

Need some advice on how to discuss finances with your spouse? For a few helpful hints, see Page 4.

A little wet weather last week couldn't dampen Franklin County's Bicentennial Celebration. See story Page 7.



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113 Washington Ave. NW
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Stutts to face three challengers in District 6 Republican Primary

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Qualifying for elected office in Alabama during the 2018 primary cycle ended last Friday afternoon for federal, state and local candidates.

Sen. Larry Stutts (R-Tuscumbia) has qualified to seek a second term representing Alabama Senate District Six.

According to the Alabama Republican Party website, Stutts has opposition from three challengers: Daniel Boman, a former state representative who lives in Winfield; Steve Lolley, a banker from Guin; and Eric Aycock.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) was the lone qualifier for the Democratic nomination for Senate District Six. Morrow chose not to run for reelection to the House District 18 seat he has held since 1990 in order to seek the Senate seat.

There will be a contested primary in the race for Morrow's successor, at least on the Republican side,

where Russellville businessman Jamie Kiel will face Colbert County resident Tony Riley. Riley is general counsel and human resources manager for Tiffin Motor Homes, Inc. in Red Bay.

Former Belgreen High School principal Eddie Britton has qualified for House District 18 on the Democratic side. No opponent for Britton was listed in the Democratic Primary.

Rep. Ken Johnson (R-Moulton) qualified for another term representing House District Seven. Proncey Robertson, a lieutenant with the Decatur Police Department and a Mount Hope resident, also qualified to run as a Republican.

According to multiple sources, Johnson was considering withdrawing from the race, which would leave Robertson as the lone Republican candidate.

Northwest-Shoals Community College psychology professor Ken Brackins qualified for House District Seven in the Democratic Primary.

See 'STUTTS,' Page 9

Robotics program flourishing at TES

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When a Tharptown Elementary School parent approached TES principal Kelby Daniel about the school possibly starting a robotics program, Daniel supported the idea but said they would have to find a faculty member to spearhead the program.

That's where first-year special education teacher Jake Ward came in. Ward heard about the idea and immediately volunteered to help start a robotics program at TES.

With more than 60 kids now involved in robotics at Tharptown Elementary, it's safe to say the idea was a big hit with students and parents.

"We sent a letter home with parents and asked the kids

See 'ROBOTICS,' Page 9



TES Robotics sponsor Jake Ward with team members (from left) Brent Hollins, Drayven Borden, Harley McGuire, Harlee Fisher and Noah Compton.

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Marjorie H. Tesseneer, Russellville, age 81
Died Sunday, February 4, 2018. Graveside service held at Winston Memorial Cemetery with Pinkard Funeral Home directing.

Raymond H. Vernon, Russellville, age 75
Died Friday, February 9, 2018. Memorial service will be held Saturday, February 17, 2018 at 1 p.m. at Littleville First Baptist Church with Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville directing.

We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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

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Vinson: Still no fixed wireless, still no answers

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Junior Vinson's two-month battle with AT&T about his eligibility for the company's new fixed wireless service in eastern Franklin County has taken a turn. This time Vinson finds himself at odds with the Federal Communications Commission.

AT&T held a ribbon cutting on December 19, 2017 to announce fixed wireless internet service on a tower located just east of Macedonia Baptist Church on County Road 724. AT&T officials promised 10-megabit-per-second speed to all users within a three-to-five-mile range of the tower.

Vinson, who lives a half mile from the tower, tried to sign up for the service but was told by AT&T officials he was not eligible.

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

According to AT&T officials, locations of the towers are determined by census information and a formula used by the Federal Communications Commission.

In a February 5, 2018 statement to the *Free*

Press, AT&T Public Relations spokesperson Catherine Stengel said: "Fixed wireless internet is limited to CAF II eligible areas as defined by the Federal Communications Commission. We continue to evaluate the alternative high-speed internet solutions available in the area."

Vinson has faced difficulty getting information

Vinson filed a complaint with the FCC, but that complaint was closed shortly after it was opened with no explanation to Vinson as to why his property is included in an ineligible area.

"It seems to me the FCC has indeed without rhyme or reason placed my address outside the CAF II eligible areas," Vinson said. "They promptly closed my complaint without answering."

from AT&T as to why he was not eligible for the new service. Finally, on January 25 of this year, Vinson received formal notice from Roger Pereira with AT&T notifying him that "the service is currently not available. We apologize for any inconvenience."

Vinson learned from Dave Hargrove earlier this month that he did not live within an FCC-designated census tract of eligibility, in spite of his home's close proximity to the tower.

Vinson's research determined he lives in census

block 1075 within census tract 9733 in Franklin County. According to an FCC map, Vinson's property falls within a small triangular area of ineligibility within a large tract of CAF II eligible area. His property is designated as "ineligible—below benchmark," according to the map.

Vinson filed a complaint with the FCC, but that complaint was closed shortly after it was opened with no explanation to Vinson as to why his property is included in an ineligible area.

"It seems to me the FCC has indeed without rhyme or reason placed my address outside the CAF II eligible areas," Vinson said. "They promptly closed my complaint without answering."

Vinson received an email from the FCC on February 8, 2018, notifying him that his complaint file had been closed.

When AT&T announced fixed wireless service in Elmore County last year, the Elmore County Commission soon learned that not everyone within the three- to-five-mile range of the tower was eligible. Commissioner Bart Mercer released a statement saying the commission had no control over the coverage area and admitted "it doesn't make a lot of sense to me that people that close to the tower may not be able to use the service," Mercer said.

Vinson certainly agrees that the criteria for who is and isn't eligible doesn't make a lot of sense to him either.

BCDA board members elect new slate of officers

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A new slate of officers will lead the Bear Creek Development Authority board of directors through 2018 after board members elected a new chairperson and vice-chairperson at their February 9 meeting.

Bear Creek mayor Connie Morrison was elected chairperson, and Haleyville attorney Jeff Mobley will serve as vice-chairman.

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore was elected to another term as secretary.

Franklin County resident Neal Hargett addressed the board with concerns about the future of Little Bear Lake. Hargett, who lives on Little Bear, said the lake's low water level was affecting the use of his property as well as revenue received by BCDA.

The lake's water level was lowered last year at the direction of the Tennessee Valley Authority after a leak was detected, leading to concerns about the integrity of the dam.

"Little Bear being lowered was a killer out here," Hargett said. "I own property on this lake. TVA dropped the ball big time. No one was notified. I wasn't notified until two weeks after the fact. It was terrible the way it was handled, and this needs to get corrected and fixed this time."

Hargett believes more than a million fish were killed as a result of the low water level and that the leak was not sufficient to warrant such drastic treatment.

A TVA representative who attended last Friday's meeting said there would be a press release issued soon by TVA announcing what will take place with Little Bear Lake. An investigation by TVA determined there was no subterranean erosion or loss, so the tentative plan calls for monitors to be installed to monitor the leak, and by March they will start to bring the lake back up to its normal pool level.

Hargett asked whether any study had been done to determine whether the annual lowering of the lake levels had any effect on the integrity of the dams.

"Why lower it so much in the winter when our rainfall is totally different than it was years ago?" Hargett asked. "I just want to know, when is the lake going to be fixed? There's just a handful of us on Little Bear Lake, but when this happens to Cedar Lake, which is also an earthen dam, I guarantee there will be more than two of us here at your meeting."

"We have something very special here, and I hope it's not being taken for granted. Our concern is fixing the lake where we can use it. The water level is ridiculous around the lake."

The BCDA board voted to draft a letter to TVA asking for a status of the Little Bear dam and seeking more information on the water levels of the Bear Creek lakes.

In other action, the board:

- Approved a \$0.60 per hour across-the-board raise for four of its five employees. The amount reflects a three-percent raise. The fifth employee, Mike Stephens, received a salary raise of \$7,000 to \$40,000 per year and a new title of co-supervisor.

- Approved a Strategic Plan for Bear Creek Development Authority that was prepared with the assistance of Franklin Resources Group.

- Heard an update from BCDA manager Shannon McKinney that a timber harvesting and sale on a tract adjoining Elliott Branch was moving forward.

- Heard an update from Tricia Montgomery that grant funding to the Town of Hodges for trails around the Overton Farm property and for a covered arena have been defunded by the State of Alabama.

- Established an Overton Farm committee, to be chaired by Montgomery, with the purpose of keeping Overton Farm as a specific area of interest by the board.

- Approved a Fiscal Year 2018 operating budget, subject to recommended changes from the Budget Committee at the next board meeting.

Helen Keller Hospital holding book and gift sale

Submitted

The Helen Keller Hospital Volunteer Auxiliary will host a Book & Gift Sale March 1-2 at Helen Keller Hospital. The fair will be presented by Collective Goods and will include 30 to 70 percent off retail prices on various types of books and gifts for the whole family.

