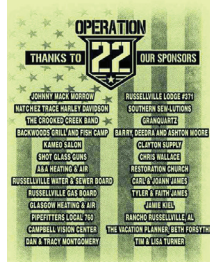


Two local men have launched an effort to raise awareness and funds to help lower the alarming number of suicides among veterans. See story Page 3.



Russellville High School has been named one of Alabama's CLAS Banner Schools. See story Page 3.

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County financial records seized

AG's investigation involves former county administrator

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Officials from the Alabama Attorney General's office seized financial records from the Franklin County Commission dating back to 2009 as part of an investigation that involves former Franklin County administrator Crista Madden, the *Free Press* has learned.

The records were picked up from the commission office on Friday, March 2, pursuant to a subpoena, according to a source familiar with the investigation. The records date back to 2009, the source said.

Madden was appointed as county administrator by Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore on October 1, 2009. Madden is the daughter of Franklin County Commissioner Rayburn Massey.

Madden resigned from her county administrator position in Franklin County on August 31, 2017. She was hired as the county administrator for Chilton County and began that new position October 1, 2017.

The Chilton County Commission placed Madden on

administrative leave Friday afternoon after an executive session at an emergency meeting. According to an article in the *Clanton Advertiser*, Madden was removed from all county bank accounts and assistant administrator Denise Hafer was added as the new authorized signature on those accounts. Hafer was appointed as interim county administrator Friday.

"We have been contacted by the attorney general's office requesting some documents," Bedford said. "The [probate] judge and commission fully complied with the request. At this point it's just a subpoena for records. We have no details on the investigation."

Madden did not answer phone calls Monday and did not return a message.

During Monday's Franklin County Commission meeting, Miller requested the commission go into executive session and asked that a roll call vote be taken on his request. Moore told Miller that Alabama law stipulates

See 'RECORDS,' Page 3

TES Robotics team earns landmark win

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

In a year of firsts for the Tharptown Elementary School robotics program, the school earned its first win in a robotics competition as the TES Little Wildbots won first place at the February 24 University of North Alabama Robotics Competition.

The event consisted of 23 teams, each having three to six members participating. Teams had to solve timed problems with robots they had constructed. The event required each team member to work together in working the robot through the course.

Former Russellville City Schools teacher Lee Brownell with the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative coordinated the competition.

See 'WIN,' Page 9



The TES Little Wildbots won first place at last month's University of North Alabama Robotics Competition. Tharptown Elementary's Robotics program is in its first year of existence.

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Doris Ann Pace Andrews, Russellville, age 79
Died Thursday, March 1, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Sandra Houlditch Kiefer, Centralia, MO, age 75
Died Wednesday, February 21, 2018. The family was planning to hold a private memorial service at a later date. Interment in Shottsville Cemetery in Marion County, AL.

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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RHS named one of eight CLAS Banner Schools

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Russellville City Schools superintendent of education Heath Grimes nominated Russellville High School to be considered as a Council for Leaders in Alabama (CLAS) 2017 School of Distinction, he wanted to showcase the school's college and career preparation.

And the rest of Alabama took notice. After RHS was named one of Alabama District Seven's three 2017 Schools of Distinction, the next accolade came last week when RHS was named one of eight Alabama CLAS Banner Schools at a ceremony held in Prattville.

The CLAS Banner School Program began in 2001 as a way to recognize Alabama schools that showcase outstanding programs and service to their students. One hundred and seven schools were nominated for School of Distinction status, and 24 were selected this year.

"They are looking for certain programs you're doing that other schools can emulate," Grimes said. "For us, we focused on our college and career experience. That included our Academies programs, working to get students exposure to colleges, our different career tech programs and working with students to see what financial aid they may be eligible for at the next level."

"They are looking for certain programs you're doing that other schools can emulate," Grimes said. "For us, we focused on our college and career experience. That included our Academies programs, working to get students exposure to colleges, our different career tech programs and working with students to see what financial aid they may be eligible for at the next level."

Grimes praised the efforts of RHS principal Jason Goodwin and assistant principal/Career Tech coordinator Natalie Bendall.

"It's a program that's still evolving," Grimes said. "Natalie has done an amazing job with career tech, doing some innovative things and brainstorming new ways to help students be more successful."

"It's great to receive this honor, but we know we're just at the beginning phase and we have a lot more to do."

Grimes said RHS was named an Alabama Banner School in 2014, and Russellville Elementary School earned the honor in 2008.

CLAS was founded in 1969 as the Alabama Council of School Administrators, an organization formed as a professional corporation 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.

For more information on the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools and a list of all the 2017 winning schools, log onto www.clasleaders.org.

'RECORDS,' from page 1

that no additional agenda items could be added to a special called meeting agenda.

Miller said he recalled past meetings where agenda items had been added and questioned why Monday's meeting would be any different. The meeting went forward with only the one agenda item and no executive session.

Miller said he and other commissioners were notified last Friday by Moore about the subpoena and the records that were picked up. Miller said he did not know specifics about the investigation.

"The attorney general's office subpoenaed financial records, and we cooperated fully. That's about all I know," Miller said. "Anything else would be inuendo."

County attorney Roger Bedford confirmed Monday that records were subpoenaed from the commission office last week.

"We have been contacted by the attorney general's office requesting some documents," Bedford

said. "The [probate] judge and commission fully complied with the request. At this point it's just a subpoena for records. We have no details on the investigation."

The *Free Press* also attempted to contact Massey and Moore Monday morning. Messages were left with both men.

Chilton County Commission chairman Allen Caton released a statement following last Friday's meeting: "The Chilton County Commission was made aware of an ongoing investigation of Crista Madden by the attorney general's office. At this time the investigation is unrelated to Chilton County. Pending the outcome of this investigation, Mrs. Madden has been placed on administrative leave from her duties as county administrator."

Madden began working for Franklin County on September 1, 1992, when she was hired as county accountant. She became assistant county administrator on October 1, 2005.

At the time she stepped down from her Franklin County position, Madden said she would always consider Franklin County home.

"This is my home. Being away from my family will be a challenge," Madden said last fall. "Another challenge is leaving the girls and staff here. They're like family to me. I'm not running from anything here. I have a great job and work with some wonderful people. I have great relationships with the department heads and elected officials. It's just an opportunity I felt I couldn't pass by, and it's a good time in my life and career to do this."

Commissioner Chris Wallace said he was made aware of the records being subpoenaed last Friday, but Wallace said he had no specific information about the investigation.

"I don't know anything excepts the records were subpoenaed and I know there is an investigation involving Crista Madden, but I don't yet know the specifics of that investigation," Wallace said.

Local men launch 'Operation 22' to aid veterans

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, an average of 22 veterans commit suicide every day.

With the goal of raising awareness and funds to help lower that number, Cody Bragwell and Caleb Thompson organized Operation 22, a 22-mile walk set for this Saturday, March 10.

Bragwell served in the United States Marine Corps, and Thompson is a veteran of the Army National Guard. The two men were alarmed by the high number of veteran suicides. With 22 veterans taking their lives each day, that's a suicide every 65 minutes.

"Caleb came up with the idea," Bragwell said. "He'd seen it done in other areas of the country. He called me before Christmas and asked if I would help with it."

"It has become way bigger than we ever thought it was going to."

Proceeds from the walk, its sponsorships and T-shirt sales will go to www.militaryveteranproject.org. The non-profit organization supports research and alternative treatments for military suicide prevention.

The walk will begin in Russellville at Southside Baptist Church on Highway 43 South. Participants will walk a 22-mile route that ends at the Natchez Trace Harley-Davidson, 595 U.S. Highway 72 West in Tusculmbia.

Entry fees for the walk will be \$30 for adults the day of the race. All participants will receive an Operation 22 T-shirt. The walk will begin at 6:30 a.m.

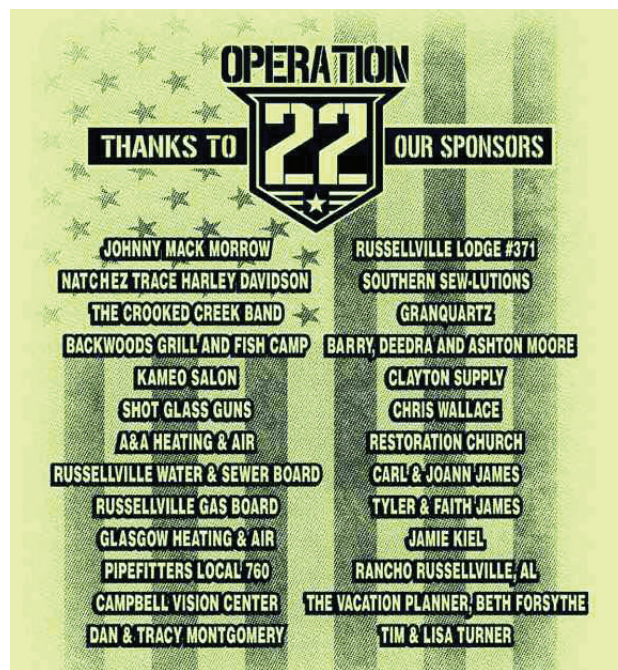
Bragwell said the response to the fundraiser has been overwhelming. There are 26 sponsors whose names appear on the T-shirts, and Bragwell said he expects more than 20 walkers. Other ways to support the cause include purchasing an Operation 22 t-shirt or making a donation.

