

Franklin County voters will consider a two-year renewal of the one-cent sales tax on the June 5 ballot. See story Page 9.

Yes, March Madness has arrived, but we're not talking hoops here. The Phil Campbell Dance celebrated its 16th anniversary last week. See story Page 3.



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113 Washington Ave. NW
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Questions linger over legality of recent BCDA board election

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) handed over a letter from the Alabama Legislative Services Agency to Trisha Montgomery at a Monday morning press conference, Morrow said he was presenting the information to her as chairperson of the Bear Creek Development Authority Board.

Although Montgomery lost an election to Connie Morrison for the position at the BCDA board's February 9 meeting, Morrow reiterated that Montgomery was legally still the chairperson and the February election was void based on an opinion from attorneys with the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts and the Legislative Services Agency.

"I have read the letter and know what it says," Morrow said, "so I am giving the letter to the chairperson of this board."

The press conference was held at the BCDA main

office. In addition to members of the media, Montgomery and board member Mark McNatt attended. Although all board members were contacted about the press conference, only two attended.

According to BCDA's by-laws, officers must be elected at a January meeting "by secret ballot and shall be chosen by a plurality of the votes cast." A letter from the Legislative Services Agency says the February 9 election at issue "was conducted in violation of BCDA bylaws. If challenged, a court may hold the vote to be invalid and order a new vote to be conducted."

The letter Morrow referenced was a March 9 letter from John Treadwell, deputy director for the Legal Division of the Legislative Services Agency.

Treadwell's letter came in response to a meeting held last week in Montgomery to consider the legal validity of the BCDA's election of officers on February 9.

See 'BOARD,' Page 9

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PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

From left, Wanda Harper, Martha Goss and Linda Hutcheson served a delicious meal to those attending Saturday's Spruce Pine Candidate Supper, an event that formally kicked off the local campaign season. Also pictured are Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton and Sue Bowen, who served as emcee for the evening.

Spruce Pine event kicks off political campaign season

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The local campaign season formally began Saturday with the first political supper of 2018, held at the Spruce Pine Community Center.

Candidate turnout was tremendous, with all but three candidates who will appear on the June 5 primary ballots and/or the November 6 general election ballot in attendance.

Guests enjoyed a homemade ham and turkey dinner and heard from the candidates seeking elected office this year.

See 'CAMPAIGN,' Page 3

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Arlin Terrell Fisher, Russellville, age 59

Died Monday, March 12, 2018. Visitation will be Wednesday, March 14, 2018 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Spry Memorial Chapel with funeral service to follow. Interment will be in Ramsey Cemetery.

Jerry Lee Gustafson, Winfield, age 69

Died Monday, March 5, 2018. The family was planning to hold a memorial service at a later date. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Betty Jean Malone, Russellville, age 85

Died Wednesday, March 7, 2018. Graveside service held at Franklin Memory Gardens. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Jack E. Mitchell, Russellville, age 91

Died Sunday, March 11, 2018. Visitation will be Wednesday, March 14, 2018 from noon to 2 p.m. at Pinkard Funeral Home with the funeral service to follow. Interment will be in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Jerry Dwane Potter, Huntsville (formerly of the Cherry Hill Community in Russellville), age 72

Died Wednesday, March 7, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Cherry Hill Cemetery.

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Phil Campbell Dance celebrates 16th anniversary

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Freida Eubank served as mayor of Phil Campbell, she constantly searched for ways to bring people to her community.

When Kenneth Cummings and Tom Willis came to her in 2002 with an idea for a weekly dance at the Phil Campbell Community Center, Eubank believed the men had presented her with a sure-fire way to bring folks to town every week.

And years later, the dance is still a fixture on Friday nights. The Phil Campbell Dance celebrated its 16th anniversary last week with a crowd of more than 100 making their way to the center for an evening of music, food, fellowship and dancing.

"I always wanted to bring people to our town," Eubank said. "And if they come here, maybe they'll stop at the gas station and get some gas, or stop for food or snacks. Any time you can get people to our town and spend a little money, next time there may be a few more people."

"We want to bring people to Phil Campbell and not see everyone leaving town on the weekend."

The dance is held each Friday night from 7-10 p.m. The town receives \$1 of the \$5 admission fee. A pot luck supper is held the first Friday of the month, and the dance provides a way for guests to enjoy some good, clean fun.

What began as an idea from Cummings and Willis has become a fixture in Phil Campbell.

See 'DANCE,' Page 10



Sonny Allen, left, Bill Woodburn and Ruby Allen take a break from the dance floor at last Friday's 16th anniversary of the Phil Campbell Dance.

'CAMPAIGN,' from page 1

First to speak was Jim Bonner, a Bear Creek resident seeking the Republican nomination for the Alabama Public Service Commission, Place One. Bonner will face incumbent Jeremy Oden in the June 5 primary.

Both candidates seeking to replace Rep. Ken Johnson in House District Seven attended Saturday evening's supper. Ken Brackens, the Democratic nominee, and Proncey Robertson, the Republican nominee, both have no opposition in the June primary and will square off in November.

There are three men seeking to follow Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow in representing the people of House District 18. Jamie Kiel and Tony Riley will face each other in the June 5 Republican primary. Eddie Britton is unopposed in the Democratic primary for Morrow's seat.

"I'll make sure our schools in Franklin and Colbert and Lauderdale County are as good as they can be," Kiel told the crowd. "That's a priority of mine. With your support we'll keep someone from Franklin County in this seat, as it has been for years."

Riley, who has worked the last 11 years as human resources manager at Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc., touted his business experience.

"It's been the best experience of my life," Riley said of working for Tiffin. "I've learned so much about business. Jobs are a big deal to me, and I know what it's like to be part of a business that's being recruited."

Britton, who serves as the chairman of the Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee, is a retired educator with 38 years of experience in public education.

Sen. Larry Stutts is seeking a second term representing the people of Senate District Six. Stutts will face three opponents on June 5, although only one of them, Steve Lolley, attended Saturday's supper.

Lolley retired recently after 25 years in the banking industry. He is a resident of Guin.

Stutts spoke about his conservative values and told the crowd how Alabama continues to show economic improvement.

"I'm proud to stand on my conservative values and principles. We're seeing a record low in unemployment in our state," Stutts said. "Both budgets are in better shape than they've been in years because unemployment is low and tax revenue is up."

Stutts said this year's education appropriation was the largest in the last decade.

"We've seen seven straight budget years without proration," he said. "We're headed in the right direction financially in this state, and I want to continue to be a part of that."

Morrow is unopposed in the Democratic primary for Senate District Six. He talked about meeting the needs of Franklin County residents during his tenure in the House.

"When we needed a four-lane highway, I went to work," Morrow said. "Now we have it. Through my career, I've attacked those problems we needed solutions to."

