

FranklinFreePress.net

05.16.18

## Pioneer Day a rousing success

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Chris Ozborn and a committee of volunteers opened the door of history Saturday at Pioneer Day, and local residents poured in by the thousands.

To celebrate the bicentennial of Franklin County, which was created by the Alabama Territorial Legislature on February 6, 1818, Pioneer Day featured living history vendors from the era when Franklin County was born.

More than 50 vendors and artisans were on hand at Sloss Lake. The weather was beautiful, and the turnout was great—a day Ozborn described as perfect.

"I've been asked several times today if I thought it was as good as I hoped it would be," Ozborn said, "and I said no, it was better. For children and young people who may not understand, we wanted to show them how people lived in the 1800s. It was educational, too—not just something to look at and have fun, but also a teaching tool."

Saturday's activities included a working spinning wheel, broom making, goat milk soap making, chair

See 'SUCCESS,' Page 8



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

**JUST KICKIN' IT** - Thousands of local residents turned out for Saturday's journey into the past. The day's events included Frank Stone taking kids on mule rides, led by his mule team of Homer and Jethro.



## Baldwin excited to play fundraiser show at Roxy

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Joseph Baldwin has been successful in two careers.

First, he's an acclaimed farrier—a craftsman who trims and shoes horses' hooves—something he's done for 30 years. Second, he's an accomplished musician who's recorded eight CDs.

For those who hear his music, they definitely place Baldwin's musical talent first.

Baldwin (pictured at left) will be the headliner at Saturday's "A Night with Joseph Baldwin" at the Roxy Theater. Organized by Wanda Myrick, the event is a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society and her Relay for Life team "Will's Willing Walkers."

The concert begins at 7 p.m. with the gospel trio Three Strong, featuring Kellie Copeland Hargett, Shayla Baker Sutherland and Leann Parrish Trapp.

See 'BALDWIN,' Page 9

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# Service to Country... Service to Franklin County...



In March 2004, Staff Sgt. Barry Moore said goodbye to his wife Deedra and his daughter Ashton, four years old at the time.

He knew he would be gone at least a year. He was assigned to Mosul, Iraq.

It took a special person to do this. Barry served his country when he was called.

If re-elected as Franklin County Probate Judge, Barry will continue to serve the citizens of Franklin County every day.

Please vote for Barry Moore, Franklin County Probate Judge, in the June 5, 2018, Republican Primary.

Sincerely,  
Bill Jackson  
Vietnam Veteran and  
Fellow VFW (Veteran of Foreign Wars) Member

**Vote Barry Moore**  
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**Dannie Edward Willingham**, Russellville, age 69  
Died Sunday, May 6, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Taylor Cemetery. Danny was preceded in death by his parents, William Edward Willingham and Theadus McAfee Willingham; and his sister-in-law, Connie Willingham.



We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com).

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

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# Maddox: Alabama citizens looking for 'real solutions'

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Walt Maddox knows he's facing an uphill climb in his campaign to become Alabama's first Democratic governor in 16 years. But it's a battle Maddox believes is worth fighting.

"I've never quit one time in my life. I can't promise I'll always succeed, but I'll never quit on you as your governor," Maddox said. "I'm not an ideologue. I am pragmatic. I'm a Democrat. Like John F. Kennedy said, 'Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer.'"

Maddox, in his fourth term as Tuscaloosa mayor, made a campaign stop earlier this month in Franklin County and spent the day as the guest of Russellville attorney Roger Bedford, Jr. Maddox held town hall meetings at Russellville and Red Bay City Halls.

Maddox, who faces opposition in the June 5 Democratic Primary from Sue Bell Cobb, Christopher A. Countryman, James C. Fields, Jr., Doug "New Blue" Smith and Anthony White, has been endorsed by Bedford, the Crimson White newspaper in Tuscaloosa, Ron Sparks and other prominent Democrats.

**"It boils down to action—how do you govern as mayor, and how do you govern when elected governor?" Maddox said. "As I travel Alabama, I find real people looking for real solutions. The rhetoric has not served this state well the past eight years. People want results, and we're the best candidate to deliver those results."**

Maddox shares a message that people want results in state and local government, and he's delivered those results in Tuscaloosa. As for the state level, Maddox points to what he describes as years of failure since Republicans took control.

"It boils down to action—how do you govern as mayor, and how do you govern when elected governor?" Maddox said. "As I travel Alabama, I find real people looking for real solutions. The rhetoric has not served this state well the past eight years. People want results, and we're the best candidate to deliver those results."

Maddox began his professional career as a field director with the Alabama Education Association. In 2001, he became executive director of personnel for Tuscaloosa City Schools, and he was elected as a city councilman in

See 'MADDOX,' Page 10



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Alabama gubernatorial candidate Walt Maddox (center) visited Russellville earlier this month, holding town hall meetings and spending time with former state senator Roger Bedford (left) and Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee chairman Eddie Britton.

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# Leaders step up at RHS

Sheryl Hamilton  
For the FFP

Leaders take charge and move forward with ease. The 2018 Russellville High School Black History Program was held in February. The high school students participated, presenting songs and readings, posting colors and playing musical instruments to make for a much richer Black History Program. Xaria Hollingsworth stood firm and informed the audience that the U. S. Government officially acknowledged Black History Month in 1976. However, Carter G. Woodson, a writer and historian, began Negro History Week in 1926. The month is used to remember contributions and achievements of African Americans. Jesse Owens was an Olympic runner who won many gold medals. The Jesse Owens Museum is just a few miles up the road.

So many students and their families participate in the W. C. Handy Festival activities. Handy is from Florence and is known for his outstanding Jazz music.

Destiny Cooper gave some historical facts about the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice." It was first written as a poem and later put

to music by James Weldon Johnson. RHS senior Logan Jones did not hesitate to accept the leadership role and introduce the speaker with such eloquent words. He wanted his peers to know that he was not just an athletic leader but is also capable of leading in other capacities, too.

