on Twitter and Instagram at @RachelCruze and online at rachelcruze.com, youtube.com/rachelcruze or facebook.com/rachelramseycruze.*

## 'HIGHWAY,' from page 7

- Consultant fees (\$70,000)
- Herbicides (\$45,000)
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- Worker's compensation (\$35,000)
- Tires and tubes (\$20,000)
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Within the four-cent gas tax list of revenues are:

- \$535,000 from the gas tax itself

- \$38,000 from motor vehicle license fees
- \$118,000 from petroleum inspection fees
- \$32,000 from excise tax on motor fuels
- \$260,000 from a five-cent gas tax
- \$182,373.41 in federal aid revenue
- \$90,000 in Alabama Transportation and Rehabilitation Program reimbursements.

Four-cent gasoline tax expenses consist mainly of costs associated with road maintenance and improvement and include:

- \$583,000 on road building materials and supplies
- \$70,000 on pothole patching materials
- \$150,000 on equipment rental (four-cent tax projects)
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# Donations to annual Toy Share exceed expectations

Submitted to the FFP

More than 3,300 toys and \$1,125 were donated to the seventh annual Bank Independent and WAFF-48 Toy Share toy drive over the holidays, surpassing 2016 totals and helping hundreds of families across seven counties.

"This program grows every year thanks to our generous communities," says Macke Mauldin, Bank Independent president. "And every year our community partners distribute toys to more and more local children. We want to express our gratitude to everyone who helped us make this Christmas brighter for our neighbors and friends."

Since the first Toy Share drive in 2011, partner organizations have distributed 21,793 toys and more than \$6,000 to local families. Toys were collected in all Bank sales offices and in several Dollar General locations (and through a drive at Florence's Flobama Downtown restaurant and music venue) and were presented to partnering charitable organizations for distribution to

local families prior to Christmas Day.

Recipient organizations included the Angel Tree Program in partnership with Lexington High School, Committee on Church Cooperation of Morgan County, William Porter Foundation in the Shoals, Safeplace of the Shoals, Cornerstone Church in Lawrence County, North Alabama Christian Children's Home, Department of Human Resources of Franklin County, Department of Human Resources of Lawrence County, Department of Human Resources of Limestone County, Christmas Charities Year Round in Huntsville, and the Rogersville Volunteer Fire Department.

Toy Share was the last of four annual Share drives hosted by Bank Independent in 2017 to give back to the community as part of the bank's Helping Hands initiative.

The first Share drive of 2018, Shelter Share, will run throughout the month of February. Shelter Share offers all Bank Independent locations as convenient donation points for pet food and supplies to be donated to area animal shelters.



COURTESY PHOTO

More than 3,300 toys and \$1,125 were donated to the annual Bank Independent and WAFF-48 Toy Share toy drive over the holidays, surpassing 2016 totals and helping hundreds of families across seven counties. Since the first Toy Share drive in 2011, partner organizations have distributed 21,793 toys and more than \$6,000 to local families.

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## Lady Bulldogs bounce back

Belgreen's girls snapped a two-game skid with a 57-29 rout of Tharptown.

## County champs!

Four junior high teams added to their trophy case.



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# Wildcats' win over Belgreen shakes up Area 13 race

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

THARPTOWN - Shannon Benford wasn't ashamed to admit it. Tharptown's 58-50 win over No. 9 Belgreen on Saturday night caught him a little off guard.

"I didn't expect that," said Benford, who had been winless in four tries against the Bulldogs since taking over as Tharptown's head coach in 2016.

Imagine how surprised his wife must have been when she heard the news.

"She'll be mad she missed it," Benford said of his better half, Savannah, who is employed at Helen Keller Hospital. "She had to work tonight."