Morrow foreshadowed what's sure to be a key component of his campaign when he criticized Stutts' support of the Alabama Accountability Act.

"We've got to preserve our public schools," Morrow said, "and anyone in the legislature who votes to pull money out of our public schools into private schools doesn't need to be there in Montgomery, because they don't represent the people of this state."

Political newcomer Charles Adcox will be the Republican nominee for Franklin County coroner. Adcox told the crowd his experience working in emergency medical services and as a reserve law enforcement officer, a member of Tharptown Volunteer Fire Department and a juvenile detention

officer in Tusculumbia qualify him to serve as coroner.

Incumbent Elzie Malone, who is unopposed in the Democratic primary, did not attend Saturday's event.

Although there is no Democratic candidate for probate judge, there is a contested race in the Republican primary, as incumbent Barry Moore faces Joe Mansell.

Moore told the crowd about some of the county commission's accomplishments during his tenure, including securing more than \$12 million in funds for roads and bridges through the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP). He stressed the importance of working together with other agencies on projects.

"We can accomplish so much by working together," Moore said. "That teamwork has led to several industrial access grants received and we've recently applied for another one in the Mike Green Industrial Park."

Mansell, a career firefighter and chief of the Russellville Fire Department, talked about his passion for Franklin County.

"I've always enjoyed helping my community, and I want to make Franklin County as great as we possibly can," Mansell said. "I want our fire departments to be the backbone of our county."

Ralton Baker, who will serve another term representing the Franklin County Board of Education District One, attended the Spruce Pine event, as did Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton, who was elected in 2016. Hamilton was the lone elected official in attendance who will not be on the ballot in 2018.

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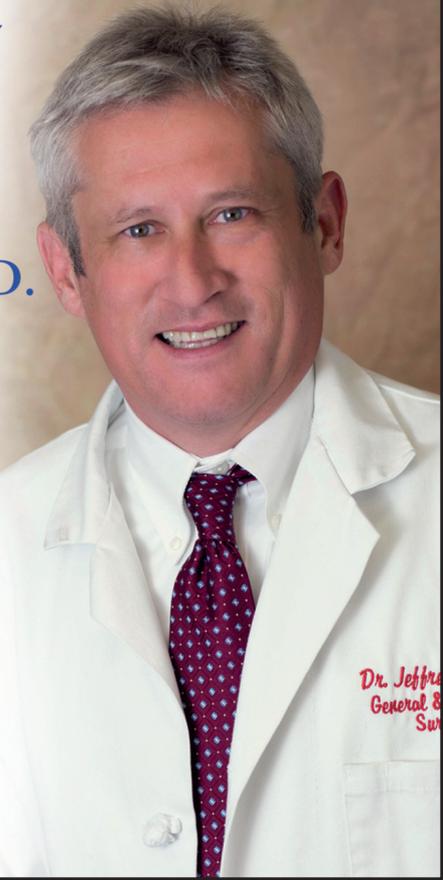
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Honey Do List: Bird feeding

Birds are extremely active creatures, and they eat constantly. Their high rate of activity requires a lot of nutrition. That's why bird feeding is a great hobby any time of the year.

That's especially the case now, when birds are building nests and preparing for new families. Bird houses and feeders should be up, clean and well stocked in the next few days.

You can make your yard bird-friendly by paying attention to just a few details. Evergreens can provide year-long shelter from the elements and predators. Consider planting more evergreens in your yard, whether shrubbery or individual trees, in a location near where you will also place bird houses, feeders and a birdbath. Or create your habitat close to existing evergreens.

Shelter from wind is important. Placed near structures like your house or garage, feeders and birdhouses are protected from strong winter winds and can give great vantage points from an inside window.

What you put in your feeders is important. Particular bird species prefer specific types of food. Grains (seeds) and suet (seeds and fruits embedded in fat) are popular with a

wide variety of bird species. Seeds include sunflower seeds, corn and millet. Black sunflower seeds and millet, in particular, are very popular among many common types of birds, such as cardinals, finches, woodpeckers and other birds. Installing a few bird feeders, each stocked with different types of food, is the best way to attract the greatest variety of bird types.

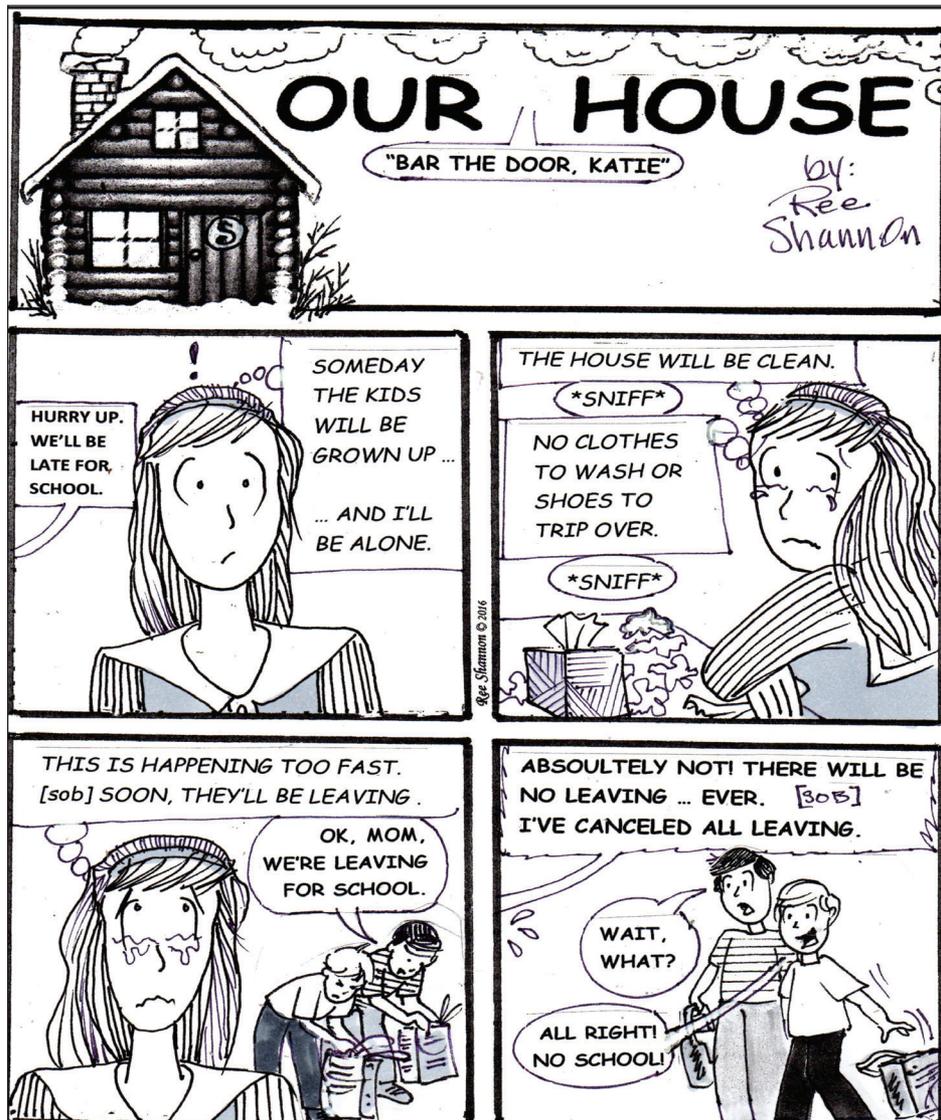
Note that feeding birds won't prevent those who migrate from leaving your area. This is instinctual and has nothing to do with whether or not there is food available. For those birds that *do* stay throughout the winter, remember that once you start feeding them, you must continue to do so or they will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