The proceeds benefit the projects of the Volunteer Auxiliary. The sale will take place in the main lobby of the hospital. There will be a variety of books, including children's books and cookbooks.

The Helen Keller Hospital Volunteer Auxiliary is comprised of members of the HKH Volunteer Program. This group hosts fundraisers throughout

the year to purchase items for the hospital and provide scholarships to area students. The Louise Isbell Ashe Volunteer Scholarship is presented each spring to graduating high school seniors pursuing careers in healthcare.

For more information on the Volunteer Auxiliary or how to volunteer, contact the Human Resources Department at 256-386-4639.

Honey Do: Spring fever

I vote to get rid of all those flu bugs and replace them with a good case of Spring Fever. With a few more mild days like we've had, that is just liable to happen, and I'm already itching to get outside.

If your yard is like mine, there is a lot of prep work that needs to be done before the mower takes the field, and most of this can be done now while the ground may still be a little soft.

Trees and shrubs can shed a lot of debris during the fall and winter months, and now is the time to walk over the yard and haul this stuff away. Sticks, limbs and rocks sometimes seem to appear out of nowhere, and they can do a lot of damage to mower decks and especially blades. Trim low-hanging or protruding limbs so they won't be a nuisance when you do get the riding mower out.

Trees and shrubs can shed a lot of debris during the fall and winter months, and now is the time to walk over the yard and haul this stuff

away. Sticks, limbs and rocks sometimes seem to appear out of nowhere, and they can do a lot of damage to mower decks and especially blades.

Take a gander up into the trees and look for rotted or broken branches. If you can, you might as well eliminate these hazards now, before they fall. Trim low-hanging or protruding limbs so they won't be a nuisance when you do get the riding mower out.

Look for fire ant hills and treat them. Give it a couple of days and level them out with a shovel. This spring, I plan to broadcast ant killer over my yard and treat existing mounds to kill them out. If you do this, you should save a lot of time battling these onerous critters this summer.

Next week, let's get ready to start those engines. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

Please send your letters to the editor, guest columns, cartoon panels and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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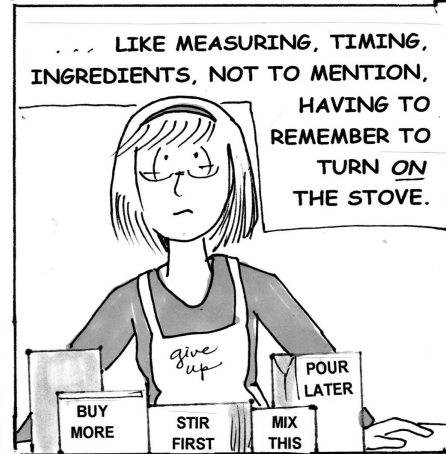
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Our HousE

by Ree
Shannon



How to talk money with your spouse

By Rachel Cruze

Certain topics are guaranteed to cause friction in marriage. For some, it's in-laws. For others, it's work-life balance. Or the kids. Or housework.

And then there's money. When finances are mentioned, do you feel anxious and get that pit in your stomach? If so, you're not alone.

In late 2017, Ramsey Solutions conducted a study of more than 1,000 U.S. adults to learn how married couples communicate and relate about money. The study found that money is the number one issue married couples fight about. In fact, money fights are the second leading cause of divorce, behind infidelity.

The good news is that money doesn't have to be a source of friction in your marriage. In fact, money talks can actually bring you closer together instead of tearing you apart. I'll show you how.

Tips for Improving Communication Around Money

Before you start talking about specific money issues, like debt or budgeting, I want you and your spouse to take a step back and share your money stories with each other. You both come from different backgrounds that impact how you relate with money.

For example, my parents filed bankruptcy the year I was born, so debt was a four-letter word in our house growing up. My husband's family didn't have that same experience, so they saw finances differently. Our backgrounds have shaped how we think and feel about money, but knowing each other's story has helped us to acknowledge our unique perspectives and find compromise as we move forward together.

I promise, if you take the time to learn your

spouse's story, you will avoid a lot of miscommunication and unnecessary conflict.

Here are some more steps to improve your money conversations:

1. Be fully present. That means turning off devices (phones, laptops, tablets, TV) and focusing on your spouse. Pay attention to what they're saying. Don't check out and make a to-do list or wonder how your favorite team is doing. And keep showing up every time you talk.

A marriage is about two people working as a team. And when you learn how to talk about money together, you'll win as a team. Getting on the same page will unify the two of you in ways you may not have experienced before.

2. Listen to understand. Most of us listen so we can give an answer. When we do that, we miss important details that could change the conversation completely. Don't jump in with your opinions and observations unless your spouse asks for them.

3. Ask questions. You can't always trust your assumptions. Questions help you see the other person's viewpoint more clearly, and they show that you're actively participating in the discussion. Questions also move the conversation to a deeper level.

4. Reflect on what you hear. Giving a reflective statement shows that you understand what your spouse is saying. Start with, "What I hear you saying is...." Then summarize what they said, including any emotions you're hearing or seeing.

When your spouse feels heard and understood, you grow closer together. And that's the end goal, isn't it?



Quit job for school?

Dear Dave,
My wife and I have \$72,000 in debt from student loans and a car loan. We're trying to pay off our debt using the debt snowball system, and we each make about \$45,000 a year. She's a teacher, and she's planning on going back to school for her master's degree, but she's thinking about quitting her job to do this. She'll be able to make more money with the additional education, and she would only be unemployed for two years. The degree program will cost us \$2,000 out of pocket per semester for two years. Does this sound like a good idea?

Chris

Dear Chris,
There's no reason for your wife to quit her job to make this happen. Lots of people—especially teachers—hold down their jobs and go back to school to further their education. I'm not sure trying to make it on one income when you're that deep in debt is a good idea.

Whatever you do, don't borrow more money to make this happen. Cash flow it, or don't do it. We're talking about \$8,000 total, and you've got \$72,000 in debt hanging over your heads already. My advice would be to wait until you've got the other debt knocked out, then save up and pay cash for school. You could slow down your debt snowball and use some of that to pay for school, but I'd hate to see you lose the momentum you have when it comes to getting out of debt.

The choice is yours, but don't tuck on any more student loan debt. I know her income will go up with a master's degree, so from that standpoint it's a good thing to do. But if you do a good thing a dumb way, it ends up being dumb!

Dave

Pre-planning explained

Dear Dave,
My grandmother passed away a

week ago. She was 98, and I know both she and my grandfather had pre-paid for their funerals in 2004. However, there were outstanding costs of \$1,500 with the funeral services we had to pay out of pocket, because she had outlived the insurance policy attached to the pre-payment plan. I know you say it's always better to pre-plan, not pre-pay, for a funeral. Can you refresh my understanding of this?

Rebecca

Dear Rebecca,
Let's use a round figure and say the cost of a funeral is \$10,000. What would \$10,000 grow to 25 years from now if it were invested in a good mutual fund? Now, juxtapose that number with the increase in the cost of a funeral over that time. The average inflation rate of consumer-purchased items is around four percent. So, the cost of funerals, on average, has risen about four percent a year. By comparison, you could've invested that money, and it would've grown at 10 or 12 percent in a good mutual fund.

Now understand, I'm not knocking folks who are in the funeral business. But lots of businesses that provide these services realize more margin in selling pre-paid policies than they do in caskets. In other words, they don't make as much selling the casket as they do selling a pre-paid policy on the casket.

Do you understand my reasoning? If we knew the exact date she pre-paid and how much she pre-paid, that figure invested in a good mutual fund would be a whole lot more than the cost of a reasonable funeral. It's the same principle behind the reason I advise folks to not pre-pay college, or just about anything else, that's likely far into the future. The money you could've made on the investment is a lot more than the value of pre-paying. Pre-planning, on the other hand, is a great idea for many things—including funerals.

I'm truly sorry for your loss, Rebecca. God bless you all.

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

The libraries at Russellville First Baptist Church and Red Bay First Baptist Church are accepting donations of new and used Bibles (in good shape) and New Testaments to send to the Love Package Ministry (formerly Edwin Hodges Ministry). They will be sent to foreign missionaries to use and distribute. Please drop them off Monday through Thursday during office hours. For more information, call 256-332-4085, and thanks for your support!

Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling hams for Easter. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, March 31 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street in Russellville.

AARP Tax-Aide will be offering free income tax preparation at DHR on Thursdays from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. through April 12. You do not have to be an AARP member, be retired or be a certain age to use this service. Call Ben at 256-332-0252 for an appointment.

Kindred Hospice (formerly Gentiva Hospice) offers a grief support group, “Grieving Well Together,” that meets the third Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Lenox room at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. You are invited to attend.