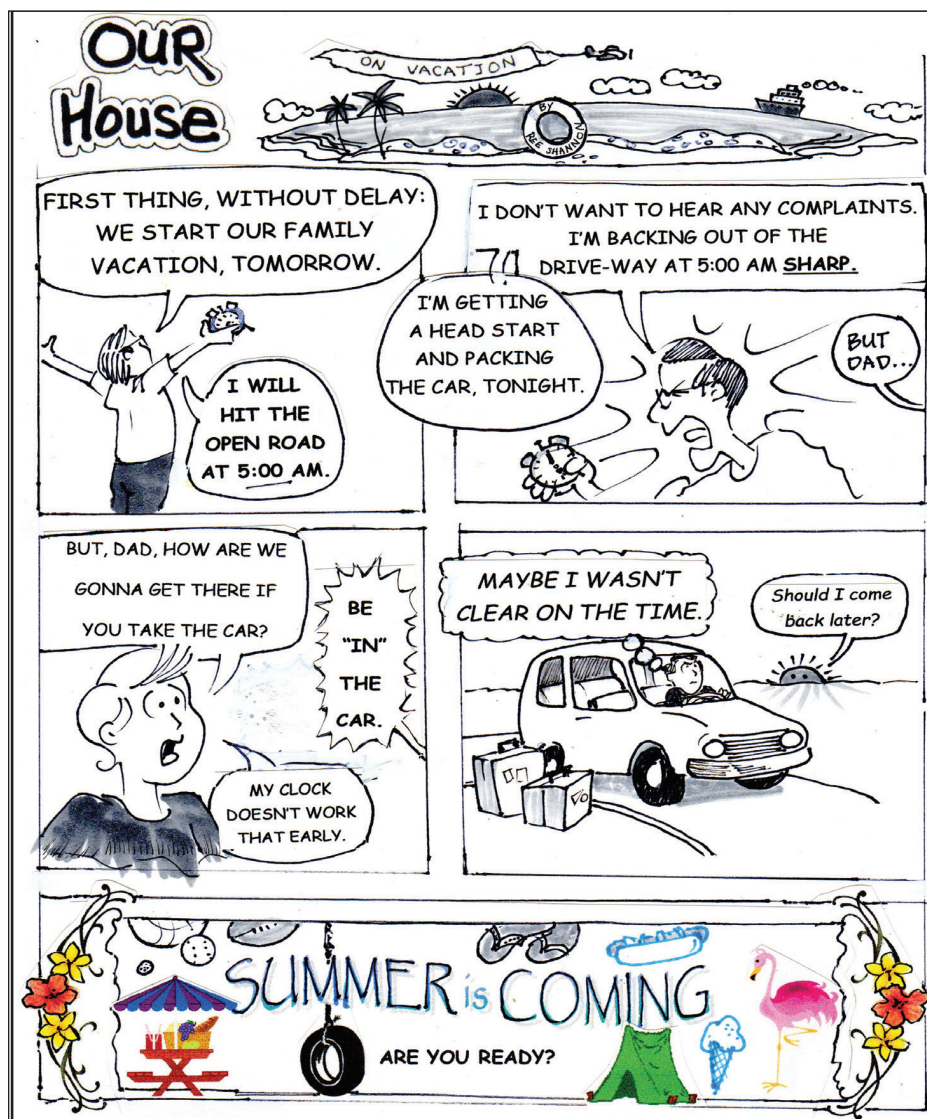
Mrs. Deborah Freeman, RHS Class of 1978, encouraged the students to make wise choices.

"Make wise choices. Think before you make a move," Freeman told the students. "Be responsible and make good choices about your Facebook postings. There are consequences to the choices we make. Sometimes we get it right, and sometimes we get it wrong."

Freeman advised the students to write down five things they desired to do and told them that five years later they really want to be in a different place. "Wise educators know that students grow up," she said.

History has recorded governor George Wallace standing in the door at the University of Alabama in 1960 to block Blacks from entering the school to enroll. Years later, in 1991, Gov. Wallace regretted the speeches he made on segregation.

See 'LEADERS,' Page 5



## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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### Letters to the editor

The Franklin Free Press is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The Franklin Free Press reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

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**by Dave Ramsey**

### Help them help themselves

Dear Dave,

My parents have always been bad with money, and recently they lost their home to foreclosure. They found another place to live, and they both work, but since the foreclosure my dad has been asking me for money on a regular basis. He tries to make me feel guilty, and he calls or asks me to come over to talk about it when my mom isn't home. He even asked for half of the bonus I received at work the other day. I know they need help, but I'm not sure what to do.

Eli

Dear Eli,

I can tell you love your parents, because you're looking for the best way to help them. I think your brain knows what to do, but your heart is having a hard time doing it.

The first thing you're going to have to accept is

that your father is being very manipulative right now. Put an end to these private meetings and phone calls once and for all. If he wants to talk, make sure he understands it will only happen with your mom in the room.

Second, understand there's nothing wrong with helping your folks get back on their feet. However, any financial help you give them should be temporary in nature, and it should be a gift. Don't get involved in giving them money every month just because they raised you. That's not how this works. When you permanently subsidize someone, you take away their dignity. You also change their status and compromise their ability to stand on their own two feet.

In return, you should let them know you expect them to work toward changing their financial behaviors with the help of a quality financial counselor—one with the heart of a teacher. It's often difficult for parents to accept advice and suggestions from their own children, but it's for their own good. Sit down with them, and gently let them know how much you care and how much you want better, happier lives for them.

God bless you all, Eli.

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](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net)!



## 'LEADERS,' from page 4

Several Blacks have attended and graduated from the University of Alabama since that time. Rev. and Mrs. William Freeman are very proud to acknowledge that their children Ryan and Whitney (both RHS graduates) have received their B.S. and Masters Degrees from UA. Deborah Freeman is a UNA graduate and is the executive director of the Russellville Housing Authority. She also serves on the Civil Service Board.

RHS seniors Robert Hamilton and Bernard Phinizee couldn't wait to

stand at the podium to thank RCS superintendent Heath Grimes, RHS principal Jason Goodwin and the administrative staff for allowing the program to be put on this year's calendar. They especially thanked Mrs. Emily Rush and Mrs. Patrice Smith for directing the music and Mrs. Sheryl Hamilton for coordinating the program.

Just as Xaria said, "Our history is rich and should be celebrated."

History was being made by the leaders and participants of the 2018 Black History Program.

## JOE KNOWS:

**BUDGETS:** For the past 16 years, Joe has prepared and managed a budget for a department that now exceeds \$1.4 Million, and has done so without incident or discrepancy.