There are lots of advantages to having bird friends in your yard and the surrounding neighborhood. They are beautiful, interesting to watch and help control those annoying summer insects.

Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



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Legislature okays tax cut for families

By State Senator Larry Stutts

As we enter the home stretch of the 2018 legislative session and wrap up the final months of this quadrennium, I wanted to take a moment and look back. There have certainly been bumps in the road over the past four years, but now we find ourselves in a place of abundance.

Unemployment is at a record low, the economy is growing, and state budgets are in better shape than they've been in years. The hard work of identifying waste, cutting spending and resisting the call to raise taxes is paying off.

But our work isn't done.

On January 11 of this year, Alabama Senate Republicans unveiled our "Fighting for Alabama" 2018 legislative agenda. The agenda focused on passing balanced budgets, spurring economic growth, encouraging infrastructure improvements and cutting taxes. I'm proud to say that we have moved the needle on all of those goals.

This past week, the Legislature approved the first tax break for Alabamians since 2006. Now, lower- and middle-income families will be able to deduct a little bit more from their state income taxes. According to the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Office in Montgomery, some 200,000 Alabamians will see their taxes go down as a result. The economy is humming, and the right call is put the excess tax revenue back into the hands of the taxpayers instead of growing the government bureaucracy down in Montgomery.

Expanding access to broadband internet in rural counties is key to ensuring that all of our state shares in the economic growth. That's why I was proud to support legislation in the Senate that incentivizes cable and telecommunications com-

panies to invest in rural Alabama. Broadband internet is the communications highway of the 21st century, and every home, school and business in Alabama needs access to it.

The Legislature is poised to pass a \$6.6 billion education budget for Fiscal Year 2019, the largest budget for our schools in over a decade. Teachers and education support personnel will get a raise of 2.5 percent, while First Class (our nationally awarded, voluntary pre-K program) will see an increase of \$20 million. And for the seventh consecutive year, Alabama's schools won't have to worry about proration, a specter that used to regularly haunt our schools during past years of fiscal irresponsibility in Montgomery.

Perhaps the legislation I'm most proud of this session is Senate Bill 179, which establishes severe penalties for individuals found guilty of obstructing an investigation into human trafficking. Should SB179 receive final passage in the House, any person who obstructs a police investigation into a first-degree trafficking case will now be guilty of a Class A felony, which carries a minimum jail sentence of ten years.

Doing the people's work has been a distinct privilege and has been both rewarding and humbling. President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free men." It has been an immense honor representing you in the Senate. Don't hesitate to call my Senate office at (334) 242-7085.

Dr. Larry Stutts is an OB-GYN who represents Alabama Senate District 6, which is comprised of all or parts of Marion, Lawrence, Lauderdale, Colbert and Franklin counties. He and his wife, Jackie, make their home in Tuscomb.



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by Dave Ramsey

Layoff insurance?

Dear Dave,
Some of the people I work with have been buying into a new kind of supplemental insurance that protects against layoffs. It costs about \$30 a month per person, and the full payout if you're laid off is \$9,000.

It seems to me you would have to be paying in for a long time to see that kind of return, so I wanted to see how you feel about this kind of thing.

Steve

Dear Steve,
Any time insurance is there for something you could cover yourself, it's a good idea to stop and remember that every insurance company is still a business. They must cover all the costs of operation, plus make a profit. Believe me, that takes a lot of money.

Statistically speaking, if lots of people cashed in on a policy like this, an insurance company would go out of business. We're talking about only \$30 a month to cover \$9,000. That alone tells you not many people cash in. It's gimmick insurance.

On average, you're losing money when you buy insurance of any kind. Again, on average, over the scope of your lifetime you'd be better off simply saving money and self-insuring against things like this.

The only things I recommend buying insurance for are things you

can't afford to cover personally. But you *can* afford to cover a layoff by saving an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses.

If I'm in your shoes, Steve, I'm not buying that stuff.

Dave

Keep it in your own pocket!

Dear Dave,
I just filed taxes, and it looks like I'll get a pretty big refund this year. A friend of mine told me I should adjust my withholding, so I don't get a refund. This seems pretty dumb to me. Why change my withholdings when I'm getting money back?

James

Dear James,
The only reason you're getting a refund is because you had too much taken out of your paychecks in 2017.

Let's say your refund is \$3,500. Basically, you loaned the government \$3,500 of your own money, interest-free. A refund isn't a gift or reward, James. It's your own cash that you get back because you paid in too much during the previous year. In your case, that adds up to almost \$300 a month!

Instead of loaning the government money that you worked hard to earn, wouldn't it be a better idea to keep it in your own pocket?

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

 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 23. 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.

 Representatives from the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), Franklin County Emergency Management, Winston County Emergency Management, Marion County Emergency Management and the University of North Alabama will be conducting Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) household surveys of residents in Franklin, Marion, and Winston counties from March 13-16 between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Surveyors will ask about general disaster preparedness, drinking water preferences and the April 2011 tornadoes. Households will be selected randomly to participate in the survey. All surveyors will be wearing identification badges and a vest which will designate them as a member of the CASPER team. The teams will be able to provide a phone number for identification verification. The survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and the information collected will remain confidential. For questions please call the ADPH District Office, located in Sheffield, at (256) 383-1231.

 Osborn Hill Cemetery will meet this 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.

 A benefit for David Cason will be held this Friday, March 16 from 4-7 p.m. at Pleasant Hill Church in East Franklin. Smoked chicken and barbecue plates made by William Bishop will be sold for \$10 each. Includes two sides, drink and dessert. Proceeds will benefit Cason to help with medical and travel expenses related to a serious health condition.

 The Alabama Cooperative Extension System will hold a Gardening Series at the Russellville Public Library on the last three Fridays in March from 11 a.m.-noon. Topics will be 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? Call 256-332-1535, stop by the library or email us via our website at www.russellvillepubliclibrary.com.