There will be a charity motorcycle show at the Natchez Trace Harley-Davidson at the conclusion of the 22-mile walk. There will be a live band and food truck on site at the Harley dealership.

"We expect to arrive there between 3 and 4 p.m.," Bragwell said. "Everyone is invited to join us there and enjoy the motorcycle show. A percentage of sales from the food truck will be donated to www.militaryveteranproject.org."

"We'll have a military truck following us on the 22-mile walk. Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow has loaned us the truck, and it will have a banner with the names of people who made donations but didn't walk."

For more information, follow Operation 22 on Facebook, or contact Bragwell at 256-460-1793 or Thompson at 256-668-9475.



The Honey Do List: Charge!

If you have a lawnmower, you will eventually have battery issues. Over the winter, batteries may become weak or die from being in storage.

As I mentioned last week, let's look at battery maintenance and charging procedures.

The best battery maintenance is prevention. If you don't use your mower during the winter, remove the battery and store it in a warm, dry place. Just keep it away from flammables.

Keep the connections clean and corrosion-free. They can be cleaned with a wire brush and coated with a corrosion inhibitor to keep them clean. Make sure cables are in good shape. Look for damaged rubber coatings and deteriorated eyelets.

Charging is a pretty simple operation. For specific details, follow the manufacturer instructions for your charger. It's always a good idea to wear gloves and eye protection when dealing with batteries.

A trickle charger can be attached with the battery on or off the mower and will keep the battery ready to go. Follow all manufacturer's directions and safety rules.

A dead battery can possibly be charged back to life. You can try

charging it or carry it to a shop and have them do a load test.

Charging is a pretty simple operation. For specific details, follow the manufacturer instructions for your charger. It's always a good idea to wear gloves and eye protection when dealing with batteries. Set the charger to 12 volts. The battery can be in or out of the tractor when you charge it. Make sure that the battery charger is off and unplugged before connecting it to the battery.

Connect the red charger cable to the positive (+) terminal of the battery. Connect the black charger cable to the negative (-) battery terminal. Turn on or plug in the charger. Charge the battery following the instructions specified by your battery charger manufacturer. Once the battery is fully charged, turn off the power on the charger. Then remove the charger cables.

Now is the time to be checking out these things, because with a little help from the sun we'll be cutting soon. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

Something
is Fishy at Our House

by Ree
Shannon



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Character lessons we all can learn

Last month was a busy one for our students and faculty as we celebrated Black History Month and Career and Technical Education Month in each of our schools. These events provided us with the opportunity to learn more about those who have made a difference in this world and to learn more about how we can also make a difference in this world through our own words, actions and choices.

There are so many pioneers and influential people that our students had the opportunity to focus on during Black History Month, but the contributions Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made to the world were something I personally pondered last month. Dr. King was a man who commanded respect and honor, not because he bullied it out of people or because he required it out of those around him, but because it was a natural response to his actions.

In a world where we constantly worry about shootings and retaliations and getting an eye for an eye, it becomes more apparent that we could ALL learn from the lessons Dr. King taught us. We could all stand to be more tolerant of our neighbors, more kind to those in need, more understanding of those who aren't exactly like us and more compassionate to those less fortunate.

Dr. King was humble and gentle, with a bold confidence and an unwavering faith in his ideals, his morals and his dreams. He led by example and stood up for what he believed in without ever resorting to violence. Dr. King used his words like a sword in the fight against injustice, and he used his faith as a shield when going to battle with those who opposed him. He took the time to care for others, and he dedicated his life to right-

ing wrongs and advocating for change in a peaceable way.

Our students can look to Dr. King (and others like him) to see that the types of values he had and the way he approached problems are things to be admired and emulated. In a world where we constantly worry about shootings and retaliations and getting an eye for an eye, it becomes more and more apparent that we could ALL learn from the lessons Dr. King taught us. We could all stand to be more tolerant of our neighbors, more kind to those in need, more understanding of those who aren't exactly like us and more compassionate to those less fortunate. Character education is just as important as academic education, and I'm sure our students learned valuable lessons as we observed Black History Month at RCS.

Last month we also observed Career and Technical Education Month, which is designed to highlight all the different programs students can study that will help them in their future careers and how this type of education can be beneficial to students AND the community. Throughout February the RCS CTE Department highlighted their programs at the high school and middle school levels and went into the lower grades to show our elementary students how important career tech is.

We were also thankful to have the mayor and city council recognize February as Career and Technical Education Month in the city of Russellville, where they acknowledged the important role career tech plays in our community.

See 'LEARN,' Page 5



Heath
Grimes
RCS Sup't



Don't let it hang around!

Dear Dave,
I have \$100,000 in student loan debt. Since the amount is so large, is there a special place in your Baby Steps plan for it?

Julie

Dear Julie,
The fact that it's a large amount of student loan debt doesn't change anything. Baby Step 2 is where you pay off all debt except for your home.

I hope you have a nice, large income with which to fight that big, nasty pile of student loan debt. Believe it or not, I've seen even worse situations. I've talked to people who went \$200,000 into debt for a four-year degree in a field where they'll make \$50,000. That kind of thinking and behavior is ridiculous, but it's out there.

Whatever you do, don't let this student loan debt hang around for years and years. You've got to get focused and intense about getting control of your money. That means living on a strict, basics-only monthly budget. After that, start throwing every nickel and dime you can scrape together and save toward those student loans as fast as possible.

Your income is your largest wealth-building tool, Julie. You can't save and plan for the future when all your money is flying out the door to pay back debt!

Dave

'LEARN,' from page 4

Thanks to the programs implemented in RCS CTE, we have students who are ready to enter the workforce and become productive citizens and employees of local businesses and industries. We are training up the next generation of future leaders, and it is great to have the city acknowledge how vitally important this is.

Our spring sports are also in full swing, and we hope that our community will come out and support our hard-working student athletes and coaches at the many events they will have in the coming months. We have an exciting spring

Better late than never

Dear Dave,
I have a credit card that I haven't made a payment on in almost two years. The debt has been sold a couple of times, and now a collector is saying I owe \$1,200. The original amount was \$500.

I'd like to work something out, but I can't afford \$1,200. What should I do?

Luanne

Dear Luanne,
They're asking for \$1,200 because they've added things like interest and late fees. They want to make as much money as possible on an old debt they bought for pennies on the dollar.

If you can afford \$500 right now, ask if they'll accept a one-time payment to settle the account. Get it in writing if they accept the offer, and don't give them a penny until after you get a copy of the written agreement. Once you have the agreement in hand, send them a money order or cashier's check for \$500. Do not, under any circumstances, give them electronic access to your bank accounts.

You waited too long to take of your obligation, Luanne. That made things more difficult and more stressful than necessary. I'm glad you decided to do the right thing, and clean up your mess, though.

Better late than never!

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.*

semester ahead, and we would love for each of you to know about our events, activities and successes. If you want to keep up with what's going on at RCS on a daily basis, make sure to follow our district Twitter (@RussellvilleK12) and Facebook accounts as well as the Twitter (@Russellville_HS, @RussellvilleMS, @ResElem, @Westatrcs) and Facebook accounts for each of our four schools.

As always, it's GREAT to be a Golden Tiger!