She wasn't the only one. The Wildcats (8-8 overall through Sunday, 5-2 in Class 1A, Area 13) had to work their way through a nearly six-minute scoreless stretch in the first half and 25 turnovers on the night, but the fruits of their labor were well worth the effort. Saturday's win over Belgreen (14-5, 5-1) threw the Area 13 race into an unexpected state of flux, with Tharptown and Hackleburg (4-2 in area play) suddenly right in the thick of things to challenge the heavily favored Bulldogs for the regular season area championship.

"It was big, probably the biggest win we've had in a couple years," Benford said after watching his team rally from five points down in the fourth quarter behind clutch three-point shooting from senior Levi McCormack and then hold on down the stretch thanks to equally clutch free-throw shooting from senior guard Aaron Creasy. "It was huge. This is a good group of guys we've got. I'm proud of them."

Trailing by one at the end of three quarters, the Wildcats watched their deficit grow to five at 42-37 on back-to-back buckets by Belgreen's Seth Taylor to open the fourth. Creasy triggered the comeback with a three-pointer at the 6:00 mark, and then McCormack put Tharptown on top with a three from the left wing.

The Wildcats regained possession on a steal by sophomore Edward Lopez, and McCormack—who had gone just 1-for-8 from the floor in Saturday's first half—splashed his third three of the second half (this one, also from the left wing, with a defender right in his grill) to stretch the lead to 46-42 with 4:20

See 'WILDCATS,' Page 18

# Red Bay boys, PC girls take home B-Junior county titles

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

THARPTOWN - Red Bay coach Kevin Morrow has had seventh-and-eighth-grade basketball teams that finished with better records than this year's bunch. But these Tigers closed their season in a manner consistent with many of the rest.

As county champions.

Red Bay got a game-high 16 points from Coby Jackson and two three-pointers apiece from David Lindsay and Carson Corum on Saturday, pulling away from Phil Campbell for a 61-31 win in the finals of the junior high Franklin County Tournament.

The Tigers finished the year 15-8, winning five of their last six games and cruising by first Belgreen and then the Bobcats last week at Tharptown to claim

See 'TITLES,' Page 14



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Coby Jackson (22) scored 16 points in Saturday's final, helping Morrow (third from left) and the Tigers win the seventh-and-eighth-grade boys championship for a fourth straight year.

# Lady Bobcats cap 15-1 season with ninth-grade championship

## Phil Campbell A-Junior boys also claim county crown

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

THARPTOWN - Phil Campbell's ninth-grade girls capped off a 15-1 season with a county championship on Saturday, but the secret to their success is no secret at all.

"When you have a group that's not satisfied with where they are, a group that wants to keep working and keep getting better, that's when you can really win a lot of games," said head coach Tracy Pace, whose team built a huge first-half lead over Tharptown in Saturday's final and then cruised to a 35-27 win. "I really believe that if you're not moving forward, you're going backward."

It was full speed ahead on

See 'BOBCATS,' Page 16



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Caymen Quinn (22) went 5-for-7 from the foul line and led Phil Campbell with 11 points in Saturday's ninth-grade girls final.



## 'TITLES' from page 13



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Red Bay's seventh-and-eighth-grade boys finished the season 15-8 after beating Belgreen and Phil Campbell to win the county championship. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Andrew Ray, Bryson Hacker, Paden Allison, Carson Corum, David Lindsay, Brian Parker Blair; back row (L to R) - Assistant coach David Corum, Charlie Huffman, Hayden Seahorn, Landon Glover, Owen Terry, Coby Jackson, head coach Kevin Morrow, Cooper Corum.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Phil Campbell's seventh-and-eighth-grade girls beat Tharptown 39-25 in Saturday's final to win the county championship. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Abby Hamby, Harley Cummings, Jade Roberson, Chesney Hamby, AJ Jeane; back row (L to R) - Ava Reid, Alexis Stewart, Katelin Frazier, Gracelyn Habada, Mary Kathryn Swinney, Allie Herring, Madison Branch, head coach Tracy Garrison.

the county title.