 You are invited to a Unity Breakfast this 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.

 Spring Revival will be held at St. Paul CME Church (406 Hamilton Street in Russellville) March 21-23. Guest evangelist is Rev. Christopher Reeves, Greater St. Paul CME Church in Florence. Service times are 7 p.m. nightly. Everyone is invited!

 Kids and Kin dates 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 22 at 5 p.m.—"Ways Babies Learn When You Sing to Them," Alisha Albright, Family Guidance Center of Alabama.

 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.

Join North Russellville Baptist Church for a Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser on Saturday, March 24 from 9 a.m.-noon at the North Russellville Baptist Church Fellowship Hall on Waterloo Road. Tickets are only \$5. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go toward the North Russellville Baptist Church Youth Department.

The Franklin County Chamber of Commerce will host the annual Easter Egg Hunts on Saturday, March 24. Easter Egg Hunts will be in Russellville at 10 a.m. at Eastside Ball Park, in Phil Campbell at 12:30 p.m. at Memorial Park and in Red Bay at 3 p.m. at Bay Tree Park. A drawing for bikes will be held at the conclusion of each hunt. We welcome children fifth grade and under to participate. Remember to bring your baskets!

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.

St. Paul CME Church of Russellville (406 Hamilton Street, Russellville) will hold a Seven Last Words Service on Good Friday, March 30 at 6 p.m. Program participants include Rev. Charles Dale, Rev. Bo Lloyd, Rev. James Coffey, Rev. Nick McSpadden, Rev. Charlie Johnson, Jr., Rev. Johnny Smith and Rev. Christy Gill. Everyone is invited!

The 14th annual Relay for Life Open Bass Tournament is set for Saturday, March 31. The annual tournament is a fund raiser for the American Cancer Society and is coordinated by Rhonda Boyles and Jamie Sumerel. The tournament will begin at Slick Rock Boat Ramp on Cedar Creek at 7 a.m. and will run to 3 p.m. Entry fee is \$70 per boat, with \$10 per boat for lunger (with 100 percent payback). First place finishers in the tournament are guaranteed \$1,000. There is a five-fish limit per boat. Door prizes will be awarded, and entries are now being accepted. Take-off will be done by drawing, and the tournament will be held regardless of weather conditions. Two contestants are permitted per boat. Large mouth, small mouth and spotted bass only will be counted. Fish must measure 12 inches with mouth closed and roll tail. All fish, except trophy fish, will be released after the tournament. For more information or to register for the tournament, contact Boyles at 256-627-4112 or Sumerel at 256-762-5123.

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 April 12.

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 classes of 1951-53, 1961-63, 1971-73, 1981-83, 1991-93, 2001-03 and 2011-13. Everyone is invited. \$12 for meal tickets. Please RSVP for meals to 256-332-1376.

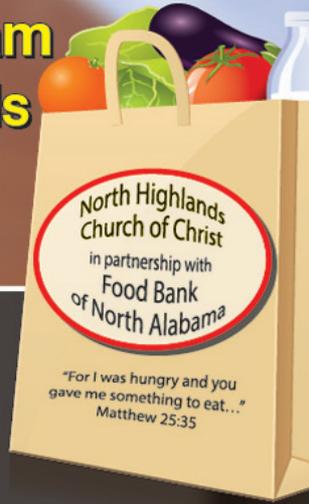
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Local voters to consider renewal of one-cent tax

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County voters will soon decide whether to extend a one-cent sales tax that was originally approved in 2010.

The tax, which was in two-year increments, has been overwhelmingly approved by voters four times. In 2010 and 2012, the entire one-cent tax went to benefit Franklin County and Russellville City Schools.

In 2014, the Franklin County Commission requested local legislators to introduce a bill that provided for 75 percent of the proceeds to benefit schools and 25 percent to go to matching funds needed to secure Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program (ATRIP) grants.

Franklin County voters have twice approved the tax with the 75/25 split, in 2014 and 2016.

Commissioners voted to request a 30-year extension on the one-cent tax, and along with the support of RCS superintendent Heath Grimes and Franklin County superintendent Greg Hamilton, that amendment was introduced and approved in the Alabama legislature.

On the June 5, 2018 ballot, Franklin County voters will consider only a two-year renewal of the tax, with a 75/25 split. The difference will be the 25 percent going to the county would be earmarked for road and bridge improvements and not specifically for ATRIP matching funds.

But on the June 5, 2018 ballot, Franklin County voters will consider only a two-year renewal of the tax, with a 75/25 split. The difference will be the 25 percent going to the county would be earmarked for road and bridge improvements and not specifically for ATRIP matching funds.

'BOARD,' from page 1

At that meeting, Morrison was elected chairperson and Haleyville attorney Jeff Mobley vice-chairman. Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore was elected as secretary.

According to information relayed to the Legislative Services Agency, all BCDA board members were notified of the February 9 meeting by BCDA manager Shannon McKinney. The email from McKinney did not indicate that officer elections would take place at the meeting.

Nine of the 14 BCDA directors attended that meeting, and Morrison was elected by a 5-4 margin after a voice vote.

According to BCDA's by-laws, though, officers must be elected at a January meeting "by secret ballot and shall be chosen by a plurality of the votes cast."

According to Treadwell's letter, "the election was conducted in violation of BCDA bylaws. If challenged, a court may hold the vote to be invalid and order a new vote to be conducted."

Additionally, BCDA bylaws require written notice of every regular meeting by "mailing, postage prepaid, at least ten days prior to the date of the meeting."

Based on that, Treadwell indicated that with notice having come via email, the form of the notice was subject to legal challenge. Treadwell also indicated the only board members who would have standing to challenge the notice would be the five members who were not in attendance on February 9.

Treadwell listed some options for how to proceed with the BCDA Board of Directors, including a revision of the bylaws, or dissolution of the board altogether through legislation.

He also referenced the Legislative Sunset Review Committee, which conducts 'sunset' reviews of state boards to determine whether they are performing their intended purpose and whether the board needs to be revised or eliminated through legislative action.

When contacted Monday afternoon, Morrison said she had seen Treadwell's letter and had forwarded it to BCDA Board attorney Jeff Bowling. Morrison said she would await legal advice from Bowling as to how to proceed. But she maintains she remains chairperson of the board.

"That's what we pay our attorney for. He will look at this and get with legislative services and advise us how to proceed," Morrison said. "I was elected chair at a meeting of the board and will continue in

that role unless told otherwise."

Morrison said she was not contacted by any board member regarding any questions as to the legality of the February 9 election. And the first she heard of any question was when she saw Treadwell's letter.

"This has become extremely frustrating," Morrison said. "But we'll take it one step at a time, and that's all we can do."

Morrison said the board would likely meet again in April.