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

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay will present its second production of the 2017-2018 season, “One Toe in the Grave” by Jack Sharkey, February 15-17 at 7 p.m. each night and February 18 at 2 p.m. at Community Spirit Bank’s Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. Tickets are on sale now at the Weatherford Centre and are \$8.00 for the play and \$17.00 for the dinner. Dinner tickets must be purchased in advance. You may go by or call the Weatherford Centre at 256-356-9829 weekdays between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m. to purchase or reserve your tickets. For group sales, contact Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286, or for more information concerning the play, contact Scotty Kennedy at 256-356-8758. Cast members include: Stacy Stepp, Abbey Jones, Montana Bates, Scotty Kennedy, Ethan Ray, Brittany Russell and Mary-Elizabeth Moore.

Homer and Ida Petree of Red Bay will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with a reception in their honor this Saturday, February 17 from 2-4 p.m. at James Chapel Missionary Baptist Church Fellowship Hall (Highway 424). The reception will be hosted by children and grandchildren. No gifts, please.

Kids and Kin dates for January through March in Franklin County are as follows and will be held at the Franklin County Baptist Association Building, 128 Guard Street NE, Russellville, AL: Thursday, February 22 at 5 p.m.—“Healthy Habits,” Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama; Thursday, March 8 at 5 p.m.—“Ready or Not, Here I Come,” Dee McNalley, UCP; Thursday, March 22 at 5 p.m.—“Ways Babies Learn When You Sing to Them,” Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama.

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Happy 200!



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Jamie Kiel (left) and Bicentennial Committee chairperson Chris Ozbirn are pictured above with the commemorative marker unveiled at last week's ceremony celebrating Franklin County's 200th birthday.

Weather can't dampen Bicentennial celebration

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A little rain couldn't wash away 200 years of history, as a crowd of more than 200 gathered outside the Franklin County Archives last Tuesday morning to celebrate Franklin County's Bicentennial.

Along with six other Alabama counties, Franklin County was formally created by the Alabama Territorial Legislature on February 6, 1818. Lauderdale County also celebrated its Bicentennial that same date.

Tuesday's Bicentennial kickoff was emceed by Russellville attorney Roger Bedford, Jr. The Russellville High School Marching Hundred performed the National Anthem, with members of American Legion Post 31 of Tuscumbia posting the colors.

Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) read a resolution congratulating Franklin County from Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey. A special song, "Franklin County," written by the late Betty Starnes, was played before the commemorative marker recognizing Franklin County's 200th birthday was unveiled.

The marker reads: "The Alabama Territorial Legislature created Franklin County on February 6, 1818, from lands ceded two years earlier by the Chickasaw and Cherokee nations. The county was named in honor of Benjamin Franklin. The first sheriff was James Frazier. The first probate judge was John S. Fulton, appointed in 1821. At its creation, Franklin County consisted of more than 1,200 square miles and just two towns, Russell's Valley (Russellville) and Big Springs (Tuscumbia). The creation of Colbert County in 1867 from the northern portion of Franklin reduced greatly its original size. Tuscumbia became the seat of the new county.

"In 1818, Joseph Heslip constructed Alabama Iron Works, the state's first iron ore furnace. Iron produced at the Franklin County facility, which was later renamed Cedar Creek Furnace, aided in both the Mexican War and Civil War. In July 1864, Union Gen. Lovell H. Rousseau destroyed the furnace during his raid through Alabama.

Franklin County has made several notable contributions to the area of higher education. The origins of Alabama's first state-chartered college are in the county. The Methodist Church established LaGrange College there in 1830. The first graduate, J.D. Malone, was a native of nearby Limestone County. In 1855, the college relocated to Florence,

See 'BICENTENNIAL,' page 11

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Moore seeking reelection to office of probate judge

Submitted to the FFP

My name is Barry Moore, and I am seeking reelection to the office of Franklin County probate judge. This is a position I have come to respect and enjoy over the past 11 years because of my ability to help my fellow citizens as a member of our local government.

Because I have lived in Franklin County all my life and my roots run deep in this area, I have the honor of knowing many of you personally. During my time serving as probate judge, I have had the opportunity to meet those I didn't already know. But for those who may not know me or why I am seeking reelection for this position, let me tell you why this is more than just a "job" for me.

As chairman of the Franklin County Commission, I will continue working with federal and state officials to secure funds for the county roads and bridges; I have seen the real-life impact these projects can have.

Through the historical Alabama Transportation and Rehabilitation Improvement Program (ATRIP), the Franklin County Commission was able to work together with the city's mayors and municipal governments, as well as with the city and county school systems, to secure \$12 million dollars in federal funding for necessary road and bridge projects throughout the county and its cities.

School buses are able to travel easier and safer routes, residents are dodging less pot holes and driving on smoother roads, and businesses have gained necessary turn and access lanes through Industrial Access grants. Other projects were completed through Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and Community Development Block Grants that we were able to secure.

It's been great seeing how much these grants have helped our citizens. I want more time to continue and complete many of these projects that have already been started and embark on new projects as well.

In the area of law enforcement, I will continue to support funding to ensure our hard-working men and women will be able to operate efficiently to protect the law-abiding citizens of our county. I genuinely care about the safety of our citizens, and I believe in our law enforcement and appreciate what they do.

As to economic development, I will continue to work hard to support our existing businesses and industries while actively pursuing new opportunities that will benefit our citizens.

I am extremely proud of the new jobs our county has seen during my tenure, including jobs at IHP, Southern Homes, Franklin Structures, Mar Jac Poultry and many other businesses that have expanded. There is more work to do in the creation of jobs, and I want to continue to be part of that so our citizens can support and raise their families here and truly make Franklin County their home.



Barry Moore

The Probate Office will continue to provide friendly, fast and efficient service to our customers, because I believe it is important to treat those who come in our office the way we would want to be treated if we were in the same position. And as probate judge, I will make fair and unbiased decisions within the statutes of the law to protect the rights and estates of the citizens of Franklin County. I believe it's important for our citizens to have someone fair and knowledgeable to preside over these situations, and I am certain my tenure over the past 11 years reflects this.

As probate judge I will use conservative values and common-sense principles while executing my duties and responsibilities. I will continue to be a dependable and diligent official, and I will continue to make it a priority to represent the working men and women of Franklin County by listening to their concerns and trying my best to resolve any issues when possible.

I have been married to Deedra Seale for 25 years, and we have a 17-year-old daughter, Ashton. I graduated from the University of North Alabama in 1990 with a degree in Business Management. I served in the Alabama National Guard for 23 years and served one year on active duty in Iraq. I worked with HART Machine Tool, Inc. for over 15 years as office manager before beginning my tenure as probate judge in Franklin County in 2007.

Being probate judge is more than just a job for me—it's a way to give back to a community I've been part of my entire life. I would very much appreciate your support for the Republican nomination during the June 5, 2018 primary.

Don't forget to visit us on the web at www.franklinfreepress.net!

Eight more local eateries receive satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The eight Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of January 29, 2018 through February 2, 2018, each had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

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 ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

The eight Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 89 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The highest score was 100, given to the Phil Campbell Senior Center, 135 Sherry Brice Drive,

Phil Campbell.

Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

- Kentucky Fried Chicken, 15045 Highway 43, Russellville, 89. (Cracked or damaged utensils).
- The Flying Beetle Destination, 104 Montgomery St. SW, Russellville, 89. (Can opener blade dirty).
- McDonald's, 15254 Highway 43, Russellville, 92. (Leak in freezer dripping on food).
- Chelle's Kitchen, 7321 Hwy. 19, Vina, 96.
- Chevron Food Mart, 3515 Broad St., Phil Campbell, 97.
- Rhoda P's Catering Services, 2080 College Road, Phil Campbell, 98.

See 'RATINGS,' Page 11

'STUTTS,' from page 1

John "Jody" Letson shows an active campaign committee according to the Alabama Secretary of State's Office, but Letson did not appear on the list of Democratic candidates who have qualified for office as of 5 p.m. last Friday.

Franklin County resident Rick Neighbors will face Lee Auman in the Democratic Primary for Alabama's Fourth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Haleyville) has no Republican opposition in his quest for a 12th term.

Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore will face Republican opposition in the June 5 primary from Russellville Fire Department chief Joe Mansell. There was no Democratic candidate to

qualify for probate judge.

In the Franklin County Board of Education District Five race, incumbent Democrat Mike Shewbart will face primary opposition from Ralph Winchester, who previously held the board seat. There was no Republican candidate to qualify.

Ralton Baker, who represents District One on the Franklin BOE, had no primary or general election opposition as of late Friday afternoon.

Franklin County coroner Elzie Malone will seek another term and is unopposed in the Democratic Primary. Charles Adcox has qualified to run for coroner in the Republican Primary.

Franklin County district judge Paula McDowell, Franklin County circuit clerk Anita Scott and

Franklin County circuit judge Terry Dempsey each are unopposed in the Democratic Primary and had no Republican opponent as of 5 p.m. last Friday.

Franklin County sheriff Shannon Oliver appears headed to another term, as Oliver had no opposition in the Democratic Primary and no Republican candidate had qualified as of late Friday.