*Heath Grimes, Superintendent
Russellville City Schools*

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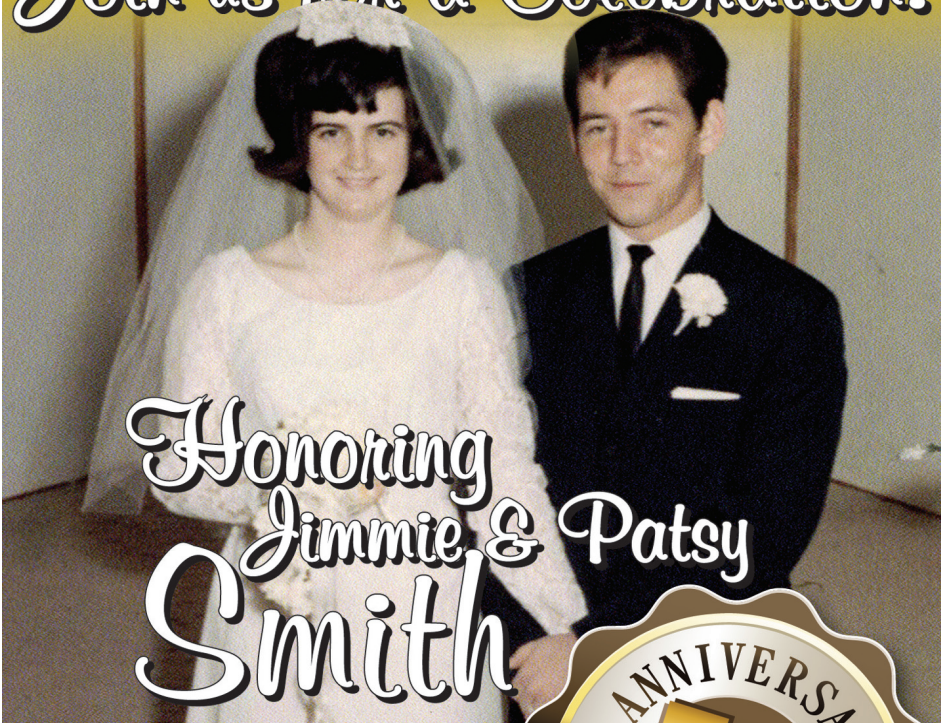
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Matthew 25:35


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 is selling hams for Easter. Hams are \$30. Pre-order 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.


 The Community Action Agency of Northwest Alabama's Gerald Williams Cooperative Garden Program is offering free vegetable seeds, plants and fertilizer to help qualified local residents wishing to grow their own gardens. Sign-up runs through Friday, March 16. To participate in the program, applicants must reside in Franklin/Colbert/Lauderdale counties, and gross monthly income must not exceed \$1,507 for a single-person household, \$2,030 for a two-person household and \$2,552 for a three-person household. For each additional person in the household, add \$522 per month. Plants will be distributed on April 17 at the Russellville Farmers Market. All residents should call 256-248-1921 from 1-4 p.m. Monday-Friday to apply or for more information.


 American 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 March 8.


 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, 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.


 The Phil Campbell Dance is celebrating its 16th anniversary this Friday, March 9 at 7 p.m. at the Phil Campbell Community Center. Admission is \$5. Come join us!


 The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will hold a Gardening Series at the Russellville Public Library on the last four Fridays in March from 11 a.m.-noon. Topics will be Petals & Pollinators (March 9), Spring Vegetable Gardening (March 16), Garden & Landscape Pest Management (March 23) and Urban Forestry/Tree Maintenance (March 30). Everyone is welcome! Volunteers are needed at your Russellville Public Library. Are you interested and available? Give us a call at 256-332-1535, stop by the library or email us via our website at www.russellvillepubliclibrary.com.


 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests James LeBlanc and Angela Hacker at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville this Saturday, March 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.


 Osborn Hill Cemetery will meet on Thursday, March 15 at the Littleville Town Hall at 6 p.m. for its yearly meeting. Donations are needed to help maintain the perpetual care now and in the future. Please make check payable to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan, 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674.

 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.

 You are invited to a Unity Breakfast on Saturday, March 17 at 9 a.m. at the Mt. Moriah PB Community Christian Life Center, 818 W. Irvine Avenue, Florence. There will be candidate introductions and speaking. Sponsored by the Alabama Democratic Conference. Tickets are \$20 per person, with tables of eight available for \$160.

 Belgreen Kindergarten Registration will be held on Friday, March 23 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in the school's library. Students registering must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2018. Please bring your child's birth certificate, social security card, immunization record, and proof of residency (current utility bill or copy of lease/mortgage) to register. For more information, please call Belgreen High School at 256-332-1376.

 Belgreen Pre-K Registration will be held Friday, March 23 from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. in the school's library. Students registering must be 4 years old by September 1, 2018. Please bring proof of residence, immunization record, birth certificate and social security card. All paperwork is due before 2:30 p.m. For more information, please call Bridgett Rickard at 256-332-1376.

What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

Kindergarten registration at Tharptown Elementary School will be held Friday, March 23 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. in Mrs. Tverberg's room. Child must be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2018. Please bring child's birth certificate, immunization record (blue slip), Social Security card, and proof of where the child lives (utility bill, gas bill, water bill, rental agreement/lease or deed).

Tharptown Pre-K online registration is now open! Child must be 4 years of age on or before September 1, 2018. You may register your child at <https://alprek.asapconnected.com>. If you have already registered your child online, please bring child's birth certificate, immunization record (blue slip), Social Security card, and proof of where the child lives (copy of utility bill, gas bill, water bill, rental agreement/lease or deed) to the school on Friday, March 23. Tharptown Pre-K onsite registration will be held that day from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Bring all forms mentioned above. A drawing will be held that afternoon.

A benefit golf tournament for David Boutwell will be held Friday, March 30 at Twin Pines Country Club. Registration and lunch starts at 11 a.m. with a 12:30 p.m. shotgun start. The tournament is a four-man scramble with a donation of \$240 per team. For more information, contact Ernest Presley at 256-460-5805 or Ronnie Boutwell at 256-324-0960.

The Belgreen Alumni Banquet will be held Saturday, April 14 at the Belgreen High School cafeteria with social hour from 4-5 p.m., dinner from 5-6 p.m. and annual alumni meeting from 6-7 p.m. This year we will honor the Class of 1968 on their 50th anniversary. Also, we will give special recognition to the Class of 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011. Everyone is invited. \$12 for meal tickets. Please RSVP for meals by calling 256-332-1376.

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

New Life Ministries would like to invite you to join them for Sunday School at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and for worship services on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a fellowship lunch after morning services. You and your family are invited to come worship and fellowship with the Lord of Hosts and his children. New Life Ministries is located on Hwy. 24 west toward Red Bay, right behind Tompkins Feed.

Alabama Cottage Food Law Course

Tuesday, March 13, 2018



Time: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Where: Franklin County Extension Courthouse Basement; Room 1; Russellville, AL

Fee: \$25.00 (checks only-no cash)

To pre-register: call the Franklin Extension office at (256) 332-8880.

Instructor:

Susan Hill- Regional Extension Agent Food Safety and Quality

Alabama Cottage Food Law allows anyone to sell non-hazardous food, made in the home, to consumers.

Non-hazardous foods include cakes, cookies, dried herbs, jams and jellies.

Anyone preparing these foods to sell, are required to attend a food safety course.

Learn:

- *What foods can be sold to consumers
- *Food Safety rules
- *How to start your own business and lots more!



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School board gets good news on financial front

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County Schools superintendent of education Greg Hamilton had some good news for his board at their February 27 meeting, as the system had an ending fund balance after January of 2018 of \$732,977.55.

Alabama public schools are required to maintain a fund equal to one month's operating expenses in reserve. This is the largest sum Franklin County Schools has held in reserve since Hamilton took office last January.

Hamilton updated the Franklin County Board of Education on the status of several projects in the system. The Tharptown School cafeteria project (Phase One) is underway, as ground work has started and a secure fence has been installed.

At Belgreen, there are new roofs on the Career Tech Center and the old lunchroom, and those projects passed inspection, Hamilton said. The system will send out bids for the new serving line at the East Franklin Junior High School classroom. Franklin County Schools received an \$83,000 grant for the project. The current serving line consists of pieces of serving lines that were replaced at other schools.

The system had an ending fund balance after January of 2018 of \$732,977.55. Alabama public schools are required to maintain a fund equal to one month's operating expenses in reserve. This is the largest sum Franklin County Schools has held in reserve since Hamilton took office.

At Phil Campbell, the field house project is finished. Hamilton said a broken water line had flooded the cafeteria and field house.

As for the prolonged battle with the State of Alabama Division of Risk Management regarding damages to the Vina band hall/science lab building, Hamilton said they are still in negotiation and he expects a definitive answer in March.

Actions taken by the board at its February 27 meeting included:

- Approval of out-of-state trips for Phil Campbell High School SADD Club to Six Flags in Atlanta (April 27, 2018), PCHS ACCESS class to St. Jude and Memphis Zoo (April 19, 2018), Vina third grade to Memphis Zoo (April 19), Vina High School softball team to Tremont, Miss. (March 8) and Vina kindergarten to Buffalo Park and Zoo in Tupelo (April 10).

- Approval of the construction of a new softball concession stand and restrooms at Red Bay High School at no cost to the board.

- Awarding a bid to Suburban Propane as lowest responsible bidder for liquefied petroleum gas and equipment for new school buses at a bid price of \$.58 markup per gallon. The 44 new buses purchased by the system will run on propane fuel. Propane tanks will be installed at all schools except East Franklin. The new buses are expected to be delivered in late April, Hamilton said.