"There were days where I thought we had a really good chance to win it," said Morrow, who has led Red Bay to nine B-junior boys championships—including the last four in a row—in 16 years as head coach. "Here at the end of the year, we've been playing pretty well. We had a big win over Winfield, who had beaten us twice earlier in the year. We got behind 8-0 at Sulligent [on January 4], and I called a timeout to get their attention a little bit. We ended up winning that game 41-18.

"From that point on, we've played pretty well. I always felt like if we come out zoned in and ready to play, we'd be fine. At the same time, you're dealing with twelve- and thirteen-year-old kids, so you're never quite sure what you're gonna get."

What the Tigers got in Saturday's final was a balanced scoring attack led by Jackson and Andrew Ray, who combined to score 26 points; a dominant performance on the glass that saw them out-rebound Phil Campbell 31-17; and a relentless effort on defense that helped them break open a close game with a big second quarter.

"We defended well," Morrow said. "We got after it in the press and got some easy baskets that helped us pull away in the second quarter. The first quarter was nip and tuck.

"Coby and our other post guys got after it on the boards pretty good. Our wing guys, Owen Terry and Andrew Ray, are really aggressive on the offensive and defensive glass."

Red Bay raced out to a quick start, surging to a 9-2 lead on a three by Hayden Seahorn with barely three minutes gone by. The Bobcats battled back, getting a three from Brennan Misner and a putback from Cam Habada to cut the lead to 9-7 at the end of one quarter.

Phil Campbell pulled even on a layup by Habada early in the second quarter, but that's when the Tigers started to take control. Ray followed a basket by Bryson Hacker with two buckets of his own, and then Lindsay buried a three to make it 18-11 with 2:45 left in the first half.

The Bobcats were still trailing by just seven with a minute to go when Corum nailed a three to spark a closing 7-0 run. Ray converted a steal into a layup, and then a jumper by Owen Terry sent Red Bay into the locker room with a commanding 28-14 lead.

The Tigers out-scored Phil Campbell 19-7 in the second quarter.

"We didn't turn the ball over a lot," Morrow said. "When you're able to force some turnovers and you take care of the ball, you end up with a few more shots than the other team. And if you pound the glass, that just gives you even more opportunities."

Habada hit a three-pointer for the Bobcats to open the second half and cut the lead to 11, but Jackson proceeded to take over in the paint. The eighth-grade big man scored eight points and grabbed five rebounds during a dominant two-minute stretch, helping the Tigers open up a 36-18 advantage.

"Coby has a lot of ability," Morrow said of Jackson, who averaged 12.0 points in two tournament games. "We think the ceiling is pretty high for him, if he continues to work. And he's one who's willing to do the work."

Red Bay extended the margin to 21 on a three by Paden Allison at the 1:10 mark and led 41-23 at the end of three. Corum and Lindsay each hit another three in the fourth quarter, helping the Tigers out-score Phil Campbell 20-8 down the

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# 'TITLES' from page 14

stretch to run away and hide.

"We got balanced scoring out of all of them," Morrow said. "Nine of our eleven players scored today, so that was good to see."

Jackson finished with six rebounds to go along with his 16 points, and Ray added 10 points and four boards. Lindsay scored seven points, and Corum, Hacker and Landon Glover each had six. Allison finished with five, and Seahorn had three. Terry chipped in with two points and five rebounds. Charlie Huffman grabbed a team-high six boards, and Brian Parker Blair added two rebounds.

Habada led Phil Campbell with 11 points. Kyle Pace added seven, and Misner finished with five. Cooper Riddle, JJ Quillen and Cole Pace each scored two points, and Clayton Demartin and Sage Raper had one apiece.

In B-junior girls action at the county tournament on Saturday:

### Phil Campbell 39 Tharptown 25

Madison Branch had 17 points and nine rebounds for the Lady Bobcats, who dominated the first half on their way to winning the county title.