**MANAGEMENT:** Joe manages and oversees the daily operations of a department of 20 full time employees.

**TEAMWORK:** Working with NACOLG and other fire departments, Joe's department has applied for and received numerous grants, including a storm shelter grant.

**BUSINESS:** Joe, and his wife, Shae, owned and operated Quinn's Grocery for several years.

**Joe Mansell**  
*Franklin County*  
**Probate Judge**

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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 Boston butts for Memorial Day weekend. Butts are \$30. Pre-order at 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, May 26 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.


 Attention all young ladies of Colbert, Franklin and Lauderdale counties entering 10th, 11th, and 12th grades in the Fall of 2018!!! The Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program will be held Saturday, August 4 at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama. Young ladies entering the 12th grade will have the opportunity to compete for cash scholarships as well as many other scholarships to colleges and universities. Also, each county winner will have the opportunity to represent her county at the state program in Montgomery in January of 2019. Young ladies entering the 10th and 11th grades have the opportunity to be "DYW Little Sisters." For more information, contact Susan Hargett at 256-710-9239 or Katernia Cole-Coffey at 256-332-8880, or check information on our Facebook page at Distinguished Young Women of Northwest Alabama, or email dshargett@aol.com. Other information and sign-up is available at [www.DistinguishedYW.org](http://www.DistinguishedYW.org). Please contact us no later than June 23, 2018.


 LifeSouth Community Blood Center will host a blood drive at Russellville Hospital on Wednesday, May 16 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. LifeSouth is the primary supplier of blood products to Russellville Hospital. Please contact Deborah Lindsey to schedule an appointment at 256-332-8676 or by email at [deborah.lindsey@curaehealth.org](mailto:deborah.lindsey@curaehealth.org). Please be sure to bring your photo ID when you donate. Everyone who signs up to donate will receive a free T-shirt, an appetizer card from Texas Roadhouse, a free cookie dough card from Papa Murphy's and a free meal ticket from Russellville Hospital. We will also be giving away DOOR PRIZES! Please call me if you have any questions, and thank you for giving the gift of life!


 State tax obligations for business owners (licenses, sales tax, property tax, withholding, etc.) are a lot to be responsible for. To help Alabama business owners better understand and master these requirements, the Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR) invites business owners to ADOR's free Business Essentials for State Taxpayers (B.E.S.T.) Seminar this Thursday, May 17 at 9:30 a.m. in Florence. The seminar will be held at the Shoals Chamber of Commerce, 20 Hightower Place. While there is no charge to attend the B.E.S.T. Seminars, reservations are required to ensure adequate space is available. You can reserve your spot online, or you can call Donna Jenkins or Christy Simmons at 256-383-4631, ext. 0. For more information on B.E.S.T. Seminars and other B.E.S.T. resources, visit our website at <https://revenue.alabama.gov/taxpayer-advocacy/b-e-s-t-seminars/>.


 The Franklin County Cattlemen's Association will hold a steak sandwich sale this Friday, May 18 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Russellville Foodland parking lot next to CB&S Bank on Hwy. 43. Ribeye steak sandwich, chips and drink of your choice for \$8. For large orders of 15 or more, call ahead to 256-810-9304 or 256-412-3468. Proceeds go to the College Scholarship Fund for Franklin County and Russellville City Schools.

 The Franklin County Career Technical Center will host a Candidate Supper this Friday, May 18 at 6 p.m. in the Belgreen High School lunchroom. Whole Hog Express will cater. Smoked chicken, two sides, drink and dessert for \$10. Proceeds will be used to support Dillon Borden, FBLA Computer Applications 2nd place state winner. He will compete at the National FBLA Conference in Baltimore on June 27-July 2. Call Pam at 256-332-2127, Ext. 1 to order a plate. (Candidates only receive a free plate.) To-go plates are available and must be picked up from 5-5:45 p.m. You may send in money to Pam or pay at the event. It is very important to call in your order to ensure there is enough food prepared. There will also be a cake auction to support Borden on his trip. Anyone willing to donate a cake for this event should call Pam at 256-332-2127, Ext. 1.

 There will be a dinner at the Spruce Pine Community Center this Sunday, May 20. Decoration will be at Spruce Pine Cemetery. Family and friends are invited to bring a covered dish. For more information, call Janice Winstead at 256-460-0524.

 Are you ready to "Stand Up, Step Out" for Jesus? Revival services will be held at 2nd Missionary Baptist Church in Russellville on Monday, May 21 through Wednesday, May 23 at 7 p.m. each night. Matthew 28:19. Evangelist will be Rev. Green Davison IV of St. James M.B. Church in Leighton. Pastor Rev. Johnny Smith and congregation invite you to attend.

 The Franklin County Extension Office will host a free Herd Health Management Program on Tuesday, May 22 at the Northwest Alabama Livestock Auction, 1330 Hwy. 243 South in Russellville. Meal and registration will be from 5-5:45 p.m. Guest speaker Dr. Chris Bishop will speak from 6-7:30 p.m. He is a veterinarian with the Alabama State Veterinarians Office and will be discussing proper herd vaccination and deworming protocol. Meal sponsored by the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association, Franklin County Extension Office and Alabama Cattlemen's Association. RSVP by Wednesday, May 16 to 256-332-8880.

 The 2018 "Sea Valiente" ("Be Brave") Assembly of Jehovah Witnesses is set for Friday-Sunday, June 1-3, at the Von Braun Center in Huntsville. The program includes interviews/discussions, a conference on "The Hope of the Resurrection," a multimedia presentation and movie. Log onto [jw.org](http://jw.org) for program times and information. The assembly will begin daily at 9:20 a.m. and run through 4:50 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and through 3:30 p.m. on Sunday.



# What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

**K**iwanis Club of Corinth proudly presents the 21st annual "Leon Frazier Memorial Sing." The concert is set for Saturday, June 2 at the historic Corinth Coliseum Civic Center, 404 Taylor Street in downtown Corinth. The night will be filled with great southern gospel music featuring Gold City, the Perry's, Jeff and Sheri Easter, Josh and Ashley Franks and Dujuana Frazier Thompson. Doors open at 5 p.m., concert begins at 6 p.m. For more information, call 662-665-1175.