Russellville resident Lowell Moore qualified for Franklin County Place One on the Alabama Republican State Executive Committee, and Yvonne Foster qualified for a seat on the Democratic State Executive Committee.

Alabama Primary elections are set for Tuesday, June 5, 2018.

'ROBOTICS,' from page 1

to come by my room if they were interested," Ward said. "We had enough initial interest to send out some paperwork to get started. I never imagined as many kids would sign up as we've had. It's an unreal turnout. I expected maybe twenty or so, and we have more than sixty on the list."

Ward serves as the third-fifth-grade team sponsor along with co-sponsor Monica Elliot. Brittany Pannell is the kindergarten-second-grade sponsor with Jessica Cantrell as the co-sponsor.

Students work with Dash robots, which perform simple tasks and turns through an app installed on iPads controlled by the students. Dash the Robot was the winner of the Creative Child 2017 Kid's Product of the Year and 2017 Toy of the Year honors.

"It's a pretty simple robot that does simple tasks like moving forward, turning right or left and moving backwards," Ward said. "You can program more advanced turns. And it moves by centimeters and meters so it teaches the kids how to measure."

The Tharptown Elementary Robotics Team meets Wednesday afternoons after school for practice. Later this month, six students from K-second and six students from grades 3-5 will compete in the University of North Alabama Robotics Competition, an event organized by former RHS teacher Lee Brownell. Ward said there will be several criteria that go into which students are invited to participate in the competition.

"We're stressing attendance at school and robotics meetings," he said. "So even if you attend the robotics meetings but don't attend classes, you won't be able to go. We want the kids to work for it and not have it handed to them. We'll look at grades, and behavior is a major factor, too."

All six students will work together in the team competition, Ward explained.

"We look at how well they can work in a team environment," Ward said. "It's not an individual event at all."

Although the elementary robotics program is not affiliated with the Tharptown High School Robotics team, Ward hopes to see that change in future years.



COURTESY PHOTO

Tharptown Elementary Robotics team member Noah Compton measures the distance traveled by the team's Dash robot.

"Since our program can not have sixth-graders, the teams stop at fifth grade," he said. "We hope to talk with our high school sponsor and see if the sixth-graders can go over and work with them. Hopefully, we'll get access to more robots. We're trying to write some grants and doing anything we

can to purchase more robots. The more robots we have, the more teams I can take to competition.

"I want to thank Mr. Daniel for his help and support this year. He's been with us every step of the way. Everything I've gone to him about, he's been supportive and encouraging, and we appreciate that. I couldn't be happier with the start of this program."

Students participating in Tharptown Elementary robotics this year include:

Trinity Studdard, Griffin Rogers, Anne Tyler, Kade Raper, Jacob Brown, Derrick Graham, Mason Turner, Jackson Grissom, Kinzley Behel, Elaina Coalson, Jeffrey Ventura, Olivia Cantrell, Saydie Mitchell, Cayden Porter, Devin Veltman, Audrey Kiel, Sadie Odom, Jessy Morales, Lillianna Hod, Jonathan De La Rosa, Christopher Fretwell, Carter Clement, Gabriella Hatmaker, Angel Morales, Caleigh Lawson, Alexis Holins, Randy Pike, Alex Muctezuma, Celee Bretherick, Ivy Coalson, Brayden Foust, Zillah Ibarra, Braden Hamilton, Jonathan Brown, Autumn Foust, Mike Promotor, Cole Borden, Lettie Hines, Noah Compton, Nick Galloway, Laura Belle Ertle, Cesar Rueda, Sebastian Bonilla, Isabella Hall, Miranda Gutierrez, Hannah Howard, Drayven B. Borden, Harley McGuire, Connor Crowe, Fatima Mendoza, Harlee Fisher, Kobe Warhurst, Shyla Martinez, Addison Gasque, Pamela Saint, Layne Franks, Grace Garcia, Kylee Beard, Layla Hood, Brent Hollins, Keagan Wimberly, Emily Byrd, Katelin Mears and Gracie Hopkins.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to visit us online at [www.franklinfreepress.net!](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)

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'MONEY,' from page 4

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Council approves liquor sales for new downtown restaurant

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The city council approved a resolution allowing retail liquor sales for The Bricks, LLC, opening the door for Russellville's newest downtown restaurant to sell alcohol. Owned by Trent and Michelle Stephenson, the Bricks Inn and Restaurant is scheduled to open Monday, February 19. The facility is located at 114 North Jackson Avenue and, in addition to a restaurant, will offer five rooms at the Bricks Inn. The council had a public hearing

scheduled on the liquor application, but no citizens spoke for or against it. In other action, the council:

- Renewed a \$500,000 line of credit with CB&S Bank for one year at 3.5-percent interest. There is no balance owed on the line of credit, which is there for emergency situations.
- Approved a quote from Affordable Service Heating and Air for a new heating and air conditioning unit at the Russellville Tennis Complex.
- Accepted the resignation of Nancy Thornton from the Russellville Public Library Board and appointed Hillary Hall in the vacant seat.

'RATINGS,' from page 9

- MeMe's Cakery, 15480 Hwy. 243, Russellville, 98.

Of the 11 inspections done in Colbert County from January 29-February 2, 2018, all received scores of at least 86. USA Ichiban, Inc., 1207 S. Jackson Hwy., Sheffield, had the low score of 86. Happy's Victory Fuel, 1300 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals, Dollar General #11337, 2821 Hwy. 20, Tuscumbia, and Subway, 4116 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield, each shared the high score of 98.

'BICENTENNIAL,' from page 7

Lauderdale County. In 1974, it was renamed the University of North Alabama. John Nooe, the first graduate of the University of Alabama, was a son of Franklin County. Russellville native Luther Noble Duncan served as Auburn president from 1935 until his death in 1947. In 1881, 25 residents of Franklin county organized Alabama's first chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. Members of the group had previously attended meetings of the order in neighboring

Mississippi. Alabama Charity Chapter #1 received its charter a decade thereafter. When a fire destroyed the original lodge, located in Burleson, it relocated to Vina and then Red Bay. The oldest marked grave in Franklin County is that of Maj. James Dorman, a veteran of the War of 1812, who died on April 11, 1819. A set of 45 books, each chronicling a famous Alabama native, will be donated to each Franklin County and Russellville school after a grant was

obtained by Ozbirn. Colbert County schools also will receive the book collections, as a result of efforts by the DAR. Bedford reflected on the people and places of Franklin County and how fortunate he is to have spent most of his life here. "I think about the history of Franklin County, from Pogo to Trapptown and back, and realize how beautiful a place this is to live and how we are truly blessed," Bedford said.

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Bright Future

A tough season for the Golden Tigers ended with a loss to Brooks in the area tournament, but Russellville could soon be back on top. See story Page 16.

Dynasty Not Done?

The RHS baseball team is conceding nothing in its quest for another title. See story Page 14.



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SPORTS

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Tigers eager to turn page on frustrating finish to 2017

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Richard Maggerise doesn't like to dwell on the past, and he doesn't want his Red Bay baseball players to spend too much time looking in the rearview either.

Considering what's behind them, it's probably for the best.

The Tigers entered the final day of area play last April one win away from clinching an area championship and earning the right to host a first-round playoff series. An error-laden 2-1 loss to Lamar County in the first game of a doubleheader ended those hopes, but Red Bay still had a shot to qualify for the postseason by winning game two.

Then-sophomore right-hander Kolby Bragwell was brilliant on the mound in the nightcap, tossing seven shutout innings, but Lamar County put up a five-spot in the top of the eighth and won 5-0. A day that had begun with the Tigers hoping to be at home in the first round of the playoffs ended with them heading home for good.

As next Monday's 2018 season opener at Hamilton rapidly approaches, Maggerise wants his players living in the here and now.

See 'TIGERS,' Page 17

Moving on

Win by win (that's 14 in a row now, if you're scoring at home), Phil Campbell's girls are gaining steam toward a potential Final 4 berth. Next stop: Hanceville.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - On a scale of 1 to 10, Chloe Roberson gave it a six.

Kallie Allen was feeling a bit more generous. She gave it a seven.

"I liked it," Allen said. "It could have been better, but it could have been worse."

For the record, the subject matter at hand was not Phil Campbell's performance in last Thursday night's Class 2A, Area 14 final against Lamar County, but rather the cartwheel head coach Craig Thomas landed after the game to celebrate the Lady Bobcats' first area tournament title since 1993.

"That's a promise I made way back at the beginning of the season," said Thomas, whose team led

See 'HANCEVILLE,' Page 18



PHOTO/KYLE GLASGOW
Dakota Elliott (left) was one of four Lady Bobcats to score in double-figures in the area final against Lamar County.

Lady Bulldogs clinch regional bid

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

GUIN - It didn't take Jasmine Martin very long to come up with her favorite thing about this particular Belgreen team.