Jade Roberson added 10 points for Phil Campbell, which led 10-3 at the end of one quarter. Branch opened the second quarter with a long jumper and a three-pointer, and then Roberson nailed a corner three to make it 18-3 with 4:00 left in the half.

Alexis Stewart later closed out the half with a jumper, sending the Lady Bobcats into the locker room with a 27-8 lead. Branch and Roberson combined for 13 second-quarter points, helping Phil Campbell out-score Tharptown 17-5.

Stewart finished with six points, and Mary Kathryn Swinney added four. Allie Herring had two points and four rebounds, helping the Lady Bobcats hold a 28-15 edge on the boards. Katelin Frazier also grabbed four rebounds, Gracelyn Habada had three, and Chesney Hamby added two.

Autumn Montgomery went 5-for-6 from the foul line and finished with nine points to lead Tharptown. Katelyn Simmons had six points on 6-for-9 shooting from the line and also grabbed seven rebounds. Kendall Morgan added four points.

In previous B-junior girls action at the county tournament:

### Phil Campbell 35 Red Bay 30

Jade Roberson shot 4-for-5 from the foul line and scored 14 points last

Thursday as the Lady Bobcats got by Red Bay to earn a spot in Saturday's final.

Harley Cummings added eight points for Phil Campbell, and Gracelyn Habada had six. Madison Branch finished with five points.

Emma Netherly led Red Bay with 14 points, and Sarah Eaton had eight.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

After Phil Campbell cut the lead to 11 on a three by Cam Habada (2) early in the third quarter, Jackson (22) scored eight straight points to help Red Bay pull away for good.

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PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Phil Campbell's ninth-grade girls beat Red Bay and Tharptown last week, winning the county championship and finishing the season 15-1. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Autumn Roberson, Caymen Quinn, Brittany McCullough, Gracie Raper, Brittany Roberson; back row (L to R) - Head coach Tracy Pace, Faith Cook, Olivia Taylor, Katie Thomas, McKensi Scott, MaKayla Baker, Caitlynn Mills.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Phil Campbell's ninth-grade boys beat Tharptown 41-23 in Saturday's final to win the county championship. Team members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) - Malachi Gholston, Dylan Jeane; back row (L to R) - John Randle Herring, Seth Hutcheson, Boone Swinney, Blaine Goodson, Mason Swinney. Head coach Brett Thomas is not pictured.

## 'BOBCATS', from pg. 13

Saturday for the Lady Bobcats, who held Tharptown without a field goal for the game's first ten-plus minutes and led 18-2 late in the first half. McKensi Scott's straight-on three at the buzzer sent Phil Campbell into the break on top 23-6.

"We relied on our press early, but we got in foul trouble and we backed out of it," Pace said. "We went to that two-three [zone], and they had a tough time scoring. Our two guards out front, Caymen Quinn and McKensi Scott, are really aggressive, and they did a good job taking away the three-point shot.

"[Tharptown] really had no choice other than to go inside with it, and I've got some bigs in Faith Cook and Katie Thomas and Olivia Taylor who are big and aggressive and really get after it. They're tough to score against inside."

Quinn led the way on the offensive end, going 5-for-7 from the foul line and scoring a team-high 11 points. Taylor, Cook and Scott each added seven points, and Thomas chipped in with three. Taylor grabbed a game-high nine rebounds, helping the Lady Bobcats hold a 27-19 edge on the boards.

Quinn had five rebounds, followed by Scott with four, Thomas and MaKayla Baker with three apiece and Gracie Raper with two.

Gracie Montgomery hit three second-half threes for Tharptown and finished with 13 points. She made two threes in the game's final two minutes, but the Lady Wildcats would get no closer than eight points.

Macy Petree made a pair of threes in the second half and scored six points. Jaden Gaston had Tharptown's only two field goals in the first half and finished with four points and five rebounds. Taylor Cameron added two points and seven boards, and Bethany Gasque also scored two.