- Approval of personnel actions including leave of absence for: Holley Lewey, Red Bay kindergarten teacher, through the end of the school year; Resignation in supplement for Candi Fuller, junior high cheerleader coach at Red Bay; Resignation of Elizabeth Hill, Youth Tobacco Grant Coordinator, effective Feb. 9; Retirement of Carla Hutto, Parent Educator/Curriculum Facilitator for Franklin County Schools, effective March 1; Transfer of Lisa

See 'BOARD,' page 9

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City school board approves personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education accepted the resignation of Mark Heaton, Russellville High School athletic director and head football coach, effective June 30, 2018, at the board's February 22 meeting.

Linda Gable, CNP worker, also resigned. Brea Colagross was hired as a computer science teacher at RHS. Chad Whitfield and Willard Mitchell were hired as substitute bus drivers, sub-

ject to completion of bus driver certification.

In other action, the board:

- Recognized students from RHS and Russellville Middle School Choral Departments for receiving state awards.

- Recognized Chris Heaps for being awarded the 2016-17 Alabama Coach of the Year for baseball from the National Federation of State High School Associations.

- Recognized Jason Goodwin for being awarded the District 7 Principal of the Year from CLAS.

- Approved trip requests from RMS Scholars

Team to participate in the Alabama Scholastic Competition Association Middle School State Tournament in Hoover February 23-24.

- Approved a policy revision regarding Admissions and Attendance so as to not count students absent who are participating in field trips and extracurricular activities.

- Awarded the financing for 10 CE 72 passenger propane-powered buses to be purchased in April of 2018 to CB&S Bank.

The next regular meeting for the board will be Thursday, March 22 at 8 a.m.

County students to get week off for Thanksgiving

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education approved the school calendar for 2018-19 at its February 27 meeting.

The new school year will begin for students on Tuesday, August 7, 2018. There will be a teacher work day on Thursday, August 2 and the annual bus drivers in-service meeting is set for that same day at Belgreen High School. Faculty in-service days are set for Friday, August 3 (Red Bay) and Monday, August 6 (Belgreen).

The calendar includes three half-days for students, with dismissal at 11:30 a.m. Those include Thursday, October 18; Wednesday, December 19; and Thursday, May 23, 2019, the last day of school. Parent-teacher conferences will take place from 1-4 p.m. on October 18.

The Christmas holidays will run from December 19 at 11:30 a.m. through January 2, 2019. Teachers will return for in-service days on January 3-4, with students returning to school on Monday, January 7, 2019.

One change with this year's calendar is during Thanksgiving week. Students will now enjoy the entire week off from Monday, November 19 through Friday, November 23.

There is a snow day built in on President's Day, Monday, February 18, 2019.

Senior graduations will take place on Friday, May 24, 2019.

The complete calendar can be accessed on the Franklin County Schools' website, www.franklin.k12.al.us.



We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, 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 franklinfreepress.net!

'BOARD,' from page 8

McCleese, Special Education Aide, from East Franklin to Phil Campbell Elementary; Employment of Myra Coats, Child Nutrition Program Assistant at Red Bay High School and Kendra Ward, temporary special education aide at Red Bay; Volunteer boat captains at Belgreen

High School including Junior Willingham, Kenneth Sykes, Trent Vandiver, Tracy Hovater and Jeremy Donahoe. Substitute boat captains at Belgreen including Shannon Oliver, Justin Boyles and Michael Stevens; Kaitlyn Vandiver as volunteer softball coach at Tharptown; Dustin Welch as vol-

unteer softball coach at Belgreen and Tynes Channel as volunteer baseball coach at Vina; New teacher substitute Madison Thompson.

The next regular meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education will be March 20 at 5:15 p.m., with work session at 5 p.m.

'RECORDS,' from page 1

The Little Wildbots won first place in the division of kindergarten through second grade. Tharptown teacher Brittany Pannell is the K-2nd grade sponsor, and Jessica Cantrell serves as the co-sponsor. Students on the winning team included Sadie Odom, Audrey Kiel, Cayden Porter and Devin Veltman.

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton was ecstatic to hear how well the students performed, particularly in their first-ever competition.

"I'm very proud of the Tharptown Elementary School robotics team. I'm so excited about the effort of our students," Hamilton said. "This was a true team effort to get the robotics team started. I want to commend Kelby Daniel, Jake Ward, Brittany Pannell and Jessica Cantrell for all their hard work."

Tharptown special education teacher Jake Ward helped start the program at Tharptown, and more than 60 kids took part in the program's first year.

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 award.

The team members were selected by their sponsors based on several criteria including attendance at school and at robotics meetings, behavior and grades, and how well the students work in a team environment.

"This is truly a team event, not an individual event, so their abilities to work together are an important criteria," Ward said.

In the third-fifth-grade division, Russellville Elementary School's Steam Team 5 won second place, with Russellville Elementary's Team 1 taking home third-place honors.

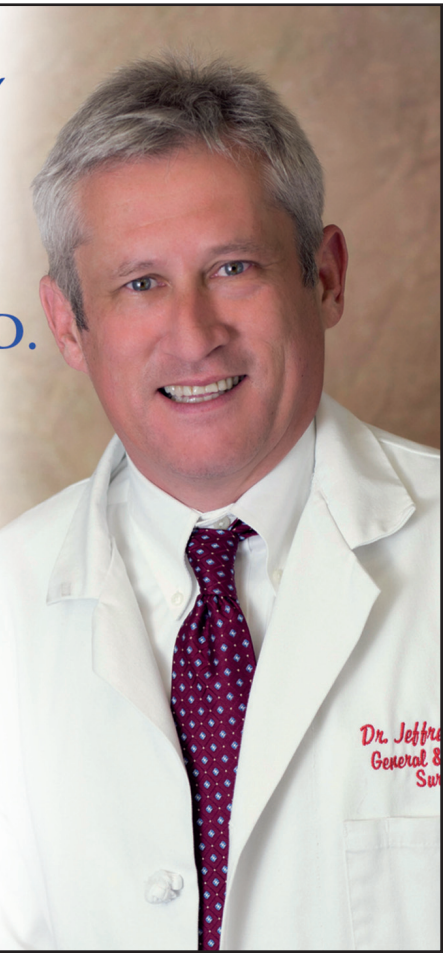
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•2nd cutting 4 or 5 days
before first Sunday of
May (definitely not on
Saturday before first
Sunday of May) for 1st
Sunday Decoration.
•After first Sunday in
May, cut grass every two

weeks, preferably first
week and third week of
the month.

•During the months of
July and August, use
discretion in determining
if a rotation may be
skipped if drought
conditions are present.
•The month of October
will be at the discretion
of the committee, based
on a will call status,
giving a 10-day window
to cut.

•Committee will have the
right to cancel
agreement at any time
committee is unsatisfied
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All bids need to mail to
address below by March
16, 2018:

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(2)

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Franklin Free Press
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Commission receives annual update from NACOLG

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County commissioners received their annual update from officials with the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments (NACOLG) at their February 12 workshop.

NACOLG executive director Keith Jones shared with the commission the multiple ways his agency works for, and with, Franklin County officials and citizens, including the agency's Department of Governmental Services, Senior AIDE/Worker Program, Revolving Loan Fund, Department of Planning and Transportation, Dial-A-Ride program and meal delivery through senior centers in Russellville, Phil Campbell, Hodges and Red Bay.

NACOLG is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency created by the local governments pursuant to Alabama State Legislation in June, 1967. The objectives and purpose of NACOLG were established by Act 1126, Regular Session, 1969, Legislature of Alabama; Act 85-757, Regular Session, 1985, Legislature of Alabama; and codified in Title 11, Chapter 85 of the 1975 Code of Alabama.

It is a voluntary Association of 37 governmental units in the five-county region of Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston counties, along with the municipalities therein. NACOLG is not a government but rather an extension of city and county government through which officials get together to decide issues of region-wide importance and work together to solve problems that stretch beyond local government boundaries. All NACOLG policy decisions are made by local elected officials.

Governmental Services is the part of NACOLG that works with each member government to develop viable community and economic development projects, including infrastructure and community enhancement projects.

The department works with numerous agencies, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Small Business Administration and others to secure funding for local governments.

There were a total of 11 NACOLG Governmental Services projects in Franklin County last year. They included:

•Community Development Block Grant—Economic Development: A \$360,000 project (with \$60,000 local match) to provide signalization standards and safety parameters required by Norfolk Southern for a railroad

crossing to access the new Mar-Jac feed mill facility in Spruce Pine.

•Franklin County Commission Community Development Block Grant & Appalachian Regional Commission: An \$820,000 project with \$350,000 CDBG funds, \$200,000 funds and \$270,000 local match to provide adequate storm drainage and street repairs in the Oak Hill subdivision. The project is in progress.