"We all get along really well," said Martin, a senior guard for the Lady Bulldogs. "I've never been a part of a team that gets along as well as this team does."

It's a good thing Martin and her teammates are so simpatico. If they weren't, she might have driven every last one of them crazy by now.

As the team's lone senior, Martin has taken it upon herself to make sure the Lady Bulldogs stayed pointed in the right direction and kept their collective eyes on the prize, day in and day out—that prize being, of course, a berth in the Class 1A Northwest Regional.

"They've probably been annoyed with me," said Martin, who was a sophomore on the Belgreen team that went to Hanceville two years ago and

was steadfastly determined to go back in her final season of high school hoops. "I'm always staying on them, telling them, 'C'mon ya'll, stay focused, let's go.' The [Belgreen] boys have seven seniors, but I'm the only one we've got, so I feel like I have to do a little more."

As of Monday night, Martin's constant prodding has paid off. The Lady Bulldogs used their superior athleticism and depth to throttle Area 12 champion Marion County on its home floor, clinching a regional berth with a 71-45 rout.

When it was over, Belgreen's girls lingered on the court for 15 minutes, swapping hugs and high fives with one another and also with family members and fans who stuck around to take part in the post-game revelry. Freshman post player Emma Dempsey put the Lady Bulldogs on her back both during the game—when she had 18 points, 15 rebounds and four blocked shots—and after, when older sister Gracie (a sophomore guard) hopped aboard for an impromptu piggy-back

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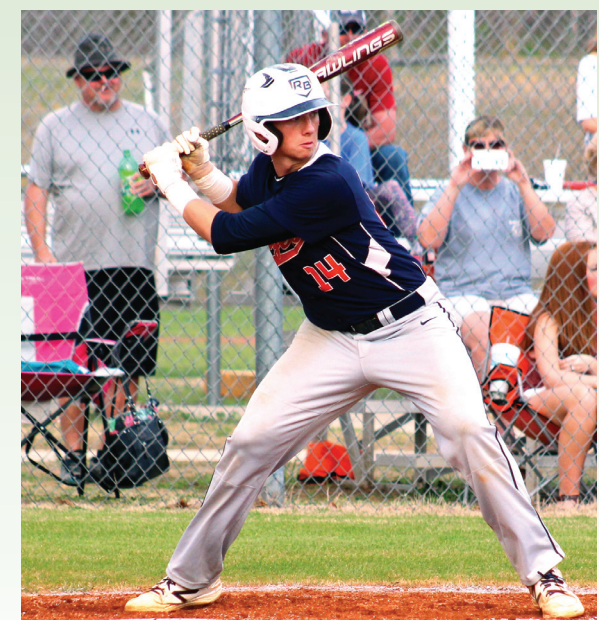


PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Kolby Bragwell returns to anchor Red Bay's lineup after leading the team last season with a .375 average, 33 hits and 26 RBIs.

Dynasty not done? Golden Tigers conceding nothing

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Over the past three seasons, Russellville has posted a mind-boggling record of 121-23 while joining Hartselle (1990-92) and Spanish Fort (2010-12) as the only baseball programs in AHSAA history to win three consecutive Class 5A state championships. That, beyond question, is dynasty material.

But don't try telling Chris Heaps the dynasty is over.

On Monday afternoon, with the 2018 opener against James Clemens at Choccolocco Park in Oxford one week away, Heaps discussed whether or not the Golden Tigers could continue to win at such a stratospheric level without the kind of SEC-caliber talent the program has produced in recent years. "We're gonna believe at the level we've been believing at," said Heaps, who is 162-63 in five seasons as Russellville's head coach. "We're gonna prepare at the level we've been preparing at. Because of that, I think we're gonna win at the level we've been winning at—maybe not the level we've been at in terms of percentage of wins, but when it comes down to 5A, we're gonna give anybody and everybody a run for their money. These guys believe that."

The Golden Tigers' 30-3 playoff record over the past three seasons undoubtedly impacts not only their own psyche but that of opposing teams as well. According to Heaps, though, Russellville's hopes of sustaining the dynasty don't rest on any sort of Black and Gold mystique; it's less about intimidation and more about perspiration.

"One of the things I really believe in is this," Heaps said. "Most of the time, you achieve what you believe. Right now, these guys think they've got an edge—not because of what's happened in the past but because of what they're doing in the present. They're working their tails off."

"There's not a single coach on our staff who's become complacent with what we've done. Our players are being held to a high standard, and they're doing a pretty good job of holding themselves to a higher standard."

That standard was in large part set by the likes of Cody Greenhill, Judd Ward and Colin Garrison, all of whom played vital roles on all three championship teams. They've moved on now, along with fellow Class of 2017 standouts Skylar Holland, Chad Wray and Russ Carpenter. That's a boatload of talent to replace—particularly on the mound, where Greenhill, Wray and Holland accounted for 81 percent (39 of 48) of the team's starts last season and 68 percent (26 of 38) of the team's wins.

Senior right-hander Rudy Fernandez, who went 8-0 last year with a 1.75 ERA and also recorded the final out of the Game 3 clincher against Faith Academy in the state finals, will assume a more prominent role after striking out 44 batters in 44 innings (mostly in relief) as a junior.

If the return of Fernandez is big, then the return to health of senior right-hander Landon Ezzell could be *huge*. Ezzell flashed promise in limited mound duty as a sophomore in 2016, but an elbow injury restricted him to

position-player status last season. Fully recovered from off-season surgery to repair his ulnar collateral ligament, Ezzell might be the top candidate to assume the role of staff ace in 2018.

"The biggest thing coming back that should help us—if he does well in his role—is having Landon Ezzell healthy," Heaps said. "He's throwing it pretty well. He's our hardest thrower. He's been about 86 [miles per hour], and it ain't even warm yet. I'm thinking he could pitch in the mid-80s, and he throws a changeup. The biggest thing he's gotta do is buy into being a pitcher and really work on the common things. If you don't have [elite] velocity, you've gotta have command, and you've gotta work on some kind of deception."

"We're gonna believe at the level we've been believing at," said Heaps, who is 162-63 in five seasons as Russellville's head coach. "We're gonna prepare at the level we've been preparing at. Because of that, I think we're gonna win at the level we've been winning at—maybe not the level we've been at in terms of percentage of wins, but when it comes down to 5A, we're gonna give anybody and everybody a run for their money. These guys believe that."

Deception is the name of the game for guys like Fernandez and senior righty Tom Barkley Scott, whose 3-0 record last year included six innings of four-hit, shutout ball against Southside-Gadsden in the regular season finale.

"Both of those guys have the ability to be deceptive," Heaps said, "They can throw a changeup in any count. That's big-time."

Heaps likes what he's seen thus far from senior right-hander Brock Malone, who's been throwing in the low- to mid-80s in bullpen sessions. The coach also said that submariner Jaret Ward could play "a critical role to our team's success." Heaps is keenly aware of the "amazing effect" soft-tossing left-handers can have on overly aggressive hitters, and senior Colton Madden is primed to fill that role in 2018.

Senior Houston Kitterman also figures into the mound mix, as do junior right-handers Caden Parker and Devin Buckhalter. Heaps said on Monday that Buckhalter has been generating "a lot of swings and misses" by the Golden Tigers' own hitters in pre-season practice. Finally, there's freshman Gordon White, perhaps the most polished of a promising group of pitchers in grades 7-9.

"We've got a young pitcher as good as anybody," Heaps said of White. "He's around 80-81, and this kid can go in, out, up and down, and he can throw his off-speed stuff for strikes. He's just a ninth-grader, but I told these varsity guys, 'If he's getting it done and you're not, he's gonna pitch.' I couldn't care less what grade he's in."

The Golden Tigers have quite a few questions to answer on the mound but not as many in the everyday lineup, where they bring back plenty of experienced production. Ezzell, who smacked a team-leading 18 doubles last season as the starting shortstop while also reaching base at a .424 clip and driving in 37 runs, will split his time between short and catcher this year when he's not pitching. Regardless of where he plays, Ezzell—who has been "scalding the ball" in pre-season practice, according to Heaps—will be counted on to anchor the middle of the order along with third baseman Kitterman, who batted .310 a year ago and cracked a walk-off home run in the regular-season area finale against East Limestone.

Heaps believes that left-fielder Scott (who batted .321 last season with 10 doubles and 21 RBIs) could be a .400 hitter this year "if he can reduce his strikeouts." The fleet-footed Buckhalter is a candidate to man center field and bat near the top of the order, where he could be joined by senior second baseman/outfielder Noah Gist, whose .473 OBP last year in 110 plate appearances was second-best on the team.

"Noah has the potential to be a leadoff guy," Heaps said. "He gets on base, and he's got a great eye for the ball. He'll take a walk, he'll get a hit, and he's got some pop in his bat at times."