Phil Campbell's only loss of the season came to Cold Springs at a Thanksgiving tournament, and the Lady Bobcats rolled past Red Bay and Tharptown last week to take home the county title they had expected to win all along.

"These girls have worked hard and improved this year," said Pace, who has now led Phil Campbell to two ninth-grade girls championships in her five seasons as head coach. "Even my girls who didn't play a whole lot, they've gotten a lot better from the time they were seventh-graders to now."

In previous ninth-grade girls action at the county tournament:

### Phil Campbell 40 Red Bay 20

The Lady Bobcats led by 20 at the half and cruised to a win in last Thursday's semifinal.

McKensi Scott led Phil Campbell with 11 points. Caymen Quinn and Faith Cook each added eight, and Katie Thomas scored seven. Brittany Roberson finished with four, and MaKayla Baker had two.

Thomas hit a three-pointer in the first quarter, helping the Lady Bobcats jump out to an early 11-3 lead. Cook and Quinn scored six points apiece in the second quarter as Phil Campbell extended the lead to 29-9 at the half.

Emma McCollister made two threes and finished with six points to lead Red Bay.

In ninth-grade boys action at the county tournament:

### Phil Campbell 41 Tharptown 23

Mason Swinney and Blaine Goodson each scored 12 points in Saturday's final, helping the Bobcats overcome a big game from Tharptown's Colton Simmons to claim the county title.

Simmons scored all 11 first-half points for the Wildcats, who trailed by just six going into the break. Tharptown was still down by six at 19-13

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# 'BOBCATS', from page 16

following a driving layup by Hayden Moss early in the third quarter, but Phil Campbell responded with a 12-2 run to take control.

Goodson sparked the run with two free throws and a layup, and then a basket by big man Seth Hutcheson made it 25-13 midway through the third. Simmons hit two free throws to briefly halt the run, but Boone Swinney scored back-to-back buckets to push the lead to 14. Goodson capped the run with another basket to make it 31-15 heading to the fourth.

Hutcheson finished with eight points and five rebounds, helping the Bobcats hold a 26-19 edge on the glass. Boone Swinney added five points and four boards, and John Randle Herring had six rebounds to go along with his two points.

Dylan Jeane added two points and four boards.

Simmons finished with a game-high 19 points for the Wildcats and also pulled down six rebounds. Moss added four points, and Sergio Alfaro, Hunter Folsom and Andy Lopez each had three rebounds.

Each team shot 7-for-14 from the foul line.

### Tharptown 48 East Franklin 25

Colton Simmons scored 15 points and Hayden Moss added 13 for the Wildcats, who cruised past East Franklin in last Saturday's semifinal.

Moss went 5-for-7 from the foul line and also made a pair of three-pointers. Hunter Folsom hit two threes and finished with 10 points. Jaden Laster and Andy Lopez scored four apiece, and Travis Staten had two.



### PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Mason Swinney (2) and Blaine Goodson (above, 14) scored 12 points apiece to lead the Bobcats in Saturday's final.



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# 'WILDCATS', from page 13

remaining.

"He always has the green light," Benford said of McCormack, whose 43 threes made this season through Sunday were the most by any boys player in Franklin County. "It doesn't matter how many he's missed."

After senior forward Cole Daniel made a free throw for Tharptown, McCormack drove the lane and dished to Daniel for a layup that capped off a 12-0 run and made it 49-42 with 3:05 left to play. The Wildcats were on the verge of delivering a knockout blow, but Benford didn't dare relax—not with Belgreen in the other corner. The Bulldogs, whose 36-13 record over the past two seasons entering Saturday included a 14-3 mark against county competition and a 14-1 mark in Area 13 play, hadn't climbed the mountain without overcoming a few fourth-quarter deficits along the way.

"Don't think that wasn't on my mind, either," Benford said.