**E**veryone is invited to attend a Candidate Supper at Jonesboro Community Center on Saturday, June 2. Bean plates will be \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Supper starts at 4 p.m. Candidates will speak at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call Dianne at 256-332-0525 or Helen at 256-332-8078.

**T**he Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833 will meet Thursday, June 7 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more info, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!

**T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, June 9 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.

**N**itrate City Baptist Church, 6175 Second Street in Muscle Shoals, invites you to "Game On" VBS, Monday, June 11 through Wednesday, June 13 from 6-8:30 p.m. Registration is Monday, June 11 at 5:30 p.m. Classes for students who have completed grades 1-6 (children) and grades 7-12 (youth). Tyler Pendley is the pastor.

**A**merican Legion Post 64 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Chamber of Commerce office on Jackson Avenue. Meal served around 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m. Next meeting will be June 14.

**O**range Baptist Church will hold Vacation Bible School on Saturday, June 16 from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. The church is located at 8153 Highway 34 in Russellville. VBS will be one day only. For more info, call 256-332-2296.

**T**he NACOLG SenioRx Medication Assistance Program supplies free and low-cost medications for anyone in Alabama with a disability or a chronic illness regardless of age that requires daily medication. Medicare recipients may also be eligible. For more information, contact NACOLG SenioRx today. There is no charge for this service. 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463). This program is in partnership with the state of Alabama and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

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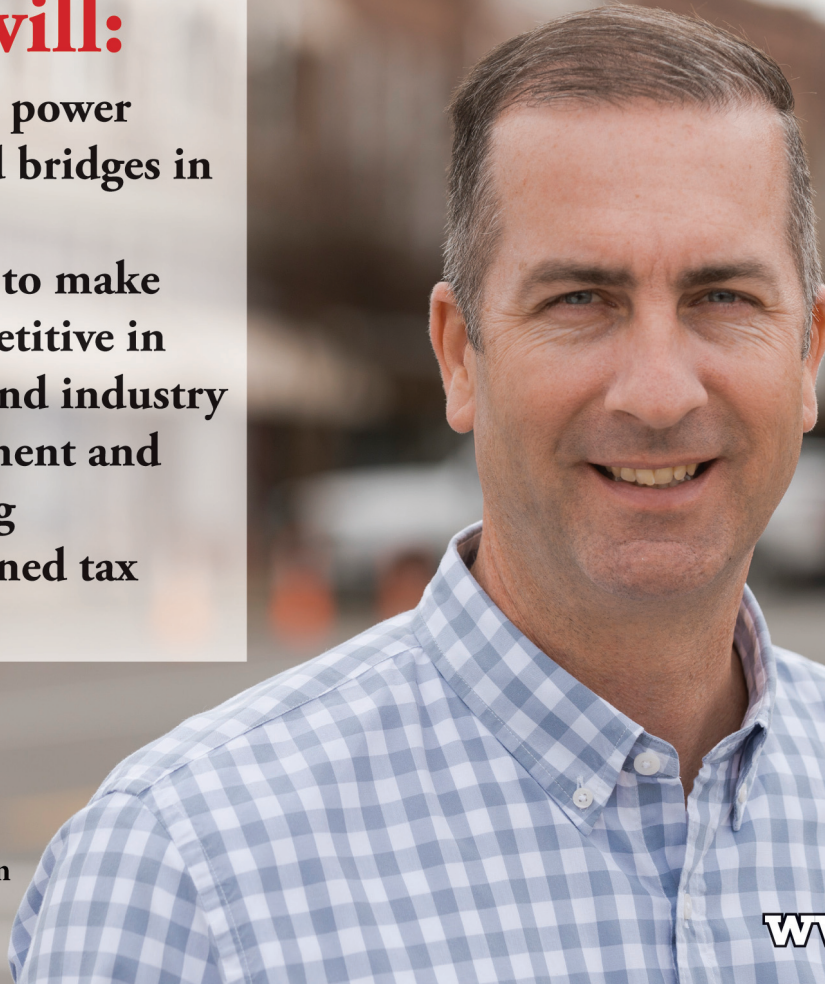


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[www.JamieKiel.com](http://www.JamieKiel.com)

## ‘SUCCESS’ from page 1

caning, handkerchief dolls, corn shelling and much more.

Toby and Sherry Hutcheson spent Pioneer Day representing the Alabama Trappers and Predator Control Association. Hutcheson explained to kids how the lost art of trapping works. He had several animal pelts on display as well.

“This is part of our history. The fur market is almost gone,” Hutcheson said. “To sell fur these days, you have to go outside of the United States. People have quit wearing fur, so most of it goes to Europe, Korea and other overseas locations.”

Trapping is something Hutcheson said he’s done his entire life. He also enjoys traditional hunting but said trapping is another reason to get out and enjoy the wilderness.

Hutcheson recalled trapping in its heyday, when he used his check from fur sales in 1981 to purchase a Chevrolet pickup. He said most local trapping now is for beaver, raccoon and coyotes because of the damage and scavenging they cause.

The Alabama Trappers and Predator Control Association holds annual workshops for kids at Johnny Mack Morrow’s Cypress Cove Farm. There’s also an annual adult workshop at the Hamilton Fire Department sponsored by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. More information about the organization and a membership application is available at [www.atpca.org](http://www.atpca.org).

Russellville resident Louise Woodruff attended Pioneer Day in part to listen to the Sacred Harp Singers. Sacred Harp singing comes from the shape-note book the music originates from, called the *Sacred Harp*. The unusual singing style is based on a four-note system. Woodruff’s father,

Wade Richardson, and her great-uncle, Albert Thorn, were both Sacred Harp singers, so she said listening to the music Saturday was a special piece of history for her.

“My great uncle would come and get my dad every year in April for a singing at the Pleasant Grove Primitive Baptist Church,” Woodruff said. “It was a great memory from the past, and the singing was very good. It nearly made me cry.”

The Sacred Harp Singers perform each month on the first and third Wednesdays from 9-11 a.m. at the Donald Green Senior Center in Cullman.

**“It’s very educational to listen to the actors talk about the tools of the day,” Hutcheson said. “Today we have all this automation, but we’re all so busy we don’t build the relationships with people like they did in 1818. They were really able to enjoy other people, which is something we don’t always have time for today.”**

Orland Britnell had three tables of historic tools and household items that were used by his family. Each item had a tag explaining its use and a bit of history about the item.