•City of Russellville Community Development Block Grant: A \$359,400 project with \$109,400 local match to reconstruct Hal Kirby Park. The project was closed out in November of 2017.

•City of Russellville FEMA: A \$278,500 project with \$69,600 local funding to construct three 96-occupant safe rooms in Russellville to be located at 111 Armory Drive, 109 School Drive and 27601 Highway 24. An additional project of \$96,000 saw the construction of 96 occupant safe rooms at 206 Hamilton Drive and 90 Dillard Hollow Road in Russellville.

•2016 City of Red Bay CDBG: A \$245,800 project with \$45,800 local funding for a sewer line relocation at Sunshine Mills, Inc. 400 jobs were retained. The project closed out in August 2017.

•City of Red Bay CDBG: A \$488,000 project with \$89,000 local funding for sewer line rehabilitation on County Highway 11 (4th Street NE) and running south along 4th Street NE. Also included portions of 2nd Avenue NE, Davis Street, Willow Street, Ginn Circle and 5th Street. The project is underway.

•City of Red Bay ARC: A \$398,000 project with \$198,000 local funding for 4,800 linear feet of sewer line rehabilitation on County Highway 11. Project closed out January 2017.

•Town of Vina ARC: A \$165,500 project with \$49,650 local match to rehabilitate the town's two water tanks. The project is underway.

•Town of Vina CDBG: A \$399,960 project with \$99,960 local funding to make drainage repairs at Town Park. Project closed out in January 2017.

•Town of Phil Campbell ARC: A \$199,350 project with \$35,800 local match to rehabilitate 45 damaged, corroded and unsafe manholes in Phil Campbell. Project is underway.

•Town of Phil Campbell CDBG-DTR: A \$250,000 project consisting of a loan pool established after the 2011 tornadoes to assist business owners in reviving the local economy with job creation. Project was closed out in June 2017.

For more information on NACOLG and the services it offers, contact the agency at 256-389-0555.

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Eight local establishments earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The eight Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of February 19-23 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 range. The highest score was 100, received by the Mason Jar on Main, 102 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay.

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

- Big Star of Russellville, Inc., 314 S. Jackson Ave., 89. (No paper towels in restrooms, air freshener spray stored above produce scale).
- Subway, 504 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 91. (Leak in cooler dripping on food).
- 24 Crossroads @ Hotel Red Bay, 107 4th St. SE, Red Bay, 92. (Cooked food not date marked).

- Quinn's Grocery, 9980 Hwy. 48, Russellville, 93. (Signs of rodents present).

- Detailed Subs and Sandwiches, 1106 4th St. SW, Red Bay, 96.
- Big Star of Russellville Deli, 314 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 96.
- Weatherford Centre, 303 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 98.

Of the 12 inspections done in Colbert County from February 19-23, one restaurant scored below the satisfactory range. Chiska Food Mart, 6220 Hwy. 72 West, Cherokee, scored an 84. (No drying device at kitchen/prep handwashing sink, no toilet tissue in restroom).

The high score for the week in Colbert County was 99, received by the Renaissance Olive Oil Co., 711 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

Health ratings are available at www.foodscores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

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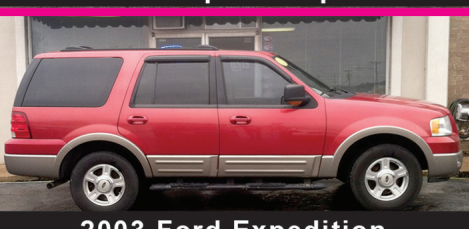
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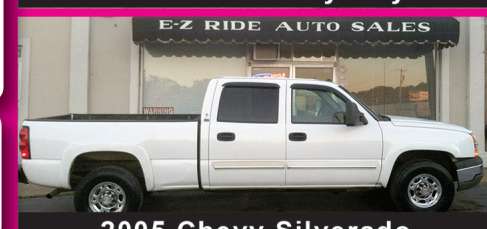
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Cameron has 16 K's as Lady Wildcats rout Colbert County

Staff reports

Tharptown eighth-grader Taylor Cameron struck out 16 batters in a six-inning complete game on Saturday, leading the Lady Wildcats to a 10-1 win over Colbert County.

Cameron (1-1) had a pair of strikeouts in the bottom of the first and then struck out the side in the second. After an RBI single by Cara Ergle keyed a three-run top of the third for Tharptown, Cameron went back to work and struck out the first two batters (numbers five and six in a row) to start the bottom of the third. She gave up her first hit at that point but then recorded a groundball out to end the inning.

A two-out single by Aly Vandiver sparked a four-run rally by the Lady Wildcats (2-5 through Sunday) in the top of the fourth. Brooke Daily drove in a run with a base hit, and Ergle added a two-run single to make it 7-0. Cameron walked the first batter in the bottom of the fourth but then found her groove again, striking out six in a row for the second time to run her K total to 13 by the end of the fifth inning.

Tharptown pushed the lead to 10-0 with three runs in the top of the sixth. Colbert County finally got on the board in the bottom half, taking advantage of an error and a single to score its first run. Cameron struck out the next two batters before giving up a double and a walk. She then recorded her 16th and final strikeout to end the game.

Cameron issued just one walk and held the Lady Indians to three hits. She struck out 10 Meek batters in her only previous start and had 26 strikeouts in 11 innings on the season through Sunday. She threw 98 pitches on Saturday, 63 of which were strikes.

Vandiver went 2-for-3 with a double and two runs scored. Catie Dawson was 3-for-4 with an RBI, and Ergle was 2-for-4 with three RBIs. Daily went 1-for-3 with two RBIs and two runs scored, and Shaylee Wieting was 2-for-4 with two stolen bases and three runs scored.

In previous action:

Sheffield 4 Tharptown 0

The Lady Wildcats out-hit Sheffield but failed to score in a loss earlier on Saturday.

Brooke Daily was 2-for-2 with a stolen base, and Shaylee Wieting, Olivia Ergle and Aly Vandiver each had one hit.

Olivia Ergle took the loss in the circle, allowing four earned runs on four hits in three innings. She struck out four and walked one.

Franklin Free Press 2017-18 All-County Girls Basketball

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Another high school basketball season came to a close last week at the Final Four in Birmingham, which means it's time for us to unveil our annual All-County selections.

This was a strong year for girls hoops in Franklin County, with Vina finishing 24-9, Belgreen winning 20 games and getting to Hanceville, and Phil Campbell going 26-6 and advancing all the way to the Final Four. We'll start this week with our All-County picks on the girls side, then get to the boys next week. Let's dive in.

Player of the Year

Kallie Allen, sophomore guard, Phil Campbell

In a tight race, Allen edges out teammate Abby Davis and Vina senior point guard Abby Hester for POY honors. A number of factors contributed to Phil Campbell's ascension from a losing record last season to regional champion this season, but the arrival of Allen—a transfer from Russellville—was the primary catalyst.

How much did the versatile 5'8 guard help the Lady Bobcats this season? Let us count the ways.

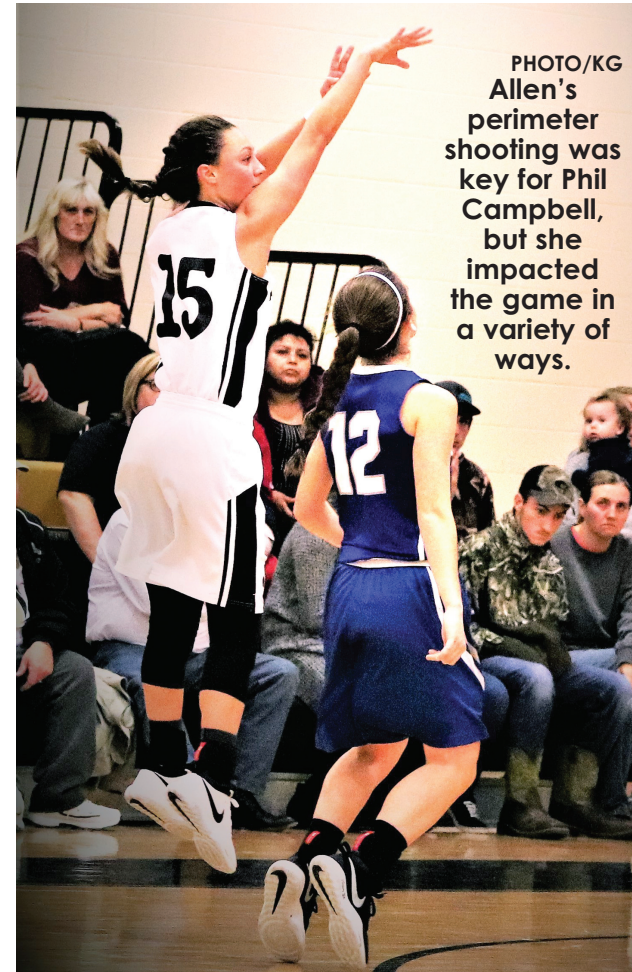
She provided some much-needed perimeter punch, knocking down a team-best 33 three-pointers. She was a consistent scorer, reaching double-figures 22 times in 32 games and averaging 12.3 points, second-most on the team. She was invaluable as both a rebounder (6.4 per game, also second on the team) and a facilitator, leading the team in assists. She was also a dynamic and disruptive defender, finishing second on the team with 82 steals (2.6 per game) and even using her length and athleticism to block 14 shots.