Morrow said he contacted Treadwell after "receiving an inquiry from BCDA board members about possible improper procedure having taken place at a meeting."

As a result, he set up a meeting with Treadwell, Rachel Riddle from the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts and Caleb Hindman with the Legislative Services Agency.

"Board members presented evidence of improper procedure, and the issue was studied by these individuals and a letter was sent to me," Morrow said. "As chair of the BCDA board, I want to present this letter to you and let you take whatever action you deem necessary, and it's up to you and the board to take it from here."

Morrow, who has been critical of certain aspects of BCDA management in recent years, said he is keeping the option open to submit BCDA to the

Probate judge Barry Moore said voters will consider the 30-year extension on the November 2018 general election ballot. The reason for that is an Alabama law that requires the legislative session to have ended at least 90 days before the election where an amendment passed during that session is scheduled to appear on a ballot.

That would require the legislature to end its session on or before March 5, which did not happen.

Voters will consider the two-year renewal in June in order to ensure that collection of the one-cent tax, which generates approximately \$2 million annually, doesn't end in June. Without a tax referendum on the June ballot, the current tax would expire.

"Although it may be a little confusing, we wanted to avoid that gap from the end of June through September," Moore said, "and this will help avoid that so we can keep going [collecting the tax] without interruption."

Sunset Review Committee.

"If this board is not going to take control and become a functional entity that represents the will of the people, there is a Sunset Committee option," Morrow said. "If this board does not become functional and properly represent all four counties [Franklin, Colbert, Winston and Marion], I will carry this agency before the Sunset Committee and ask that it be sunset and reorganized."

Montgomery read a prepared statement at Monday's press conference:

"As Governor Ivey's appointment to the BCDA Board of Directors, my concern is to look out for the interest of the great state of Alabama and the Bear Creek Watershed Area. I will work to uphold the Code of Alabama and the By-laws of the Bear Creek Development Agency. It is my hope that my fellow board members and staff will work towards the same goals together to do what we are supposed to do and bring Development to the watershed. I'll be calling for a board meeting in the coming weeks."

Montgomery was asked if she considered the February 9 officer elections legally void.

"Yes, based on what they say in this letter," Montgomery said. "I am still acting as chairperson of the BCDA Board of Directors. The election was not on the agenda."

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'DANCE,' from page 3

"We didn't know if it would go well or not at first," Eubank said. "But I didn't really know how many people were interested in dancing around here. We have regulars from Moulton, Jasper, Leighton, Florence, Double Springs and Haleyville."

Guests at the dance are greeted by Betty Robinett at the door, where she's collected the admission fee for years. Robinett helped decorate the center

last Friday for the 16th anniversary, complete with red tablecloths, floral arrangements and balloons.

There's a core of regulars, somewhere between 65 and 75 folks, who Eubank describes as one big family, bonded together not just by their affinity for dancing but also by friendships that have been built over 16 years.

"So many of us are regulars and go every week unless we're sick," Eubank said. "There are many folks who hardly ever miss a week. We're all on a first-name basis, and we hug each other when we get there."

Although Cummings has passed away, Willis occasionally frequents the dance he helped create. He was on hand at Friday's anniversary, and he joined the house band, the Fairlanes, to sing three songs. The Fairlanes include Anthony Green, Stanley Parrish, Hugh Don Franklin and Joe King. Willis's band, "Sounds of Country," provided the music until a few years ago.

"I never thought sixteen years ago that we'd still be going in Phil Campbell," Willis said. "We had no intention of staying out here eleven years playing music, but we did. It's turned out to be very special."

The Phil Campbell Community Center is located just off College Road next to the Phil Campbell Splash Pad.

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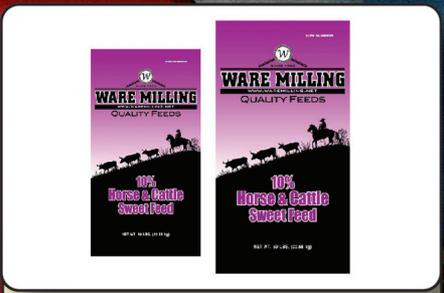
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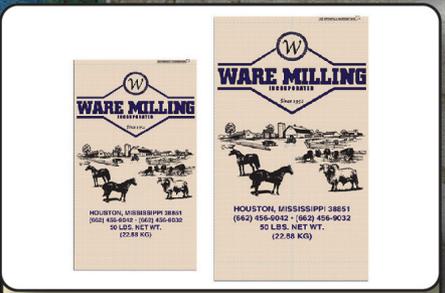
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Benefit tourney set for March 30

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Since he retired from teaching and coaching in 2005, Ronnie Boutwell has worked at Twin Pines Country Club. Boutwell, along with Twin Pines manager Howard Beall, has helped countless families with benefit golf tournaments at the country club.

This time, it's Boutwell's family who will be the beneficiary of a golf tournament set for Friday, March 30.

A benefit tournament for David Boutwell, Ronnie's son, will begin that day at 11 a.m. with registration and lunch for all participants. A shotgun start will begin at 12:30 p.m. The event is a four-man scramble with an entry fee of \$240 per team.

David, who lives in Muscle Shoals with his wife Kristen and their four children, is battling glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. The tournament was set up to raise funds for David and his family to help offset medical expenses and costs of traveling to and from Birmingham for his treatment.

Along with Ronnie, Ernest Presley is coordinating the tournament for the Boutwell family.

Boutwell has undergone two procedures, one last April and another in November of 2017. The most recent surgery resulted from the return of the cancer and the need to remove scar tissue from the first surgery.

Boutwell is a Russellville High School alum who's been around the sport of golf his entire life. Ronnie was a long-time Russellville City Schools teacher and coach. The Boutwells were raised on the golf course, so it's fitting to reach out to the local golf community to help one of its own.

"This will help with some of their expenses and costs," Boutwell said of the tournament. "Ernest is doing a wonderful job with this, and we appreciate his great effort so much."

Non-golfers can support the cause by making a cash donation or donating a door prize for the tournament.

For more information on the tournament, or to register, contact Presley at 256-460-5805 or Ronnie Boutwell at 256-324-0960.

Franklin Free Press 2017-18 All-County Boys Basketball

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Last week we announced our All-County selections for the girls, so now it's time to unveil our choices on the boys side. Let's get right to it.

Player of the Year

Mason Bragwell, junior post player, Belgreen

In a battle of highly skilled, inside-out big men, Bragwell edges out Red Bay junior Gath Weatherford for his first POY honor. The 6'6 Bragwell averaged a career-high and county-best 18.4 points per game, reaching double-figures in every game but two and topping the 20-point mark a dozen times—including a stretch of six straight games from December 11-19 during which he averaged 23.8 points.