Britnell had a tool his father used to make railroad crossties, which he sold for \$1 each. He also displayed a mule wagon side lantern light, which was required in the early 1900s to be on the side of wagons in order for them to be seen at night.

Britnell’s mother, Methyl, was a school teacher in Franklin and Marion Counties. He still has some of her schoolbooks dating back to 1925.

Other historical items in his collection included a butter churn, a lard cooking paddle, hay scythe and dozens of other items.

Britnell also had a traditional corn grinder, which

was a popular item for some of the children at Pioneer Day.

When it comes to arrowheads and old Native American flint tools, Johnny Richardson is an expert. Richardson had his extensive arrowhead collection on display, including some he found more than 20 years ago across the road from Sloss Lake.

“There’s a lot of history in rocks,” Richardson said. “We grew up east of town, and Jackie [Richardson] and I worked in the fields. The area had a lot of flint in it, so that’s how we got interested.”

In conjunction with Pioneer Day, the Franklin County 4-H held a poster contest with the theme, “My Franklin County: People, Places and Stories.”

Tharptown sixth-grader Jackson Clement was the winner of the poster contest. Russellville Elementary fifth-graders Blanca Santamaria and Kimberly Salgado Valenzo won second and third place respectively.

As she sat in one of her historic rocking chairs late Saturday afternoon, archives volunteer Doris Hutcheson was tired from a busy day, but delighted in how the community responded to Pioneer Day.

“It’s very educational to listen to the actors talk about the tools of the day,” Hutcheson said. “Today we have all this automation, but we’re all so busy we don’t build the relationships with people like they did in 1818. I think it was a better general time back then.”

“Even though they had a hard life, my grandparents enjoyed building relationships with their neighbors. They were really able to enjoy other people, which is something we don’t always have time for today.”



# Fire meeting focuses on 2015 legislative act

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

At last Monday's monthly meeting of the Franklin County Fire and Rescue Association, extensive discussion took place about a 2015 local legislative act that allowed Franklin County residents to vote, by fire district, to impose an annual fee to benefit volunteer fire departments.

Although nine fire districts voted to implement the annual fee, the meeting didn't focus on the much-needed revenue coming in as a result of its passage. Instead, there was continued discussion about whether the legislation was supported or hindered by Sen. Larry Stutts (R-Tuscumbia).

Association president Michael Moomaw included Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) on the agenda to discuss the legislative history of the bill, which was introduced in a special session in August of 2015.

Morrow is unopposed as the Democratic candidate to face Stutts, assuming Stutts wins the Republican nomination on June 5, in the November general election.

Morrow explained the three-step process the bill needed in both the House and Senate. After the bill cleared the House, it went to the Senate, where Stutts, as the local legislator whose district would be impacted by the bill, had to guide it through the three-step process.

Morrow said he was contacted by a reporter from the *TimesDaily* on August 5, 2015, and was told by the reporter that Stutts had not signed his name to the bill yet and that he "had bigger fish to fry." (*Times-Daily* August 6, 2015).

Morrow contacted Moomaw and urged him to travel to Montgomery the next day (August 6) with other Franklin County volunteer fire department members to urge Stutts to support the bill.

Step two of the three-step process in the Senate came on August 7 when Stutts signed the bill as the local legislator, and the bill cleared the Alabama Senate on August 10, the seventh day of the special session.

The bill was then sent to Gov. Robert Bentley, who signed it, and it was placed on the ballot and approved by Franklin County voters in nine fire districts in 2016.

The bill calls for an annual fee which is added to residents' ad valorem taxes and is specifically for funding the local fire department. The nine fire districts that moved forward with the legislation all saw voters approve the measure.

Moomaw was asked whether he felt Stutts actually opposed the bill at the time, or if he just wasn't moving forward in a timely fashion with a pending deadline. [Special sessions last no more than 10 days according to Alabama law, and if the bill hadn't cleared the legislature in 2015, it would not have appeared on the ballot until 2018.]

"On our first talk with Sen. Stutts, I thought he was just dragging his feet," Moomaw said. "When we went to him the second time and he said he'd already signed it, and it wasn't signed, that's when I thought he was opposed to it."

While he was in Montgomery, Moomaw said he thought Stutts would kill the legislation, so he contacted Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore to see if he could contact Stutts and ask for his support of the bill.

At a political event earlier last month in East Franklin, Stutts was asked by East Franklin fire chief Rodney Alexander why he 'was reluctant' to support the fire fee bill. Stutts' response appeared in the May 2 edition of the *Franklin Free Press*.

"I don't know that I was reluctant," Stutts said. "I signed it out of the Senate as soon as it got through. I appreciate what volunteer fire departments do, and it's not correct to say that I was reluctant. I supported it with no opposition at all."

In an interview last week with the *Free Press*, Stutts acknowledged his "bigger fish to fry" quote but added that he never said he was going to kill the bill, explaining that the special session was called by the governor for the specific purpose of passing a general fund budget and he thought it would be difficult to pass local legislation during a special session.

"The 'bigger fish to fry' quote was to say we had an uphill battle to pass a local bill in a special session, because the governor called it for one purpose," Stutts said. "We had to pass a budget in the special session, so in a special session there were 'bigger fish to fry' than local bills."

Stutts said in order to bring up legislation during a special session that's not on the call of the ses-

sion, a supermajority is required.

"It's not like passing a regular bill in a regular session," Stutts said. "It's easy to kill something in a special session, because technically there's only one purpose for the session."

Moomaw said he and two other fire association members pleaded with Stutts to support the bill during the special session so voters could decide whether to pass the annual fees in the 2016 election cycle.

Stutts said he always supported the bill. In a 2015 interview with the *Franklin County Times*, Stutts said he thought the citizens of Franklin County would support the annual fee.

"Our volunteer fire departments are a critical part of our rural communities," Stutts said. "If given the opportunity, I believe the vast majority of citizens will see the value in what these individuals do for us on a daily basis and vote to stabilize their funding."

Stutts said he recalls doing everything he could to usher the legislation through the Senate and that he did not say the bill 'didn't belong' in a special session.

"Historically, no local bills get done in special sessions," Stutts said. "That's what I said. We were there for the purpose of passing a general fund budget because the constitution requires us to pass one. But when I got the opportunity in the special session to bring it up, I brought it up and passed it."