Malone and Gist are both in the mix at second base, with the slick-fielding Fernandez splitting shortstop and catching duties with Ezzell. When one is on the mound and the other behind the plate, Parker is a candidate to handle short. Heaps said that catcher Hunter Briles also has a chance to play a lot behind the plate.

Senior first baseman Jeff Lloyd, who smacked a walk-off homer during last year's playoff run, provides pop from the left side, and Layne Johns could also see time at first.

"Jeff has the potential to be a big-time bat for us," Heaps said. "We have a lot of expectations for him this year."

Junior Nate Green can spell Kitterman at third and also play the middle infield. The lefty-hitting Madden (who drew six walks and struck out just twice in 23 plate appearances last season) is in the mix for the right-field job. Heaps said that Ward, another outfielder, is a candidate to bat at the top of the order. Outfielder Omar Tompkins and infielder Tanner James are also in

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'REGIONAL', from page 13

ride/photo-op amid the celebration.

Belgreen's camaraderie this season has been especially remarkable given how fierce the battle for playing time is on a nightly basis. Head coach Chad Green—now headed to Hanceville for the fourth time (twice at Tharptown, twice at Belgreen) in his 12-year career—talked about the challenges that come with trying to spread minutes throughout a rotation that goes nine or ten deep with potential impact players.

"Everybody wants to play," said Green, who had five players score in double-figures in Monday's win. "Everybody wants to get minutes, and you can't give everybody all the minutes they'd like to get. The thing about this team is, with our depth we've got so many girls who can help us. A lot of times the girls who come off the bench can give us something we might not be getting from the starting five—whether that's shooting, on-ball defense, help with the press or whatever."

The balance demonstrated by Belgreen (20-10) on Monday night stood in stark contrast to the Lady Raiders, who were extremely reliant on 6'4 senior post player Emma Culp and lightning-quick point guard Madison Stewart. Those two combined to score 37 of Marion County's 45 points, but when either had to come off the floor [foul trouble was an issue for one or both throughout much of the night] things deteriorated quickly for the home team.

"We wanted to try and keep the point guard out of the lane," Martin said, "and double-team the post as much as we could."

Belgreen's pressure was particularly effective when anyone other than Stewart was forced to handle the basketball.

"We wanted to push the ball up the floor, and we wanted to come out and press," said Green, whose team forced Marion County into a whopping 36 turnovers. "We also knew we'd really have to rebound the basketball."

The Lady Bulldogs were successful on that front as well, attacking the offensive glass early for second-chance points and finishing the night with a commanding 36-22 edge on the boards.

"We got some second and third opportunities early in the game," Green said, "and it wasn't just our post players. Our guards were getting in there and rebounding, too."

As was commonplace during a five-game win streak leading up to the Area 13 championship-game loss to No. 2 Phillips, the Lady Bulldogs got contributions from virtually everyone on Monday night. Sophomore guard Autumn Bragwell came off the bench late in the first quarter and sparked an 8-0 run with a three-pointer and a pull-up jumper; later, after Marion County had trimmed a 15-point halftime deficit down to six, Bragwell came up with a key steal and layup to turn the tide and then buried a three off a nice drive-and-dish from junior Gabbie Moore to make it 52-39 with 1:50 left in the third.

Martin, scoreless for the game's first quarter-and-a-half, put up 10 points in a three-minute span late in the first half, helping Belgreen push its early lead from seven at 24-17 to 16 at 39-23. Gracie Dempsey got to the foul line early and often, shooting 4-for-5 in the first quarter and 4-for-4 in the fourth, and twin sister Katie attacked the basket consistently on her way to scoring 10 points off the bench.

Reserve guard Emma Willingham took turns with Gracie Dempsey trying to contain Stewart; the feisty Willingham was largely responsible for holding Stewart without a field goal for the final 12 minutes of the game.

"All year long, Gracie and Emma have taken turns guarding the other team's best ball-handler," Green said. "They both do a great job. When one of them comes out of the game and the other one comes in, it doesn't get any easier for whoever they're guarding."

Sophomore post player Ansley Tate chipped in with five points, six rebounds and two assists, helping Emma Dempsey control the paint—that is, when the 6'1 freshman wasn't showing off her perimeter game. Following Marion County's 19th turnover of the first half, Martin inbounded the ball with just 2.5 seconds remaining to Dempsey, who took one dribble to the top of the key and then drilled her first three-pointer of the season to send the Lady Bulldogs into the locker room with a 42-27 lead.

"I was throwing the ball in, and I just had a feeling that I needed to pass the ball to her," said Martin, the team's leading three-point maker on the season with 49. "When she made the shot, we all got pretty excited."

the mix for playing time.

As for the Golden Tiger dynasty, Heaps is well aware that nothing lasts forever.

"At some point, it has to end," he said. "We're not planning on it ending, but at some point it will. And when it does, so be it. The best way to measure a baseball player is not by how many games he won but by how many lessons he learned, and how he learned to deal with adversity in life.

"That's what made us good. We faced adversity in 2014 [when the team finished 16-24 and missed the playoffs in Heaps' second season], and then we won it in '15 a year earlier than we thought we would. In '16 [when the Golden Tigers won a school-record 48 games], we were very deep and talented, but at the same time our guys had to put their egos aside and stay humble. They did that. In '17, it was a coin flip. We were either really good

or really average. Early in the year, we were really average. Then our guys started holding themselves to a higher standard. Accountability was a big key—not performing to par, but not accepting it. Things started to turn around right around spring break last year, and then we turned the corner and became a team that really went out and competed instead of just going through the motions. I think this team is ready to compete."



Kallie Allen

Sophomore Guard, Phil Campbell

Allen helped Phil Campbell stay hot at last week's Class 2A, Area 14 tournament, totaling 33 points in a pair of wins over Sulligent and Lamar County. She scored 15 points in a first-round rout of the Lady Blue Devils, but she saved her best work for Thursday's area final. Allen scored 18 points on 8-for-13 shooting and also had six rebounds, four assists, three steals and three blocks to lead the Lady Bobcats to a 69-50 win over LCHS, their 13th in a row.

For the season, Allen is averaging 12.3 points per game with a team-best 31 threes made.



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Belgreen didn't exactly capitalize on the momentum from Dempsey's dagger, failing to score for the first three-and-a-half minutes of the second half and allowing Marion County to cut the lead to 43-38 on a three-point play by Stewart at the 4:20 mark.

"We preached to our girls at halftime about coming out and hitting them with an 8-0 run," Green said. "Instead it went the other way."

Marion County's comeback bid came to a screeching halt with 3:59 left in the third, when Emma Dempsey grabbed an offensive rebound and put it back in while drawing the fourth foul of the night on Culp. Dempsey missed the free throw, but the damage was done; Culp headed to the bench, and Belgreen closed the quarter on a 13-1 run to open up a 56-39 lead.

Dempsey finished 7-for-10 from the field and 3-for-4 from the line, matching her season-high with 18 points. Bragwell had 12 points, four boards and three assists, and Gracie Dempsey shot 9-for-13 from the line to finish with 11 points. Martin had three rebounds and three assists to go along with her 10 points. The Lady Bulldogs hit six threes on the night and finished 19-for-28 from the line. They won despite shooting just 38 percent from the floor and turning the ball over 26 times.

Stewart led Marion County with 19 points, and Culp had 18 points and 12 rebounds. The Lady Raiders shot just 34 percent from the field and finished 15-for-26 at the line.

Win No. 20 on the season clinched a regional berth for the Lady Bulldogs, who will take on Holy Spirit (a 74-44 winner Monday night over Covenant Christian) on Friday in a semifinal matchup. Martin, who turns 18 on February 16, will get to celebrate her birthday right where she wanted to all along—in Hanceville. As it happens, Tom Drake Coliseum on the campus of Wallace State Community College is the perfect place for a party.

It goes without saying that all of Martin's teammates are invited.

'DYNASTY', from page 14

Loss to Brooks ends tough season for RHS boys, but Golden Tigers won't be down long

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

KILLEN - The offensive balance that helped Brooks nearly run the table during the regular season was on full display in last Tuesday night's Class 5A, Area 16 tournament opener, propelling the top-seeded Lions to a 68-53 win over fourth-seeded Russellville.

The Golden Tigers (7-17) boasted the area's top two scorers coming into the tournament in junior guards Lucas McNutt (16.0 points per game) and Devin Buckhalter (15.5 points per game), but Brooks (29-1 after beating Lawrence County in Friday's area final) countered with superior depth and a vast array of weapons capable of impacting any given game at any given time.

"It almost doesn't matter who they have on the floor, because nothing really changes for them regardless of who's out there," said RHS coach Patrick Odom, whose team had dropped two regular-season meetings with the Lions by 16 points and 10 points, respectively. "They have a lot of guys who are basically the same player, and Brian [Wright] does a great job with them. They shot the ball well tonight, and when they shoot it well with the depth they have, it really stresses your defense."