A reverse layup by Taylor ended Tharptown's run and brought Belgreen back within five, and then Mason Bragwell made a free throw to make it 49-45 with 2:22 remaining. Lopez answered with a big bucket in the paint to push the lead back to six, and then Creasy hit four big-time free throws—two at the 1:12 mark to make it 53-46, and two more with 49.8 seconds remaining to make it 55-48—to keep the Bulldogs at bay.

"He's not even our best foul shooter," Benford said of Creasy, who came into the night just 4-for-11 from the line on the year but went 5-for-6 in the fourth quarter and finished with 10 huge points. "But he made some big ones tonight. That was clutch."

Belgreen—playing without second-leading scorer Brant Bragwell for the third time in four games due to knee inflammation—endured a tough shooting night (36 percent from the floor, with just one three-pointer) that bottomed out with a 4-for-17 performance in the fourth quarter. The Bulldogs, who had made seven threes in a 69-50 home win over Tharptown just eight days earlier, have now dropped back-to-back games for the second time since starting the season 10-0.

"They didn't shoot it as well tonight," Benford said. "Brant not playing makes a difference, of course, but I thought our defense was pretty good."

The Wildcats focused their attention—as most teams do—on slowing down Mason Bragwell, a 6'6 junior and the county's leading scorer heading into Saturday at 19.3 points per game. Bragwell, who had put up 25 points in the win over Tharptown on January 5, finished with just seven on Saturday, fail-

ing to reach double-figures for only the fourth time in 50 games since the start of last season.

"He battled foul trouble all night, which helped," Benford said of Bragwell, who attempted only six shots, making three. "But I thought we did a good job on him. Watching the Phil Campbell game [a 61-58 win by the Bobcats last Thursday in which they limited Bragwell to 10 points] really helped us. We saw on film where they double-teamed [Bragwell] a lot, and we tried to do the same thing. I thought we defended well and rebounded well. We didn't take very good care of the ball, but we forced a few turnovers, too."

Each team turned the ball over seven times in a sloppy first quarter that ended with the Wildcats leading 13-12 following a fast-break layup by McCormack at the buzzer. Tharptown missed its next 11 shots, and Belgreen got six points from Bragwell and four from senior forward Payton Scott in a 10-0 run that made it 22-13 with 2:30 left in the first half.

Carson Petree nailed a three to end the Wildcats' drought and spark a 10-2 run that left them trailing 24-23 at the break. The Bulldogs did not attempt a free throw or make a three-pointer in the first half, turning the ball over 13 times. Tharptown couldn't take advantage, shooting just 10-for-29 from the floor and committing 14 turnovers. They were right in the mix, though, and Benford was bound and determined to see his team make the most of it.

"The third quarter has been terrible for us all year," he said after the game. "I told our guys at halftime that tonight was gonna be different. And it was."

Both teams hit four of their first five shots to open the third quarter, and the lead changed hands seven times before the second half was four minutes old. Senior guard Jacob Mayberry scored seven points for Belgreen in the span of less than 60 seconds, but Daniel countered with seven points of his own to help the Wildcats trade punches.

"I thought Cole played really well tonight," Benford said of Daniel, who scored 12 of his game-high 15 points in the second half.

The Bulldogs surged to a 38-35 lead on a pair of layups by Seth Taylor, but Daniel scored on a putback at the 1:00 mark to get the Wildcats within one at the end of three. Tharptown suddenly morphed into an offensive machine down the stretch, shooting 5-for-10 from the field (with three three-pointers) and 8-for-10 from the line in a 21-point fourth quarter.

"It was good to see our guys come out and finish," Benford said. "I'm proud of them."

Daniel shot 6-for-12 from the floor and also grabbed six rebounds. McCormack scored 11 of his 14 points in the second half and added three steals. Lopez finished with eight points, 10 rebounds and three steals, and Misael Saldana added six points and six boards.