In addition to the Franklin County fire fee legislation, Stutts co-sponsored two other pieces of legislation during the 2015 special session.

They included SB 54, which would change language relating to the Congressional district from which University of North Alabama trustees are appointed. The other was SB 44, which would prohibit the sale of tissue from an aborted fetus.

Both pieces of legislation failed to make it to the Senate floor, Morrow said.

"The sale of tissue of an aborted fetus is already against federal law," Morrow said. "What does that have to do with Alabama's general fund budget? Can anyone answer that?"

"Neither of the two bills he thought were more important than Franklin County fire departments passed or even reached the Senate floor."

## 'BALDWIN', from page 1

Their music includes a blend of praise and worship, Southern gospel, bluegrass gospel and contemporary Christian.

Tickets for the concert are \$10 and are available at the door or in advance by contacting Myrick at 256-415-3270. All seats are general admission.

Baldwin is no stranger to the Roxy Theater, having twice performed and won the WGOL Country Showdown in Russellville. Baldwin advanced to the regional finals and was one step away from landing in the top five nationally a few years ago.

Baldwin and his wife Misty live in southern Franklin County. He's a regular performer at the Franklin County Watermelon Festival and numerous other music festivals in northwest Alabama.

His performance schedule averages around 200 shows each year. And he's a regular at the Rattlesnake Saloon in Tuscumbia.

In 2011, Baldwin won the Alabama Department of Tourism's songwriting contest with his "I'm Alabama." His entry was the top one of 145 songs entered in the contest.

In addition to the \$2,000 prize, Baldwin won

eight hours of recording time in FAME Studios and made a music video of the song, which has amassed more than 20,000 views on You Tube.

**"The Roxy is, was, and always will be a favorite venue for me," Baldwin said. "I have only performed there a handful of times, and I'm looking forward to being there Saturday. It's a great thing to be helping people through the Relay for Life. I'm sure most everyone reading this has been impacted, either directly or through their friends or family members, by cancer. I'd like to personally invite everyone out to this Saturday's show."**

As a child, Baldwin took piano lessons but eventually gravitated toward the guitar. He transferred the musical knowledge he learned from the piano to the guitar and made a smooth transition.

Baldwin sees a common thread between his work with horses and his music.

"For a horse, its feet are its life, just like with me

with music, my hands are my life," Baldwin said during a 2016 interview with ALFA's Mary Johnson. "You have to keep a horse's feet healthy."

Although he was a bit under the weather early this week, Baldwin said he always looks forward to performing at the Roxy.

"The Roxy is, was, and always will be a favorite venue for me," he said. "I have only performed there a handful of times, and I'm looking forward to being there Saturday. It's a great thing to be helping people through the Relay for Life. I'm sure most everyone reading this has been impacted, either directly or through their friends or family members, by cancer. I'd like to personally invite everyone out to this Saturday's show."

Additionally, Baldwin said he's looking forward to hearing the music of Three Strong.

"I can't wait to hear the lovely ladies of the group Three Strong," Baldwin said, "and I'm bringing along a special guest to perform with me—11-year-old Liam Riddle. You will definitely be entertained by this young man."





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## 'MADDOX,' from page 3

Tuscaloosa.

Maddox was nationally recognized for his part in  
Tuscaloosa's crisis management after the devast-  
ating April 27, 2011 EF-4 tornado hit his city. He  
was named Municipal Leader of the Year by  
American City and Country in 2012. He attended  
the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where  
he was a four-year letterman on the football team.  
He and his wife Stephanie have two children.

Maddox says he and his fellow Alabamians are  
tired of seeing stagnancy in state government.

"My entire life, Alabama has been at or near the  
bottom of everything that matters nationally,"  
Maddox said. "The old way of doing business  
does not serve our future generations."

Tuscaloosa has seen major job growth during  
Maddox's tenure as mayor, something he credits  
to a unified effort that crosses party lines to work  
together for the city's benefit.

"It's not about who has the political onesman-  
ship. It's about creating new jobs. Figure out how  
to do it, and move forward with that plan," Maddox  
said. "It boils down to strategic thoughtfulness and  
ethical leadership. It's not about promoting party  
ideology. I'm running because I believe we must  
protect our next generation of Alabamians and  
leave them better off than what we inherited."

Maddox said his friendship with Bedford began  
before he was elected mayor in 2004.

"Roger was such an influential member of the

Alabama Senate. To pass a piece of legislation,  
you had to work with Senator Bedford," Maddox  
said. "We could discuss any issue and I found him  
knowledgeable, and all he cared about was creat-  
ing a positive result."

Bedford said he endorsed Maddox because he  
saw first-hand the effectiveness of Maddox's lead-  
ership after the 2011 tornado.

"I've been very impressed with his ability to  
rebuild Tuscaloosa after the tornado," Bedford  
said, "and his support of education and economic  
development is something I think will help all of us  
in Alabama."

Maddox pledges to support rural hospitals and  
says he will move forward with expanding  
Medicaid, which would infuse \$1.8 million into  
Alabama's health care system.

"I'll do that by executive order on day one. Every  
moment we wait, we are jeopardizing our ability to  
expand it," Maddox said. "It's been mentioned as  
a reduction by our current administration. It's one  
of the worst policy decisions in recent memory,  
and as I run for governor that's become painfully  
obvious across Alabama."

Maddox promises to protect public education,  
and he supports an education lottery to transform  
Alabama's public education system.

"Our lottery proposal would reinvest hundreds of  
thousands, potentially millions, into rural school  
systems," Maddox said. "Under our Promise  
Program, Russellville City Schools would qualify  
for more than \$1.1 million. I will veto any legisla-  
tion that takes money away from public schools  
and puts it into private schools. The taxpayers of  
Alabama work hard to fund public schools, and  
this money shouldn't be stolen from them."

For more information on Maddox and his cam-  
paign, log onto www. waltmaddox.com.

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- Graduated from Russellville High School, 1984
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## Walk this way

Russellville's girls experienced both ends of the walk-off spectrum at the North Regional last Friday in thrilling games against Scottsboro and Alexandria. See story Page 14.