Bragwell possesses a potent mid-range jumper, and his smooth stroke poses a threat from even further out [he hit 13 threes this season]. He's most effective, though, around the basket, where his length, athleticism and ability to finish with both power and creativity make him hard to handle.

Despite frequently facing double-teams and defenses otherwise designed to limit his touches on the block, Bragwell still shot 52 percent from the floor [he went 9-for-10 and scored 22 points in a 64-63 win over Carbon Hill on December 11.]



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Mason Bragwell finished the season with the most free throws made (146) and attempted (216) in the county. The big man also shot 52 percent from the field and averaged a career-high 18.4 points per game.

game and in blocks with 48, adding 36 assists and 35 steals for good measure. He dominated a big Marion County front line in sub-regional play, scoring a season-high 30 points, grabbing seven boards and swatting five shots in an 82-46 rout that punched the Bulldogs ticket to Hanceville for a second straight season.

See 'BOYS,' Page 14

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

Mason Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	18.4
Peyton Thomas, senior, Phil Campbell	17.0
Gath Weatherford, junior, Red Bay	16.5
Lucas McNutt, junior, Russellville	15.8
Devin Buckhalter, junior, Russellville	15.7
Cole Daniel, senior, Tharptown	13.0
Levi McCormack, senior, Tharptown	12.9
Brant Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	12.2
Jacob Mayberry, senior, Belgreen	10.4
Clay Allison, sophomore, Red Bay	9.1
Joe Hardy, senior, Phil Campbell	9.1
Braden Ray, freshman, Red Bay	9.0

Bragwell excels at getting to the foul line, where he recovered from a slow start this season to shoot 68 percent on a county-high 216 attempts. He also led Belgreen in rebounding with 7.9 per

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Weatherford was the county's second-best foul shooter at 79 percent and also ranked No. 2 with 57 threes made. He shot 48 percent from the floor overall and led the Tigers in scoring with 16.5 points per game.

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With 1,297 career points at the varsity level, Bragwell has an outside shot [no pun intended] at reaching the 2,000-point mark next season. Graduation will hit Belgreen hard in May, so the big man will have to carry an even heavier load in 2018-19. He'll undoubtedly be up to the task.

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

Mason Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	12 (high of 30)
Gath Weatherford, junior, Red Bay	11 (high of 27)
Peyton Thomas, senior, PCHS	9 (high of 26)
Lucas McNutt, junior, RHS	7 (high of 29)
Devin Buckhalter, junior, RHS	6 (high of 29)
Levi McCormack, senior, THS	4 (high of 29)
Cole Daniel, senior, THS	3 (high of 24)
Clay Allison, sophomore, Red Bay	2 (high of 21)
Brant Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	2 (high of 23)
Jacob Mayberry, senior, Belgreen	2 (high of 21)
Nate Owens, junior, PCHS	2 (high of 24)
Seth Taylor, senior, Belgreen	2 (high of 23)

First-Team All-County

Gath Weatherford, junior forward, Red Bay

After averaging a solid 9.0 points per game as a sophomore, Weatherford spearheaded Red Bay's remarkable renaissance this year with a monster season. The 6'3 junior shed 30 pounds last summer and became a multi-dimensional force on offense, adding a dribble-drive element to an arsenal that already included a physical low-post game and a pure perimeter stroke.

Weatherford topped the 20-point mark 11 times this season, most notably on December 28 when

See 'BOYS,' Page 15

Thomas (12) scored 20-plus points nine times and averaged a career-best 17.0 per game.



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'BOYS', from page 14

He scored a career-high 27 to engineer a 61-60 upset of Russellville at the Bracy Invitational. He averaged 16.5 points per game (third-best in Franklin County) and was remarkably efficient, shooting 53 percent from two-point range, 40 percent from beyond the arc and 79 percent (115-for-146) from the foul line.

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

Mason Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	29 (out of 31)
Gath Weatherford, junior, RBHS	27 (out of 31)
Devin Buckhalter, junior, RHS	22 (out of 24)
Cole Daniel, senior, Tharptown	22 (out of 28)
Peyton Thomas, senior, PCHS	21 (out of 22)
Levi McCormack, senior, THS	18 (out of 28)
Lucas McNutt, junior, RHS	18 (out of 22)
Jacob Mayberry, senior, Belgreen	17 (out of 31)
Brant Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	14 (out of 23)
Braden Ray, freshman, RBHS	12 (out of 29)
Eli Hiser, senior, Belgreen	12 (out of 31)
Clay Allison, sophomore, RBHS	11 (out of 31)

Weatherford was the definition of an inside-out threat, finishing second in the county with 57 threes made and also leading Red Bay in rebounding at 7.4 per game. He was an underrated playmaker, too, handing out 40 assists, and a hard-nosed defender, recording 29 steals and taking a team-high 11 charges.

Weatherford adjusted quickly to the bright lights and high stakes of postseason basketball, hitting four threes in the area final against Sulligent, scoring 23 points in a sub-regional win at Tarrant that sent the Tigers to Hanceville for the first time in 23 years, and recovering from a slow start to pour in

18 second-half points in a 62-58 loss to Mars Hill in the regional semifinals.

It seems that the best may be yet to come—for both Weatherford and his fast-rising team.

Peyton Thomas, senior forward, PCHS

A talented multi-sport athlete [he quarterbacked the Bobcat football team and has signed an offer to play baseball at UNA], Thomas was fully healthy—for a change—for the start of basketball season this past November. The result was a career year in which the versatile 6'1 forward averaged 17.0 points per game, second-most in Franklin County.

Thomas, a gifted passer and selfless playmaker who draws more than his share of attention from opposing defenses, spent much of the early part of the season in share-the-ball, spread-the-wealth mode. He shifted gears around the New Year and started piling up the points, averaging 20.9 per game in January. He opened the month with four straight outings of 20-plus points, including 24 in a 70-64 victory over rival Hackleburg and 22 in a surprising 61-58 win at Belgreen.

Thomas's value to Phil Campbell was most evident in his absence; he missed a January 30 game at Bear Creek with the flu, and the Bobcats lost 50-49 to a Phillips team they had previously beaten by 27 points. A selective—yet capable—perimeter shooter [he made 16 threes on the season], Thomas did his best work in the paint, where his strong frame and soft touch around the basket made him darn near impossible to stop.

A consistent scorer, Thomas reached double-figures 21 times in his 22 games and topped the 20-

See 'BOYS,' page 16



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

McNutt (above) and Buckhalter (below, left) ranked among county leaders in scoring at 15.8 and 15.7 points per game, respectively.



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Senior Shortstop, Russellville

Fernandez caught fire at the plate last week, reaching base in 10 straight plate appearances. He walked in his final three trips against Austin in a 7-6 loss last Thursday, then went 3-for-3 (including a homer and a double) and got hit by a pitch in an 11-4 win over the Black Bears. Fernandez kept his streak going with two singles and a walk against Haleyville on Friday before flying out. Through Monday, the slick-fielding shortstop was leading RHS with 16 hits, two home runs, nine RBIs, 11 runs, 11 walks, five stolen bases and a .421 average.