Seth Taylor had 14 points and five rebounds for Belgreen, and Mayberry finished with 14 points and four steals. Scott scored all 10 of his points in the first half, peppering Tharptown's defense with mid-range jumpers.

"That's as hot as I've seen Payton Scott shoot the ball," Benford said. "He got on a roll."

Bragwell had eight rebounds and five steals to go along with his seven points. Eli Hiser hit a three, and Gaven Taylor scored two points.

The Wildcats were set to wrap up area play on Monday night at home against Vina. They could potentially meet the Bulldogs again in the county finals at the end of this week—but both teams will first have to survive semifinal matchups in a tournament that is looking more wide open by the minute.

"Hopefully this will give our guys some confidence going forward," said Benford, whose team is set to face second-seeded Red Bay in the county semis on Friday night. "We've got a big game with Vina on Monday, and then we play a really tough Red Bay team in the county. They defend really well, and they play hard. I hope we can keep this momentum going."

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## Gracie Dempsey Sophomore Guard, Belgreen

Dempsey helped the Lady Bulldogs snap a two-game losing streak on Saturday, scoring a career-high 18 points in a 57-29 rout of area rival Tharptown. The sophomore guard hit a pair of second-half threes and went 2-for-3 from the foul line, adding three rebounds, two assists and three steals.

In three games last week, Dempsey made five threes and averaged 11.0 points per contest. For the season, she averages 7.2 points a game and shoots a team-best 71 percent (34-for-48) from the foul line, with 13 three-pointers.



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# Dempsey leads Lady Bulldogs to area win

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

THARPTOWN - Before the season started, Belgreen girls coach Chad Green touted Gracie Dempsey as one of his team's top defenders. On Saturday night at Tharptown, the sophomore guard showed she can play a little offense, too.

Dempsey scored a career-high 18 points on an efficient 7-for-11 shooting, helping the Lady Bulldogs snap a two-game skid with a 57-29 rout of the Lady Wildcats.

"Gracie played exceptional tonight," said Green, whose team improved to 12-7 overall and 4-2 in Class 1A, Area 13. "She drove the ball well, she shot it well. She did a great job for us. She is one of our best defensive players, but she's a very capable offensive player, too. She's a good driver, and she's improving as an outside shooter. She's already our best free-throw shooter. "And the one thing you know with Gracie is, she's always gonna give you a hundred and ten percent."

Dempsey helped Belgreen break open a close game midway through Saturday's second quarter. After four straight free throws by Adriana Borden brought Tharptown (7-10, 2-5) within six points at 13-7, Dempsey dropped in a driving bank shot to spark an 8-2 run. She found senior guard Jasmine Martin for an easy basket and then drove for another layup of her own to make it 19-9 at the 4:30 mark. Dempsey then came up with a steal on the inbound pass and scored again, pushing the lead to 21-9.

The Lady Wildcats closed back to within eight on a three-point play by Brooke Daily and a free throw by Shaylee Wieting, but Dempsey assisted on a three-pointer by junior reserve Camie Terrell that made it 24-13 with 2:35 left in the first half. Back-to-back buckets by Ansley Tate helped Belgreen stretch the lead out to 15 points before Daily beat the buzzer with a layup to make it 30-17 at the break.

Tharptown opened the second half with a basket by Wieting and a three by Aly Vandiver to get back within eight again, but that's when the Lady Bulldogs locked things down defensively. They closed the third quarter on a 22-0 run, forcing nine Tharptown turnovers and holding the Lady Wildcats scoreless for more than six minutes to open up a 52-22 lead.

"We did a decent job in the first half with our press, but then we had a little bit of a letdown early in the third quarter," said Green, whose team forced 25 turnovers on the night and held Tharptown to just 7-for-39 shooting from the floor. "The girls picked the intensity back up for the rest of the quarter, and that's when we pulled away. We just have to get to the point where we play like that for thirty-two minutes, start to finish, for four quarters."