2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard Scoring (Points per Game)

Abby Hester, senior, Vina	18.3
Madison Murray, sophomore, RHS	14.1
Abby Davis, junior, Phil Campbell	13.8
Reagan Kuykendall, junior, Red Bay	13.6
Kaitlyn King, sophomore, Vina	13.3
Kallie Allen, sophomore, Phil Campbell	12.3
Emma Humphres, junior, Vina	10.1
Emma Dempsey, freshman, Belgreen	9.8
Brooke Daily, sophomore, Tharptown	9.7
Treyvia Pruitt, freshman, RHS	9.3
Gabbie Moore, junior, Belgreen	9.2
Rayleigh Guin, eighth-grader, Vina	9.1

Allen earns bonus points, too, for her efficiency. She shot an impressive 57 percent from two-point range and a solid 44 percent from the floor overall. She also led Phil Campbell in free throws made (88) and attempted (145) while shooting 61 percent from the line.

Allen's impact went beyond mere numbers, though. Her presence allowed head coach Craig Thomas to shift pieces around and create the



PHOTO/KG
Allen's perimeter shooting was key for Phil Campbell, but she impacted the game in a variety of ways.

Lady Bobcats' optimal lineup, and her versatility made her just as effective in the post as she was on the perimeter and in the half-court as she was in transition.

Thomas liked to run his offense through Davis in the high post, but when the 5'11 junior got in early foul trouble in the regional final against Cold Springs, the coach simply moved Allen to the foul-line area and let her go to work. Phil Campbell did not miss a beat, rolling to a 46-29 win behind a season-high 20 points from Allen on 9-for-13 shooting. Allen wound up taking home regional MVP honors after totaling 31 points and 19 rebounds in two games in Hanceville.

Barring something unforeseen, Allen (who has already scored 869 career points at the varsity level) should surpass the 1,000-point mark next season before Christmas arrives. Phil Campbell is moving up to Class 3A, so the road back to Birmingham will look distinctly different. But if Allen takes another step in her development as a player, the Lady Bobcats should be right back in the mix for another deep postseason run.

First-Team All-County

Abby Davis, junior post player, Phil Campbell
Davis earns first-team honors for the third time in



PHOTO/KG
Davis is a first-team selection for a third straight year after leading the Lady Bobcats in scoring and rebounding.

her career, and she still has another year to go. The 5'11 junior led the Lady Bobcats this season in both scoring (13.8 points per game) and rebounding (6.9 per game), and her decision-making and passing from the high post were critical to the team's offensive success.

Davis was more often than not the focal point of opposing defenses, but that didn't stop her from getting the job done. Mars Hill coach Jay Mitchell said his team's primary objective in the regional semifinals was to prevent Davis from catching the ball in the high post. You know what they say about the best-laid plans, though. Davis dominated Mars Hill, scoring 14 third-quarter points on her way to finishing with a game-high 22 and 10 rebounds in a 55-46 win.

Davis—who has already scored 1,334 points in her varsity career—expanded her offensive game this season, hitting a career-high 16 threes and ranking third on the team in assists. She topped the 20-point mark six times, including a January 26 game against Lamar County in which she had a season-high 30 by the end of the third quarter.

Davis also continued to use her length, athleticism and instincts to be a disruptive defender, finishing the season with 40 blocks and 48 steals.

Abby Hester, senior guard, Vina

Hester capped off her prolific prep career with an outstanding senior season, helping the Lady Red Devils win 24 games. The 5'1 dynamo scored a staggering 605 points this year, averaging a career-high and county-best 18.3 per game. She reached double-figures in every game but two and topped the 20-point mark 14 times (more than

'GIRLS' from page 13

twice as many as any other player in the county). She knocked down 79 threes—including eight in a Senior Night romp over Brilliant on January 30—and piled up points at the foul line, where she shot 82 percent (198-for-242) for the season.

Hester, a Blue Mountain College signee, classifies herself as a passer first, and the numbers bear that out. She handed out 351 assists as a senior, averaging 10.6 per game and revving the engines for a Vina offensive attack that put up 65.2 points per game and generated 289 three-pointers made (the fifth most in state history for a single season).

**2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard
Most Games with 20-Plus Points**

Abby Hester, senior, Vina	14 (high of 34)
Abby Davis, junior, PCHS	6 (high of 30)
Kaitlyn King, sophomore, Vina	5 (high of 36)
Reagan Kuykendall, junior, RBHS	5 (high of 33)
Emma Humphres, junior, Vina	4 (high of 24)
Kallie Allen, sophomore, PCHS	2 (high of 20)
Darby Elliott, senior, PCHS	2 (high of 20)
Madison Murray, sophomore, RHS	2 (high of 25)

Hester was a constant nuisance defensively, averaging 4.9 steals per game and finishing her career sixth on the state's all-time list (according to the AHSAA website) with 613 steals. She also ranks third all-time with 1,103 assists and finished her career with 1,672 points and 233 threes made.

**Madison Murray, sophomore guard,
Russellville**

See 'GIRLS,' Page 15

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PHOTO/KG
Hester (3) earned first-team All-County honors after leading Vina to a 24-9 record this season. The 5'1 point guard scored a career-high 605 points as a senior, averaging a county-best 18.3 per game. She shot 82 percent on 242 free throw attempts and also made 79 threes. Hester topped the 20-point mark 14 times this season and also averaged 10.6 assists per game. The Blue Mountain College signee finished her high school career with 1,672 points scored and ranks among the state's all-time leaders in assists (1,103) and steals (613).



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'GIRLS', from page 14

A torn ACL in late January ended Murray's breakout sophomore season prematurely, but not before she established herself as one of the top players and most dynamic scorers in Franklin County. Murray averaged a career-high 14.1 points per game (second-best in the county), reaching double-figures 18 times in 24 games and topping the 20-point mark twice. She caught fire around Christmas, averaging 18.5 points in a six-game, two-tournament stretch highlighted by a career-high 25-point outing against Wilson at the *TimesDaily* Classic.

Murray's mid-range game and quickness off the dribble remain her greatest strengths on offense, but she's worked to become a more consistent perimeter shooter and this season knocked down a career-high 35 threes. She also led Russellville in free throws made (93) and attempted (151), shooting a solid 62 percent from the line.

Murray's athleticism and tenacity on the ball make her a plus defender as well, but it was her offense the Lady Golden Tigers missed most dearly down the stretch.



PHOTO/KG
Murray (1) led RHS with 14.1 points per game.

Jasmine Martin, senior guard, Belgreen

Martin's transformation from a spot-up wing shooter (albeit a lethal one) to a versatile all-around player has been remarkable. The 5'6 senior guard was as dangerous as ever from beyond the arc this season [her 49 threes made led the team and ranked fourth in Franklin County], but she impacted the game in a variety of newfound ways for a Belgreen team that finished 20-11 and earned a regional berth for the second time in three years.

Head coach Chad Green emphasizes rebounding, and Martin (below, 30) led the Lady Bulldogs this season with 94 defensive boards while averaging 3.9 total rebounds per game. She also ran the point extensively for the first time in her career, finishing the season with more assists (76, second-most on the team) than turnovers (66). Martin also became a difference-maker on the defensive end, leading the team with 60 steals (1.9 per game) and 63 deflections.

See 'GIRLS,' page 16



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'GIRLS', from page 15

Martin averaged a modest 7.9 points per game this season in Belgreen's balanced offensive attack, but there was nothing modest about her overall contributions. She also surpassed the 1,000-point mark for her varsity career on December 1 in a rout of Sheffield and finished with 1,215 points.

Second-Team All-County

Darby Elliott, senior guard, Phil Campbell

Elliott's impact as a relentless on-ball defender can't be overstated. The tenacious 5'2 guard led the Lady Bobcats this season with 84 steals (an average of 2.8 per game), including five in the state semifinals against top-ranked Samson. She set a fearless, aggressive tone on defense each and every night, and her teammates followed suit.