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'BOYS', from page 15

point mark nine times while shooting a solid 64 percent (65-for-101) from the foul line. He finished his time at Phil Campbell as the county's active career scoring leader with 1,345 points at the varsity level.

Lucas McNutt, junior guard, Russellville

McNutt's strong finish to the season as a sophomore in 2016-17 [when he averaged 10.4 points per game after January 1 and became Russellville's top three-point threat] proved to be a sign of things to come. The 6'1 sharpshooter opened his junior season with 27 points in a road win at Colbert County and went on to top the 20-point mark six more times before the season was done, including January 2 when he poured in a career-high 29 in a loss to Hamilton.

Primarily a spot-up shooter in his first two varsity seasons, McNutt flourished with the ball in his hands more as a junior and developed into a productive all-around scorer and playmaker, leading the Golden Tigers in both points (15.8 per game) and assists (3.4 per game). He was as lethal as ever from beyond the arc, ranking third in the county with 49 threes made, and he was money from the foul line, where he connected on 26 straight attempts at one point and finished the season shooting a county-best 81 percent (69-for-85).

McNutt was also a sneaky-good defender, picking his spots to hang back after a made basket and steal an inbounds pass from an unsuspecting opponent. He was a solid rebounder, too, averaging 4.1 boards per game.

With young point guard Will Bonner set to take the reins next year, look for McNutt to spend less time handling the ball and more time filling the cup in his final prep season.

Devin Buckhalter, junior guard, Russellville

After surviving an early-season injury scare at Hamilton, Buckhalter—who missed his entire junior football season with a broken bone in his foot—wound up playing in all 24 games for the Golden Tigers. He reached double-figures in scoring in 22 of them and topped the 20-point mark six times, including January 22 at Central when he hit five threes and scored a career-high 29.

Buckhalter, an explosive athlete who excels at stopping on a dime and knocking down pull-up jumpers from the mid-range area, upped his scoring average from 13.0 points per game the previous year as a sophomore to a career-high 15.7 per game this year as a junior. His 41 threes made were fourth-most in Franklin County, and he also averaged 4.0 rebounds and 2.1 assists per game.

With 857 career points at the varsity level, Buckhalter is in position to fly past the 1,000-point mark next year as a senior.

Second-Team All-County

Jacob Mayberry, senior guard, Belgreen

Mayberry ran the show the past two seasons for Bulldog teams that went 47-15 while winning two county titles, two area championships and making it to Hanceville twice. As a senior, the 6'0 point guard averaged a career-high 10.4 points and posted an excellent ratio of 110 assists (a team-best 3.7 per game) to just 78 turnovers. He also led Belgreen with 74 steals, an average of 2.5 per game.

Mayberry chipped in on the glass, averaging 3.7 rebounds per game, and shot a solid 45 percent from the floor, doing the vast majority of his damage on mid-range jumpers and drives to the basket (where he was equally adept at finishing with either hand). He reached double-figures in scoring 17 times in 31 games, topping the 20-point mark twice and helping the Bulldogs finish 25-6.

Clay Allison, sophomore guard, Red Bay

Allison's contributions on both ends of the floor were a driving force behind Red Bay's turnaround from a 2-24 record the previous year to 18-13 this season. The super-quick point guard, a transfer from Vina, led the Tigers with 68 assists (2.4 per game) while also ranking second on the team in scoring (9.1

See 'BOYS,' Page 17

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'BOYS', from page 16

points per game) and three-pointers made (37). He also set a disruptive tone on defense, finishing first on the team with 53 steals and 48 deflections.

Allison rose to the occasion on the most pivotal night of the season, knocking down four threes and scoring 20 points to spark a 57-48 win over Lamar County in the first round of the area tournament on February 6. Nine days later he had 13 points and three assists in a regional semifinal loss to Mars Hill, the Tigers' first trip to Hanceville since 1995.

Allison finished the season shooting a solid 44 percent from the floor, including 51 percent from two-point range and 37 percent from beyond the arc.

Brant Bragwell, junior guard, Belgreen

Bragwell battled through a nagging knee problem that sidelined him for eight games in January, but he still finished the season second on the team in scoring at 12.2 points per game and first with 34 threes made. More than just a knockdown shooter, the 5'9 guard is a skilled playmaker [he ranked second on the team with 62 assists, against only 35 turnovers], a willing defender [he was third with 52 steals] and a capable rebounder [he averaged 3.2 boards per game].

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

Lucas McNutt, junior, Russellville	.812 (69-for-85)
Gath Weatherford, junior, Red Bay	.788 (115-for-146)
Chandler Dyas, freshman, Russellville	.778 (28-for-36)
Eli Hiser, senior, Belgreen	.738 (31-for-42)
Seth Taylor, senior, Belgreen	.709 (39-for-55)
Braden Ray, freshman, Red Bay	.708 (68-for-96)
Caden Parker, junior, Russellville	.700 (28-for-40)
Levi McCormack, senior, Tharptown	.684 (39-for-57)
Brant Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	.679 (53-for-78)
Mason Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	.676 (146-for-216)
Daniel Smith, senior, Phil Campbell	.658 (25-for-38)
Peyton Thomas, senior, Phil Campbell	.644 (65-for-101)
Ashlee Britton, senior, Belgreen	.633 (19-for-30)
Colton Corum, junior, Red Bay	.629 (39-for-62)
Jacob Mayberry, senior, Belgreen	.625 (70-for-112)

Bragwell reached double-figures in scoring 14 times in his 23 games and topped the 20-point mark twice, scoring a season-high 23 in a 90-43 win at Vina on December 8. He finished the year shooting a solid 68 percent (53-for-78) from the foul line.

Cole Daniel, senior forward, Tharptown

Slightly undersized for a post player, the 6'1 Daniel more than made up for his lack of height with tireless effort around the basket. He nearly doubled his scoring average from 7.4 points per game as a varsity rookie in 2016-17 to a team-best 13.0 per game this season. He was as consistent as they come, reaching double-figures in 22 of 28 games and topping the 20-point mark three times—including December 11 against Cherokee when he scored a career-high 24 points in a 53-44 win.

Daniel's three-point production dipped this year, but he increased his efficiency from 12 feet in, pounded the offensive glass and also got to the foul line a ton [his 183 attempts were the second-most in Franklin County].

Joe Hardy, senior guard, Phil Campbell

Hardy battled back from an early-season knee injury to average a solid 9.1 points per game (second-best on the team), but his impact can't be fully measured by individual numbers. Consider that the Bobcats were 8-7 with their emotional and tactical leader in the lineup and just 1-7 without him.