Belgreen needed all four quarters to put away Tharptown in the team's previous meeting on January 5, out-scoring the Lady Wildcats 21-8 down the stretch to break open a game that was tied 41-41 at the end of three. The Lady Bulldogs sealed Saturday's win much earlier, thanks in large part to their ability to get stops and control the defensive glass.

"We had time to prepare for them, and our girls did a good job," Green said. "I thought they played with good intensity and did a good job rebounding. Against Tharptown, you have to keep them off the boards and rebound the ball. Our goal was to give up ten offensive rebounds or less, and my assistant coach told me we gave up eight, so that's not bad."

Controlling the boards against Tharptown largely means controlling Daily, an athletic sophomore post player who had scored a season-high 21 points in the close loss to Belgreen eight days earlier. She finished with seven points and eight rebounds on Saturday. Dempsey drilled a pair of second-half threes for the Lady Bulldogs, giving

her multiple makes from beyond the arc in three of the last five games. She also went 2-for-3 from the foul line and is now shooting a team-best 71 percent on the season. Martin added 12 points and three steals on Saturday, and sophomore Autumn Bragwell chipped in with nine points off the bench.

"I thought Autumn played well tonight," Green said. "We've got shooters, and we've got post girls who can score, but Autumn is one of those players who can score inside or outside. She can drive or shoot the jump shot. She's one of our best three-point shooters, and she's got some length to her. We need her to play the way she played tonight."

The extra offense from Dempsey and Bragwell came in handy on a night when junior guard Gabbie Moore, the team's second-leading scorer at 9.1 points per game, played just a handful of minutes after sitting out last Thursday's loss to Phil Campbell due to a nagging injury.

Moore had two points on Saturday, and Tate scored six. Emma Dempsey finished with three points and six rebounds, and Terrell added three points and four boards. Katie Dempsey scored two points while helping hold Daily in check on the other end, and Emma Willingham also had two points.

Wieting led Tharptown with 10 points and also had five rebounds. Borden added four points and six boards, and Vandiver also scored four points. Catie Dawson had three, and Ameliah Dawson added one.

The Lady Wildcats were set to play their final area game of the season at home against Vina on Monday night before facing Red Bay in the four-five game at the Franklin County Tournament on Tuesday at Belgreen. The Lady Bulldogs, seeded third in the county, will face No. 2 seed Vina on Friday.

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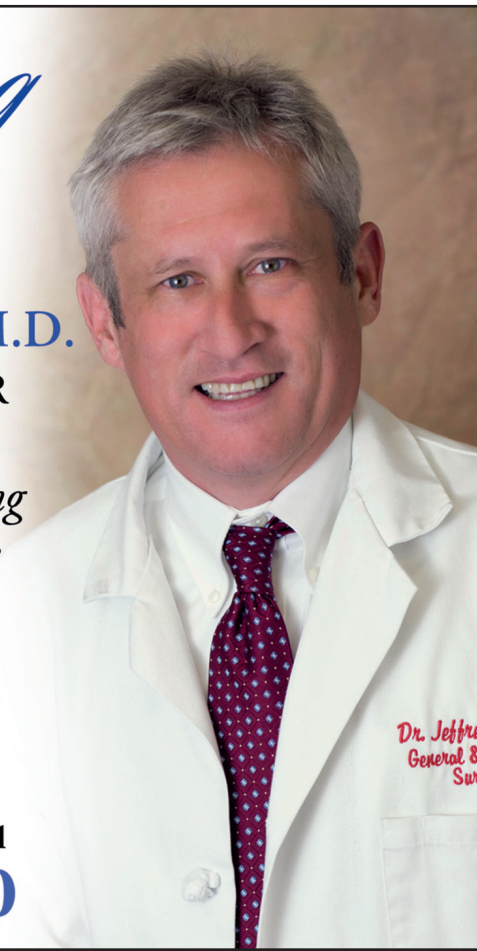
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