Junior guard Blaine Roberson was the first player to step to the forefront for the Lions last Tuesday, coming off the bench to bury three first-quarter threes—the last of which ended an early 9-0 run by Russellville and put Brooks on top 15-

14 after one.

Junior guard Brett Urban, another reserve, took the baton in the second quarter, knocking down a pair of threes and scoring 12 points to help the Lions stretch the lead to eight at 32-24 going into the break. Urban and Roberson combined for 21 first-half points off the bench, and Brooks shot 7-for-8 from the foul line. The Golden Tigers, meanwhile, struggled to convert quality looks and were unable to create the up-tempo pace they prefer.

"We're gonna miss our five seniors, but I like the pieces we have coming back," said Odom, who led the Golden Tigers to area tournament titles in each of his first two seasons. "This isn't how it's been for us in area play, and it's not how it's gonna be."

"I think we had four defensive rebounds in the whole first half," Odom said, "which means we weren't able to get out and run the way we like to. We had some of the best looks we could have asked for early, and we just couldn't get them to go down. We had a couple that looked like they were halfway through the net and somehow came out."

"If you had told me before the game that we were only gonna score fifty-three points, I knew that wouldn't be enough for us to win—not in the area semifinals, on the road, against a really good team."

Brooks essentially put the game away in the third quarter, out-scoring Russellville 20-10 behind seven points from junior guard Dusty Quillen, six from junior reserve Noah Turbyfill and five from 6'4 senior Ben Hamner. The Golden Tigers were within 10 at 44-34 following back-to-back threes by McNutt and Buckhalter, but the Lions closed the quarter on an 8-0 run to lead 52-34 at the end of three.

Russellville made one final push to open the fourth quarter, holding Brooks scoreless for three minutes and going on a 7-0 run to get within 11, but that was as close as the Golden Tigers got.

"Our guys never quit. They kept fighting all the way to the end," Odom said. "We had a couple of good looks that would have cut it down to single digits there with a few minutes to go, but we just couldn't get over the hump. Give [Brooks] credit. We threw a lot of things at them tonight, but they did a good job defending us in the half-court."

Quillen went 3-for-4 from the foul line in the fourth quarter and wound up scoring 12 of his 14 points in the second half. Urban led the Lions with 16 points, and Turbyfill had 10. Roberson finished with nine points, and Hamner scored seven. Jacob Bange pitched in with six, five of which came in the fourth quarter.

Buckhalter led Russellville with 19 points. He finished the season averaging 15.7 per game and has scored 857 career points heading into his senior year. Senior guard Brock Malone hit three threes against Brooks and finished with 11 points.

McNutt scored 10 points and finished the season averaging a team-best 15.8 per game. He also led the team with 49 threes made and shot 81 percent from the foul line. Fellow junior Caden Parker

scored seven points last Tuesday, followed by Logan Jones with four and eighth-grader Will Bonner with two.

Each team made six threes, but Brooks held a big edge at the foul line, shooting 17-for-20 compared to just 5-for-6 by Russellville.

The Golden Tigers now turn their attention toward next season, with visions of Bonner (a pure point guard who flashes special skills when it comes to court vision and passing) pushing the pace and freeing up McNutt and Buckhalter to devote their considerable talents to scoring, shooting and playing D.

"You don't want to put too much on one guy," Odom said Tuesday night, "but Will has a chance to make Lucas and Devin different players. And that's exciting."

Parker (who averaged 6.3 points per game this season) also returns, and Chandler Dyas (8.0 points per game, 31 threes made) and post player Brooks Scott are bound to take big steps forward following promising freshman seasons. All told, Russellville will bring back players who accounted for 76 percent of the team's scoring and 130 of the team's 164 three-pointers made.

"We're gonna miss our five seniors, but I like the pieces we have coming back," said Odom, who led the Golden Tigers to area tournament titles in each of his first two seasons. "This was a challenging year for us, in a lot of ways, but I'm proud of the way our guys kept fighting."

"This isn't how it's been for us in area play, and it's not how it's gonna be."



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Russellville will return its top four scorers next year, led by Lucas McNutt (pictured at left, 15.8 points per game this season) and Devin Buckhalter (at right, 15.7 points per game).

'TIGERS', from page 13

"We haven't spoken this year at length about what happened on that last day," he said. "As a coach, I want our guys to focus on what we can control. What happened last year, we don't want to dwell on it. What we want is for this team to take those lessons learned and apply them to this season."

The Tigers are moving on, full speed ahead, and job No. 1 for Maggerise and company is replacing the production and leadership provided on the mound last year by veteran lefties Chandler Allen and Landen Burgett, who combined for 10 of the team's 14 wins and 134 strikeouts in 93.1 innings.

"It's hard to replace two pitchers like Landen and Chandler," Maggerise said. "They both played significant roles on our team for the past four years. But I'm excited to see this year's group compete. Some of our more known pitchers are gone, but I believe this year's staff will do a tremendous job of letting the defense work behind them and competing on every single pitch."

Bragwell, whose 2017 highlights included 12 strikeouts in six no-hit innings against Colbert County on March 2 in addition to his late-season gem against Lamar County, is back to lead a staff that also includes seniors Hayden Murray and Skylar Brazil, left-hander Chase Allen and Alex Burroughs.

"This year we have good depth," said Maggerise, whose team finished 14-17 last season after going 19-19 and making the playoffs in 2016. "Kolby is back to anchor the rotation, and I like the guys we have behind him."

Bragwell made nine appearances (including six starts) last season, striking out 30 batters and allowing 26 hits in 32.1 innings. Murray, who posted a 2.33 ERA and a 24-to-6 strikeout-to-walk ratio in 24.1 innings last year, pitched primarily in relief, but his one start resulted in a complete game shutout. Brazil, another right-hander, threw 22.2 innings across eight appearances last season, including three starts and one complete game.

Allen and Burroughs got their feet wet at the varsity level last season, making seven appearances and working 17 total innings between them.

Offensively, Red Bay must replace the veteran bats of Chandler Allen, Burgett, Kaleb Burroughs and Blake Hester. Bragwell, who led the team last season with a .375 average, 33 hits and 26 RBIs, will play third base when he's not on the mound. Murray, who finished second on the team a year ago in average (.333), hits (32) and runs scored (23), returns at shortstop and gives the Tigers an extremely productive left side of the infield to lean on.

"I can't say enough good things about both of those young men," Maggerise said of Bragwell and Murray, who also combined for 24 stolen bases last season in 27 attempts. "Rain or shine, they are two of the hardest-working players I've had. We're counting on both of them to help carry a lineup that will have to rely more on small ball and not as much on extra-base hits."

Brazil, who reached base at a .400 clip last year and stole 15 bases in 16 attempts, will play first base, with Chase Allen also in the mix. Alex Burroughs is a second baseman, and Colbie King figures to see time at both second and in the outfield. Kaleb Bragwell can catch and play short, and Kaleb Sims is also in the mix behind the plate.

Fleet-footed senior Max Bullen will anchor the outfield in left after batting .278 last season with a .404 OBP, 18 runs scored and 23 steals in 25 tries. Fellow senior Luke Rooker mans center field, and junior Cade McKinney will handle the right-field job after making a big impact last season (19 stolen bases in 22 attempts, with 12 runs scored) as a runner.

Red Bay will open its season next Monday at Hamilton, with a jayvee game scheduled for 3:30 p.m. and a varsity game to follow. The Tigers will open their home schedule next Tuesday, February 20 against Hackleburg and then host Sheffield on Thursday, February 22. They will visit Mississippi rival Belmont next Friday, February 23 and then travel to Northside on Saturday the 24th. Area play is set to begin March 20 at home against Phil Campbell.

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'HANCEVILLE', from page 13



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Transition baskets from the likes of freshman guard Caitlynn Mills (11) helped Phil Campbell put 48 first-half points on Lamar County without so much as attempting a free throw. The Lady Bobcats hit 58 percent of their shots in the first half and 55 percent for the game, rolling to their first area title in 25 years. They followed that up by beating Cleveland 90-42 on Monday to punch their ticket to Hanceville for the third time in four seasons under head coach Craig Thomas (page opposite).

by as many as 24 points in Thursday's first half en route to posting their 13th consecutive win, 69-50. "I told them if we won an area championship, I'd do a cartwheel. And you better believe they reminded me about it.

"I'll probably be sore tomorrow," he added with a grin.

If Thomas indeed woke up hurting last Friday morning, he has nobody to blame but himself. He should have been stretching for weeks now, given how inevitable it seemed that Phil Campbell would ultimately cut down the nets as area champ. The Lady Bobcats won their six area games during the regular season by an average margin of 33 points; they continued that dominance last week, out-scoring fourth-seeded Sulligent and third-seeded Lamar County 89-37 in the first halves of their two tournament games.