Despite missing those eight games, Hardy still finished second on the team with 21 threes made—including a clutch corner trey in the final minute to beat county rival Belgreen 61-58 on January 11. That came just two days after Hardy scored a career-high 21 points in a win over Hackleburg and one week after he flirted with a triple-double (10 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, plus five steals) in a rout of Phillips in his first game back from injury.

Head coach Brett Thomas said that Hardy's return to the lineup also made Phil Campbell a much more sound and versatile team on the defensive end.

Coach of the Year

John Torisky, Red Bay

Clint Isbell deserves a ton of credit for guiding Belgreen to 25 wins (including three tight ones over Red Bay), but Torisky gets the nod after overseeing an incredible turnaround by the Tigers.

Coming off a 2-24 record in Torisky's second season, Red Bay served notice early that things were going to be much different this year. The Tigers went into Belgreen on November 17 and threatened to spoil the Bulldogs' season opener, building a double-digit lead midway through the fourth quarter. Belgreen rallied late to steal a 56-53 win, but the dye had been cast—Red Bay was for real.

The Tigers took on all comers in the ensuing weeks, notching impressive

See 'BOYS,' Page 18

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'BOYS', from page 17

wins over Class 4A area champion Central (twice), another solid 4A team in Hamilton and even Class 5A Russellville in a thrilling consolation game at the Bracy Invitational after Christmas. Red Bay split the regular-season area championship with Sulligent, then nearly knocked off the Blue Devils on their home floor in the area tournament title game.

Forced to go on the road in sub-regional play, the Tigers routed Tarrant 60-37 to clinch their first regional berth in 23 years. They fell 62-58 to Mars Hill in Hanceville, but not before torching the Panthers for 45 second-half points and trimming a 16-point fourth-quarter deficit down to two in the final minute.

Red Bay finished 18-13 on the season, a 16-win improvement over the previous year. Torisky (at right, in Hanceville) got maximum effort from his players—particularly on the defensive end, where the Tigers held teams to just 50.3 points per game—every night and successfully integrated a new point guard (Vina transfer Clay Allison) into an offensive system built on the inside-out versatility of 6'3 junior Gath Weatherford.

The Tigers accomplished all that without a single senior on the roster, positioning them to perhaps finally get over the hump and topple Belgreen as



kings of the county next season.

Most Improved Player
Eli Hiser, senior guard, Belgreen

Hiser, who averaged 3.4 points per game as part of the Bulldogs' deep bench brigade in 2016-17, took on a much more prominent role as a senior and flourished. His breakout game came in mid-December against Carbon Hill, when he scored 16 of his career-high 20 points in the fourth quarter to deliver a 64-63 win.

Hiser's other highlights included a 17-point, eight-rebound effort in a double-overtime win over Red Bay in the county finals, the first of five straight games in which he scored in double-figures. The 6'1 guard finished the season averaging 7.7 points and 3.4 rebounds per game while ranking among team leaders in assists (57) and steals (51). He was highly efficient as well, knocking down 26 threes at a team-best 35-percent clip while shooting 49 percent from the floor overall and 74 percent (31-for-42) from the foul line.

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2017-18 Franklin County Leaderboard
Three-Pointers Made

Levi McCormack, senior, Tharptown	68
Gath Weatherford, junior, Red Bay	57
Lucas McNutt, junior, Russellville	49
Devin Buckhalter, junior, Russellville	41
Clay Allison, sophomore, Red Bay	37
Brant Bragwell, junior, Belgreen	34
Nate Owens, junior, Phil Campbell	34
Colton Corum, junior, Red Bay	33
Chandler Dyas, freshman, Russellville	31
Seth Taylor, senior, Belgreen	31
Eli Hiser, senior, Belgreen	26
Braden Ray, freshman, Red Bay	22
Joe Hardy, senior, Phil Campbell	21
Rhett Benford, senior, Phil Campbell	20
Brock Malone, senior, Russellville	18



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Newcomers of the Year

Chandler Dyas, freshman guard, Russellville

The sweet-shooting Dyas made an immediate impact in his first varsity season, knocking down 31 threes and averaging 8.0 points per game—both third-best on the team. Dyas set season-highs with four threes made and 17 points in a mid-December game against Deshler, and he reached double-figures in scoring 10 times in 24 games.

The 6'1 freshman, primarily a perimeter player on offense, used his size and length to be an effective rebounder, pulling down 5.7 boards a game. He was also excellent from the foul line, where he shot 78 percent (28-for-36).

Dyas heads up a talented group of young players (also including fellow freshman Brooks Scott, a post player, and eighth-grade point guard Will Bonner) who should help the Golden Tigers bounce back from a disappointing season in short order.

Braden Ray, freshman forward, Red Bay

The highly skilled, highly versatile Ray played a key role in Red Bay's reversal of fortune this year. The 6'2 freshman made his mark three days after Christmas, going 11-for-12 from the line and scoring 16 points to help lead a 61-60 win over Russellville at the Bracy Invitational. Three weeks later at the county tournament, Ray scored a career-high 17 points on 7-for-11 shooting in a 71-49 semifinal win over Tharptown, helping the Tigers survive a foul-plagued night from junior stud Gath Weatherford.

For the season, Ray averaged 9.0 points per game on 46 percent shooting from the floor (including 53 percent from two-point range and a solid 36 percent from beyond the arc). He knocked down 22 threes and hit free throws at a 71-percent clip while ranking second on the team to Weatherford in both makes (68) and attempts (96). Ray was second on the team in rebounding at 5.0 per game and also made a big impact defensively, finishing the season with 34 steals and a team-high 22 blocks.

All-Defense

Many of the players mentioned above as All-County selections made their mark on the defensive end. So did these guys.

Payton Scott, senior forward, Belgreen

Scott reprised his role as Belgreen's energy guy on the press, finishing the season with 46 steals and creating all sorts of havoc. He also pulled down

4.0 rebounds per game and had a career year offensively, averaging 6.1 points and finishing with twice as many assists (52) as turnovers (24).

Colton Corum, junior guard, Red Bay

Corum can get hot from the perimeter [he made 33 threes and averaged a solid 6.6 points per game], but his selfless, hard-nosed style on defense was critical to Red Bay's identity. Always willing to plant his body in front of a driving defender and take a charge, Corum also finished the season with 27 steals and 39 deflections while averaging 3.7 rebounds per game.

Offensively, he ranked second on the team with 65 assists.

Seth Taylor, senior guard, Belgreen

Taylor put his active hands and sharp instincts to good use, finishing second on the team with 54 steals this season. In addition to his steady work on the defensive end, Taylor also enjoyed a career year offensively, knocking down 31 threes and averaging 7.5 points per game while handing out 55 assists and shooting 71 percent (39-for-55) from the foul line.

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