Elliott wasn't too shabby on offense either, finishing her Phil Campbell career with 1,023 points scored. She favored efficiency over volume, averaging 9.0 points per game this season on 49-percent shooting from the floor and 70-percent shooting from the foul line. For someone her size, Elliott scored a remarkable amount of points in the paint, dashing to the rim for fast-break layups and shooting 51 percent from two-point range.

Elliott finished second on the team in assists this season and earned All-Tournament honors in Hanceville after scoring 13 points on 5-for-7 shooting in the regional final win over Cold Springs.

2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard Most Games Scoring in Double-Figures

Abby Hester, senior, Vina	31 (out of 33)
Abby Davis, junior, Phil Campbell	24 (out of 32)
Kallie Allen, sophomore, Phil Campbell	22 (out of 32)
Kaitlyn King, sophomore, Vina	21 (out of 33)
Reagan Kuykendall, junior, Red Bay	18 (out of 25)
Madison Murray, sophomore, RHS	18 (out of 24)
Emma Dempsey, freshman, Belgreen	17 (out of 31)
Emma Humphres, junior, Vina	15 (out of 32)
Rayleigh Guin, eighth-grader, Vina	15 (out of 33)
Brooke Daily, sophomore, Tharptown	12 (out of 27)
Dakota Elliott, junior, Phil Campbell	12 (out of 31)
Darby Elliott, senior, Phil Campbell	12 (out of 30)
Treyvia Pruitt, freshman, RHS	12 (out of 28)

Treyvia Pruitt, freshman guard, Russellville

Already a plus defender, Pruitt made major strides on the offensive end in her second varsity season, nearly doubling her scoring average from 5.0 points per game as an eighth-grader to 9.3 as a freshman and also upping her three-point output from 21 makes last year to a team-high 38 made threes this year.

The tough-minded Pruitt, who has started 55 of Russellville's 56 games over the past two years, took on even more responsibility this season as the team's primary ball-handler. She reached double-figures in scoring 12 times, including a career-high 19-point outing against Hanceville on November 21.

Emma Dempsey, freshman post player, Belgreen

The 6'1 Dempsey led the Lady Bulldogs this season in both scoring (9.8 points per game) and rebounding (5.7 boards per game) while blocking a team-high 53 shots. She also led the team with 87 offensive rebounds and continued to improve as a passer out of the post, tying for third on the team with 31 assists. That skill will become increasingly valuable over the next three years as Dempsey—who has already scored 610 career points at the varsity level—draws more and more attention from opposing defenses.

Dempsey scored in double-figures 17 times in 31 games and also led the team in free throws made (111) and attempted (182), shooting a solid 61 percent from the line. She was at her best in Belgreen's sub-regional win at Marion County on February 12, dominating the interior with 18 points, 15 rebounds and four blocked shots.

Reagan Kuykendall, junior post player, Red Bay

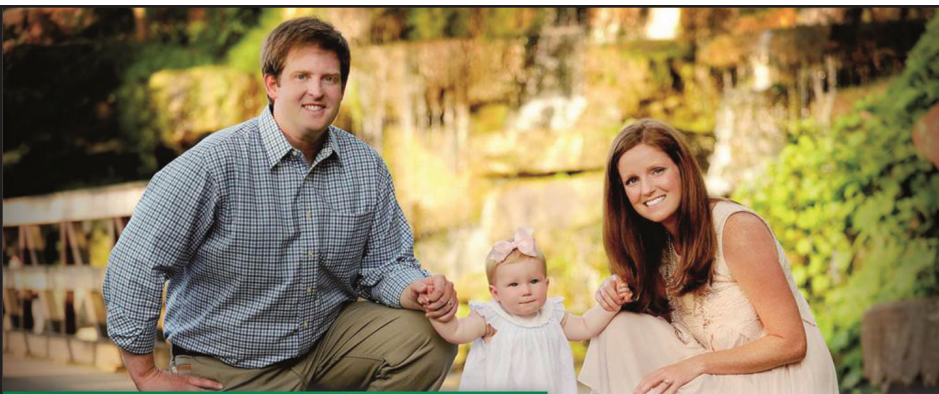
Kuykendall inherited the role of featured scorer for the Lady Tigers this season and thrived in it, finishing fourth in Franklin County at 13.6 points per game. She reached double-figures 18 times in 25 games and topped the 20-point mark on five occasions, including back-to-back overtime games against Hatton and Tremont at mid-season in which she scored 27 and 33 points, respectively.

Gabbie Moore, junior guard, Belgreen

Moore battled through a nagging injury that cost her five games this season, but she still finished second on the team in scoring at 9.2 points per game. A highly skilled passer and perimeter shooter, Moore led the Lady Bulldogs with 81 assists (3.1 per game) and knocked down 31 three-pointers. She also chipped in with 3.0 rebounds per game and ranked second on the team with 54 steals (2.1 per game) and 54 deflections.

Moore reached double-figures in scoring 11 times in her 26 games and—with 692 career points at the varsity level—will have a chance to surpass the

See 'GIRLS,' Page 17



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1,000-point mark in her final season.
Coach of the Year
Craig Thomas, Phil Campbell



At the outset of his fourth season as head coach, Thomas let his team know in no uncertain terms that the previous year's 14-15 record and last-place finish in Class 2A, Area 14 did not meet the standard for Phil Campbell basketball. The Lady Bobcats responded, riding an early seven-game win streak to a 10-2 start. They lost three straight games right after Christmas, including a 60-54 loss at home to Phillips on January 4 in which they failed to hold an 11-point third-quarter lead. Thomas's team didn't lose again for 52 days, ripping off 16 straight wins and earning the program's first Final Four berth in 31 years. Along the way, Phil Campbell won its first county championship since 1998, its first area championship since 1993 and its first-ever Northwest Regional championship in Hanceville.

A former point guard who graduated from PCHS in 1990, Thomas has a knack for game-planning and then making adjustments on the fly when the situation calls for it. The Lady Bobcats rode their trademark pressure defense and an improved offensive attack [they averaged 61.5 points per game] to a 26-6 record this season. Three of their six losses came against teams [Phillips, Samson] that played for a state championship, and the other three came to larger schools West Point and Florence.

Thomas's next challenge: Keeping the Lady Bobcats among the state's elite as they transition

'GIRLS', from page 16

from Class 2A to 3A for at least the next two years.
Most Improved Player

Autumn Bragwell, soph. guard, Belgreen
The sharp-shooting Bragwell came on strong during the season's second half, emerging as a reliable—and occasionally explosive—scorer off the bench for the Lady Bulldogs. In a seven-game stretch from December 14-28, Bragwell made one three and scored a total of just five points. In 17 games from December 29 through the end of the season, she made 34 threes and averaged 8.4 points per game.

Bragwell's greatest hits included five threes and 19 points in the county semifinals against Vina, four threes and 19 points in a January 29 rout of Fayette County, and five threes and 17 points in the Class 1A, Area 13 final against Phillips. She finished her sophomore season with 42 made threes, averaging 5.6 points per game. She also shot 75 percent (18-for-24) from the foul line and totaled 58 rebounds, 21 assists and 23 steals.

Newcomers of the Year

Caitlyn Mills, freshman guard, Phil Campbell
Mills, who saw limited late-season action with the varsity as an eighth-grader, made a big splash early this season with four threes and a career-high 16 points in a Thanksgiving tournament game against West Point. The 5'5 freshman was first off the bench for Phil Campbell all year, averaging 4.7 points and 4.1 rebounds per game while also coming up with 38 steals.

Mills played major minutes in both games at the Northwest Regional, helping put away semifinal opponent Mars Hill with clutch free throws down the stretch and then scoring five points in the final against Cold Springs. She looked right at home

under the bright lights of Birmingham in the Final Four, splashing a third-quarter three and recording a pair of steals in the semifinal loss to Samson.

With veteran point guard Darby Elliott graduating in May, a much larger role should be waiting on Mills next season as a sophomore.

2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard
Three-Pointers Made

Kaitlyn King, sophomore, Vina	91
Abby Hester, senior, Vina	79
Emma Humphres, junior, Vina	76
Jasmine Martin, senior, Belgreen	49
Autumn Bragwell, sophomore, Belgreen	42
Treyvia Pruitt, freshman, RHS	38
Madison Murray, sophomore, RHS	35
Kallie Allen, sophomore, Phil Campbell	33
Kaley Vandiver, senior, Vina	32
Gabbie Moore, junior, Belgreen	31
Carlie Lindley, senior, Red Bay	27
Macy Faulkner, freshman, Red Bay	25
Gracie Dempsey, sophomore, Belgreen	24
Aly Vandiver, sophomore, Tharptown	24

Rayleigh Guin, eighth-grade guard, Vina

Guin has already topped the 300-point mark in her varsity career, and she's not even in high school yet. The lefty guard averaged 9.1 points per game as an eighth-grader, reaching double-figures 15 times in 33 games. She also ranked among team leaders in assists and steals.