## SPORTS

05.16.18

# Lady Bulldogs make history in Huntsville

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

HUNTSVILLE - After winning a pair of close games last Thursday at the Metro Kiwanis Sportsplex in Huntsville, Belgreen's girls saved their best performance for the Class 1A North Regional final on Friday morning.

The Lady Bulldogs pounded Waterloo 15-0 in three innings, winning their first-ever regional championship in dominant fashion and punching their ticket to Montgomery for the first time in program history.

"We came alive today," said head coach Chris Scott, whose team had beaten Decatur Heritage 12-11 in a back-and-forth affair on

See 'HISTORY,' Page 16

# 4-GONE CONCLUSION



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**BETTER LATE THAN NEVER** - An injury concern prompted Heaps (4) to make a last-minute lineup change and go with Lloyd (9), who buried the Blue Devils with a first-inning blast.

## A semifinal sweep has the Golden Tigers headed to Montgomery yet again in search of an unprecedented fourth straight 5A title

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - The first curveball Jeff Lloyd saw last Friday afternoon was thrown at him by his own head coach, Chris Heaps.

Prior to the start of Russellville's best-of-three series with Mortimer Jordan in the Class 5A semifinals, Lloyd, a 6'2, 205-pound senior and three-year member of the varsity baseball team, had gone through his usual pre-game routine of playing catch in the outfield and taking groundballs with the Golden Tigers' other first basemen. Lloyd did not expect to start Game 1, and indeed his name was not on the initial lineup card Heaps sent to the press box for the series opener.

But Heaps noticed during those pre-game infield drills that junior Caden Parker, slated to start at first, wasn't moving around too well. Parker, on a 10-for-24 tear through the first three rounds of the playoffs that had seen him rise all the way to the cleanup spot, has been dealing with a sore right knee lately, one that required a cortisone injection on Friday morning. Ordinarily, Parker would have been at short with Rudy Fernandez on the mound (as he was for Game 1), but Heaps was hopeful that his impaired mobility would be less of an issue at first base.

Watching Parker take groundballs, however, the head coach came to a realization.

"He was laboring a bit," Heaps said. "He wasn't fielding balls cleanly. I said to myself, 'I'm not

gonna be able to play him.' I had to scratch him."

As soon as Heaps and his players returned to the dugout for pre-game introductions, he hurriedly filled out a new lineup card and made a beeline for Lloyd.

"I was sitting there," Lloyd said, "and he came over to me and said, 'You're at first.' It was probably two or three minutes before we went out on the field [for the national anthem]. It was last-minute, but I had prepared for it."

Lloyd had been a semi-regular for Russellville during the season, collecting 86 plate appearances, but only seven of those had come in the playoffs, and he hadn't started any of the team's first eight postseason games. Earlier in the year, Heaps and Lloyd had a conversation that thousands of coaches and players have had thousands of times since organized sports became a thing. The topic?

Playing time.

"Jeff and I had...not an altercation, but a discussion," said Heaps, now in his sixth year at RHS. "He wasn't happy with the playing time he was getting. I told him he had two choices—he could stay positive and have a good attitude about it, or he could move on. Those were his two options, and I told him to take that night and think about what he wanted to do."

"He came back to me the next day, and he said, 'Coach, from now on, whatever you decide, I'm not gonna bring any negative energy.' He said he

See 'FOURTH,' Page 18



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**Emma Dempsey earned a pair of complete game wins on Thursday and then shut out Waterloo in Friday's regional-clinching rout.**



# Russellville girls finish third at regional



Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

HUNTSVILLE - Two outs away from their second state tournament berth in the last three years, Russellville's girls couldn't close the deal against Alexandria last Friday afternoon, falling 9-8 in the loser's bracket final at the North Regional Tournament.

Earlier on Friday, the Lady Golden Tigers (24-20-2) had rallied from a late deficit to beat Scottsboro 5-4 on a walk-off RBI single by A.J. Taylor. With a trip to Montgomery on the line just a few hours later, Alexandria turned the tables and walked off on Russellville with a three-run rally in the bottom of the seventh. An RBI single by Emma Rolfe brought Alexandria within a run at 8-7, and then Leighton Sparks won it with a two-run single to right.

The Lady Golden Tigers fell behind in the bottom of the first when a two-run single by Millie Burt staked Alexandria to an early 2-0 lead. Sophomore pitcher Krista Sikes settled in at that point and retired 11 of the next 12 batters she faced.

Still trailing 2-0, Russellville rallied to score five runs in the top of the fifth. Makala O'Neal and Jenna Whitfield started the inning with base hits, and Sydney Burcham's RBI single got the Lady Golden Tigers on the board. One out later, Whitfield scored the tying run on a sacrifice bunt by Alivia Clemmons. Autumn Logan followed with

**FAMILY FIRST** - Russellville got a walk-off hit from Taylor (opposite page) to beat Scottsboro 5-4 on Friday morning, but a late rally by Alexandria later in the day left the Lady Golden Tigers two outs shy of reaching Montgomery.

PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

See 'THIRD,' page 15

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## Sydney Burcham Senior 2B, Russellville

Burcham wrapped up her Russellville career with a strong performance at last week's North Regional in Huntsville. She opened with a pair of three-hit games last Thursday against Scottsboro and Alexandria and finished the tournament 8-for-16 with five doubles, three RBIs and four runs scored as the Lady Golden Tigers went 3-2 and narrowly missed out on a trip to Montgomery.

For the season, Burcham led RHS with 54 hits, a .466 average, six home runs, 11 doubles, 49 runs scored, 26 walks and a .576 OBP.





## 'THIRD,' from page 14

a bunt hit, scoring Burcham to put Russellville on top 3-2.

Clemmons scored on an error, and then Taylor delivered a sac fly to chase home Logan and make it 5-2.

Sikes worked around a one-out double in the bottom of the fifth, and the Lady Golden Tigers added two more runs in the top of the sixth. Karlie Moore singled and scored when O'Neal reached on an error, and Burcham brought home O'Neal with a squeeze bunt to make it 7-2.

Kyleigh Rhodes homered for Alexandria in the bottom of the sixth to cut the lead to 7-3, but Sikes struck out the next batter for out number two. An error, a passed ball, two singles and a two-run double by Mattie Wade brought Alexandria back within a run at 7-6. Megan Warhurst relieved Sikes in the circle and got the third out of the inning on a groundball.