"It feels great," said Roberson, a senior forward who scored 12 points on 6-for-8 shooting in last Thursday's final and helped Phil Campbell slam the door shut after the Lady Bulldogs had climbed to within 15 late in the third quarter. "This has been one of our goals since the beginning of the year. We wanted to win the county, win the area and go to Hanceville."

If the Lady Bobcats (24-5 and ranked No. 4 in Class 2A by the ASWA) can bottle what they were brewing on offense in last Thursday's first half and crack it open a couple more times over the next few days, Hanceville could merely be the next stop on an even longer journey. [They officially wrapped up a regional berth with Monday night's 90-42 rout of Cleveland, extending their win streak to 14 and setting a new season-high for points scored.]

"We could go to the Final Four," Roberson said, "and possibly win."

"We could go to Birmingham," echoed Allen, a sophomore guard who buried two threes in the opening 90 seconds of the area final and went on to score 12 of her game-high 18 points in the first quarter. "That's what we're shooting for."

With the operative word being *shooting*. The Lady Bobcats forced their customary bundle of turnovers against Lamar County (19 in the first half, to be exact), but the Lady Bulldogs also beat the press on multiple occasions for fast-break buckets. They just couldn't keep up with what Phil Campbell was doing on the other end of the floor.

"We moved the ball well," Roberson said, "and we took good shots."

They connected on most of them, shooting 62 percent from the floor in a 30-point first quarter and recording an assist on 10 of their 13 made baskets—four of which came from beyond the arc (two by Allen and one each by sisters Darby and Dakota Elliott).

"We moved the ball well, and we got open looks," Thomas said after last Thursday's win. "We were patient in the half-court game tonight. We did a good job of sharing the ball and finding the open man."

Allen led the first-quarter charge, scoring a dozen points on 5-for-8 shooting. The Lady Bobcats consistently got touches for junior post player Abby Davis, who had six points, five assists, three rebounds and two steals by the

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time the game was eight minutes old. Roberson and the Elliott sisters pitched in with 12 combined points in the first quarter on 5-for-7 shooting from the field.

Leading 30-16 at the end one, Davis opened the second quarter with back-to-back buckets and then came up with a steal and found Darby Elliott streaking the other way for a layup to make it a 20-point game with 5:45 left in the half.

Lamar County trimmed the lead to 36-20, but the Lady Bobcats just kept coming: A layup by Dakota Elliott off an assist from Allen; a rebound and putback by Allen off an Elliott miss; another rebound and putback by Davis off an Allen miss; a steal and layup by freshman guard Caitlynn Mills that capped an 8-0 run and made it 44-20 at the 3:00 mark.

Lamar County put together an 8-2 run, but a rebound and putback by senior post player Carley Nix finished off a first half in which Phil Campbell shot 58 percent (22-for-38) from the field, recorded twice as many assists (14) as turnovers (seven), and scored 48 points—all without attempting a single free throw. Even their ordinarily demanding head coach was impressed.

"If we can keep putting up 48 points in the first half, we can go a long way," said Thomas, whose team then ran off 49 first-half points in Monday's sub-region rout. "Our goal all year has been to score 60 points a game. We feel like we're good enough on defense to hold teams under 60. So if we can put up 60 points, we believe we're gonna win a lot of basketball games."

To the Lady Bulldogs' credit, they didn't go down without a fight [which would have been easy to do, given that their two previous meetings with Phil Campbell had resulted in beatings of 42 and 20 points, respectively].

"They've definitely improved since the first time we played them," Roberson said of Lamar County.

Senior guard Adrienne Hudson opened the second half with six quick points for Vernon, and then Davis picked up her fourth foul on an illegal screen with 5:40 left in the third. The Lady Bobcats lost their mojo on the offensive end, shooting just 3-for-10 from the field and 0-for-4 from the line in the quarter, with six turnovers.

"We had a few too many untimely turnovers in the second half," Thomas said, "and foul trouble got us a little bit. But I thought we had some girls who stepped up after Abby had to come out."

Roberson was one who rose to the occasion, ending a three-minute-plus scoring drought for Phil Campbell with a driving layup and a pull-up jumper from the right baseline to make it 54-38 with 1:55 left in the third. She converted two more layups (one off an assist from Davis, who fouled out with 7:17 left in the game, and the other off a nice feed from Darby Elliott) early in the fourth quarter, further steadying the ship.

"Chloe made some big shots for us when we needed them," Thomas said. "She's a real scrappy player for us. She never fusses, and she doesn't mind doing the dirty work. Whenever somebody gets double-teamed, she's really good at diving to the basket."

Allen also stepped up late, scoring twice during an 8-0 run just past the midway point of the fourth quarter that pushed the lead to 66-45 and sealed the deal. The 5'9 guard has the length and athleticism [she blocked three shots last Thursday] to slide down and play in the high post, which she did after Davis headed to the bench with her fifth foul.

"It helps a lot to have someone like Kallie who can play anywhere," Thomas said.

Phil Campbell finished the night shooting 55 percent from the field, with 19 assists on 32 made baskets. A 1-for-9 showing at the foul line was basically the only blemish on an otherwise outstanding night on the offensive end.

"Our transition game helped us," said Thomas, whose team is now averaging 62.9 points per game on the season following Monday night's sub-region spanking of Cleveland. "We had seen on film that [Lamar County] didn't always get back on defense as quick as we get the ball up the floor, and we were able to take advantage of that."

The Lady Bobcats were a step late at times on the press, but they still came up with 14 steals and forced 25 turnovers while holding Lamar County to 39 percent shooting (17-for-43) from the field.

"We were aggressive," said Allen, who had six rebounds, four assists, three steals and three blocks to go along with her 18 points. "We know the press is where a lot of our points come from."

Despite barely playing in the second half due to foul trouble, Davis finished the area championship game with 14 points, six rebounds, six assists and three steals. Roberson had five boards to go with her 12 points, and Dakota Elliott chipped in with 11 points on 5-for-10 shooting and four steals. Darby Elliott added five points and five assists, and Mills also scored five. Nix and fellow senior Megan Bullock had two points apiece.

After climbing the ladder to snip the last piece of nylon from the rim, Thomas was surprised to learn that his team's win streak had reached 13 games. [The Lady Bobcats haven't lost since January 4 at home to Class 1A No. 2 Phillips, a defeat they avenged with a 63-57 win in Bear Creek on



January 30.]

"Wow," Thomas said. "Has it been that long? I didn't even realize. We've been pushing pretty hard."

They best not let up now, not with a showdown against third-ranked Mars Hill (23-8) looming in the Northwest Regional semifinals on Thursday at Tom Drake Coliseum. Cold Springs (a team Phil Campbell has already beaten this season, 67-59 back in November) will likely be waiting on the winner in next Monday's regional final, so a berth in Birmingham is by no means a stretch for the Lady Bobcats if they can get by Mars Hill on Thursday.

If an area title is worth a cartwheel, what feat of athletic prowess might Thomas try if his team actually reaches the Final Four?

"I haven't opened my mouth. No promises this time," he joked after Monday's big win. "We've got a shot, though, if we can get Mars Hill. It won't be easy. They're a very good opponent."

The Lady Bobcats will be taking two 1,000-point career scorers with them to Hanceville this week. Darby Elliott scored a game-high 22 on Monday, reaching the 1,000-point mark for her varsity career on a free throw late in the fourth quarter. She joins Davis, who put up 17 points against Cleveland and now has 1,302 in her career. Allen added 14 points in Monday's rout.

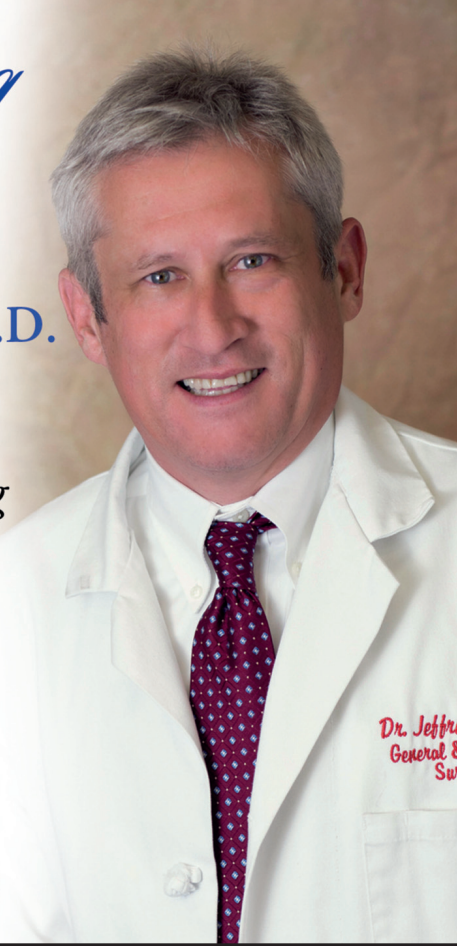
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