See 'GIRLS,' Page 18

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'GIRLS', from page 17



PHOTO/KG

Gracie Dempsey (22) ranked among Belgreen's leaders in steals (43) and deflections (49) this season, earning a spot on our All-Defense team along with teammate Emma Willingham (not pictured).

All-Defense

Several of the players mentioned above as All-County selections were outstanding defenders. The five players listed below also made their mark on D.

Madison Hargett, senior guard, Russellville

Hargett finished third on the team in scoring at 6.4 points per game, but her quick feet, toughness and relentless activity made her a nightly headache for opposing ball-handlers.

Dakota Elliott, junior guard, Phil Campbell

On most nights, head coach Craig Thomas gave Elliott the toughest defensive assignment, and she was always up for the challenge. Case in point: Elliott was primarily responsible for holding Cold Springs star Elizabeth Hill—fresh off a 30-point outing in a win over Lamar County—to just nine points on 4-for-10 shooting in the Northwest Regional final.

2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard: Free Throw % (Min. 30 Attempts)

Abby Hester, senior, Vina	.818 (198-for-242)
Chloe Roberson, senior, Phil Campbell	.750 (48-for-64)
Catie Dawson, junior, Tharptown	.742 (23-for-31)
Gracie Dempsey, sophomore, Belgreen	.725 (58-for-80)
Emma Humphres, junior, Vina	.700 (49-for-70)
Darby Elliott, senior, Phil Campbell	.698 (30-for-43)
Kaci Harris, sophomore, Phil Campbell	.647 (22-for-34)
Katie Dempsey, sophomore, Belgreen	.639 (76-for-119)
Madison Murray, sophomore, RHS	.616 (93-for-151)
Emma Dempsey, freshman, Belgreen	.610 (111-for-182)
Kallie Allen, sophomore, Phil Campbell	.607 (88-for-145)
Gabbie Moore, junior, Belgreen	.605 (23-for-38)

Emma Willingham, junior guard, Belgreen

Head coach Chad Green pointed the feisty Willingham in the direction of the opposing team's top perimeter threat and turned her loose. She frustrated Marion County point guard Madison Stewart to no end in Belgreen's 71-45 sub-regional win on February 12. Willingham, who came off the bench, finished the season among team leaders with 37 steals and 41 deflections.

Gracie Dempsey, sophomore guard, Belgreen

Willingham usually shared the responsibility of harassing an opponent's best ball-handler with Dempsey, a disruptive defender who finished the year with 43 steals and 49 deflections. Dempsey also made solid contributions on the offensive end, averaging 6.5 points per game, knocking down 24 threes and shooting a team-best 72 percent (58-for-80) from the foul line.

Chloe Roberson, senior guard, Phil Campbell

A defensive stop isn't done until the rebound is secured, and the scrappy Roberson was Phil Campbell's third-leading rebounder this season at 5.1 per game. Always eager to mix it up in the paint and willing to do the dirty work, Roberson also averaged a solid 7.3 points per game on 44-percent shooting from the floor and 75-percent shooting (48-for-64) from the foul line.

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Owens' near-perfect game caps off dominant pitching weekend for Phil Campbell

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Phil Campbell baseball coach Jonathan Raper said in the preseason that pitching would be his team's biggest strength in 2018. Judging by the Bobcats' dominance on the mound this past weekend, Raper was definitely on to something.

Junior left-hander Nate Owens faced the minimum 18 batters, striking out 10 of them, in a six-inning shutout of Sheffield on Saturday at Central High School, leading Phil Campbell to a 12-0 win. Owens' near-perfect game [he retired the first 16 men he faced before allowing a one-out single in the sixth] came on the heels of terrific outings by senior right-handers Peyton Thomas and Chase Hutchens, neither of whom allowed an earned run in complete-game wins over Central and Hamilton, respectively.

All told, the three pitchers threw 20 innings this past weekend, combining for 28 strikeouts and zero walks while allowing just seven hits and no earned runs as the Bobcats (7-1 through Sunday) extended their win streak to five.

Owens (3-0) was the best of the bunch, breezing through his complete game on just 77 pitches (54 strikes) and extending his scoreless-innings streak to 14 to open the season. The stout lefty set Sheffield down in order in each of the first five innings, recording eight Ks along the way. He struck out the first batter in the bottom of the sixth and was just two outs away from a perfect game when he allowed a base hit to David Latray.

Latray was immediately caught stealing, and then Owens recorded his 10th strikeout to finish off the one-hit shutout. For the season (through Sunday), Owens had allowed only two hits in 14 scoreless innings while striking out 23 and walking just five.

Owens also enjoyed a big day at the plate on Saturday, smacking a two-run double in the top of the fifth and another in the sixth on his way to finishing 3-for-4 with five RBIs. Thomas hit a solo home run—his third of the season and the 25th of his varsity career—in the top of the fourth to make it 2-0 and finished the game 2-for-3 with two RBIs and three runs scored. Leadoff man Cole Motes also scored three times, and senior centerfielder Mike Wrona went 1-for-2 with an RBI and two runs scored.

Earlier on Saturday, Thomas (1-0) delivered his second dominant start of the season in as many outings, striking out 12 and walking none in a 6-1 win over Central. The hard-throwing righty struck out two batters in each of the first four innings, allowing an unearned run in the bottom of the third when Central put together two singles and a passed ball. Thomas recorded one strikeout in both the fifth and the sixth and then finished strong, striking out two more batters in a one-two-three seventh. He threw 94 pitches, 67 of which were strikes.

Thomas finished with a three-hitter and was yet to allow an earned run this season in two starts through Sunday, striking out 23 batters and walking just one in 12 innings.

Phil Campbell jumped in front of Central early, scoring three runs in the top of the first on an RBI single by Owens and a two-run single by Rilan Garrison. Austen Baker drove in a run with a single in the second inning, and Brody Nix's RBI single in the third made it 5-0. Central got on the board in the bottom of the third, but the Bobcats got that run back in the fifth when Brandon Thomas led off with a hit and later came home on Wrona's sac fly.

Baker, Owens and Garrison each finished 2-for-4. Brandon Thomas went 1-for-3 and scored three runs, and Peyton Thomas was also 1-for-3.

Hutchens got the weekend started right for Phil Campbell with a strong outing in a 7-3 win at Hamilton last Friday. The senior right-hander pounded the strike zone, throwing 59 of his 80 pitches for strikes, and allowed just three hits and three runs (all unearned) in seven innings. He struck out six and did not issue a walk.

The Bobcats scored all the runs they would need in the top of the first inning, putting up a five-spot. Motes and Baker started the game with back-to-back singles, and then Thomas cracked a three-run homer to left to make it 3-0. Ridge Raper added a two-run single later in the inning to make it 5-0.

The Aggies took advantage of two errors and a passed ball to score three times in the bottom of the second, but Phil Campbell got those runs back on RBI singles by Nix in the third inning and Baker in the seventh.

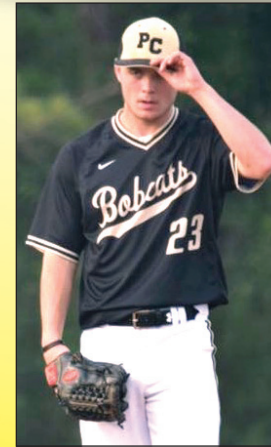
Baker finished 3-for-5, and Thomas was 2-for-5 with the three-run homer. Raper went 2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs, and Nix also had two hits. Owens added a double.

Phil Campbell was scheduled to return to action on Monday at Winston County before hosting Winfield on Tuesday.



Nate Owens Junior Pitcher, Phil Campbell

Owens has been lights-out on the mound in the early going for Phil Campbell, tossing 14 straight scoreless innings to open the season. The junior left-hander was dominant again on Saturday against Sheffield, facing the minimum 18 batters (and striking out 10 of them) in a six-inning shutout. Owens was 3-0 with one save in four appearances through Sunday and had struck out 23 batters while allowing only two hits in his 14 innings of work. Owens was also off to a hot start at the plate, batting .478 with four doubles and nine RBIs for the 7-1 Bobcats.



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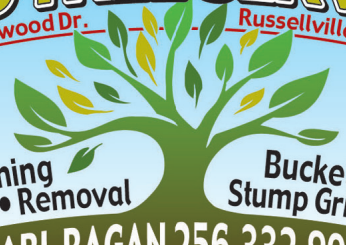
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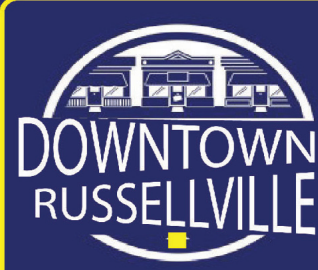
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