Russellville got one of those runs back in the top of the seventh on singles by Logan, Warhurst and Moore to make it 8-6. Warhurst retired the first batter in the bottom of the inning before issuing a walk and hitting a batter. Rolfe's RBI single cut the lead to 8-7, and Sparks delivered the walk-off win with a two-run single to right.

Moore led the Lady Golden Tigers at the plate, going 3-for-4 with an RBI and a run. Logan was 2-for-4 with an RBI and two runs, and Warhurst was 2-for-4 with a double. Burcham went 1-for-2 with two RBIs and a run, and O'Neal was 1-for-4 with two runs. Clemmons was 1-for-3 with an RBI and a run, and Whitfield was 1-for-3 with a run.

Sikes pitched 5.2 innings, allowing three earned runs on seven hits. She struck out four and walked three.

Russellville finished third at the regional, with Ardmore and Alexandria advancing.

In previous action:

### **Russellville 5 Scottsboro 4**

Karlie Moore hit a game-tying two-run homer for Russellville in the bottom of the sixth inning on Friday morning, and A.J. Taylor delivered a walk-off RBI single in the seventh as the Lady Golden Tigers rallied past Scottsboro.

Scottsboro led 4-1 before Russellville rallied in the sixth. Autumn Logan led off with a single to left, took second on an error and scored on a double by Taylor to cut the lead to 4-2. One out later, Moore, the team's junior shortstop, smacked her sixth home run of the season over the fence in left to tie the game.

Reliever Emma Whitfield pitched around a two-out walk and single by Scottsboro in the top of the seventh, and Russellville won it with a two-out rally in the bottom half. Alivia Clemmons singled with two outs, and Scottsboro elected to intentionally walk Logan, who was already 3-for-3 in Friday's game and had hit a three-run homer in a 6-1 win over the Lady Wildcats on Thursday. Taylor came through in the clutch, singling to left field to bring home Clemmons with the winning run.

Whitfield (8-4) got the win, allowing one earned run on two hits in 3.2 innings. She struck out one and walked one, holding Scottsboro scoreless over the final three frames. Megan Warhurst started for Russellville and pitched the first 3.1 innings, allowing three earned runs on five hits.

Logan finished 3-for-3 with two runs scored and a stolen base. Taylor was 2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs, and Moore was 1-for-3 with the two-run homer. She, Logan, Clemmons and Sydney Burcham all finished tied for the team lead with six home runs apiece.



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PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

**KNOCK ON WOOD -**  
Bailey Wood and the  
Lady Bulldogs will look  
to continue their winning  
ways in Montgomery.

## 'HISTORY', from page 13

Thursday morning before rallying past Covenant Christian for a 7-3 win Thursday night to make the regional final. "We made history—our first time to ever win regionals, and our first time to go to state. These girls are very special, and the future looks very bright."

That wasn't necessarily the case a couple of months ago after the Lady Bulldogs opened the season on an 11-game losing streak. Remarkably, they've lost only two games since (both in regular-season area play to Tharptown), racking up 26 wins, their second straight county championship, an Area 13 tournament title, a North Region championship and their first-ever trip to the state tournament.

"The girls told me they were not going to lose another game, and so far they have backed it up," Scott said. "It's been a long four years, but I wouldn't change a thing. We may not have the best athletes around, but I bet there's not any team anywhere that has more heart and determination than this group of girls."

"Everyone has a role on the team, and they love and believe in each other. I'm just proud and thankful to be a part of this team."

Belgreen scored twice in the first inning last Friday, getting a double from Sydney Borden and taking

advantage of two errors by Waterloo. The Lady Bulldogs broke open the game with a huge second inning, sending 11 batters to the plate and scoring six more runs to make it 8-0. Emma Dempsey and Bailey Wood got things started in the second with back-to-back singles, and Borden, Katie Dempsey and Kaycee Wilson also had hits in the six-run rally.

Belgreen put the game away with another big inning in the third, sending nine batters to the plate and scoring seven runs. Emmie Scott and Borden got things rolling with back-to-back one-out singles, and Katie Dempsey drew a walk. Cortny Williams and Emma Dempsey each had a double in the third, and Camie Terrell added a triple.

Emma Dempsey picked up the win in the circle with three shutout innings, allowing four hits and striking out five.

Borden finished 3-for-3 with two doubles and three runs scored. Emma Dempsey was 2-for-2 with a double and a walk, and Katie Dempsey was 1-for-2 with a walk and three runs scored. Scott went 1-for-2 with a walk and scored twice, and Williams was 1-for-3 with a double and a run.

See 'HISTORY,' page 17



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## 'HISTORY', from page 16

Kaycee Wilson went 1-for-2 with a walk, and Terrell was 1-for-2 with a triple, a sacrifice fly and a run scored. Wood went 1-for-2 and scored a run, and Kelsey Wilson had a walk and a run.

Next up for Belgreen is a first-round game in the state tournament against North-Central runner-up South Lamar on Wednesday morning at 9 a.m. at Montgomery's Lagoon Park. The Lady Bulldogs have grown accustomed to winning, and they don't plan on stopping now.

"It's been a long time coming," Scott said. "It's time to bring that Blue Map home."

Other first-round matchups in the Class 1A state tournament (also set for Wednesday at 9 a.m.) will be South Regional champion Brantley against South-Central runner-up Isabella; South-Central champion Sumiton Christian against South runner-up Sweet Water; and North-Central champion Addison against North runner-up Waterloo.

After stumbling to an 0-11 start, coach Chris Scott and Belgreen have won 26 games while bringing home county, area and regional championships.



"It's been a long time coming," Scott said of Belgreen's first regional title and state tournament berth. "It's time to bring that Blue Map home."

In related news, this year's Class 1A, Area 13 softball team, as voted on by the five head coaches, was released on Saturday. All-Area selections include: From Tharptown, catcher Shaylee Wieting, pitcher Olivia Ergle, pitcher/second baseman Taylor Cameron, first baseman Ameliah Dawson; from Vina, Abby Hester, Kaitlyn King, Sarah Johnson; from Phillips, Lexie Dishner, Lexie Hajjar, Amber Markham; and from Belgreen, shortstop Sydney Borden, second baseman Emmie Scott, outfielder Camie Terrell, first baseman Cortny Williams, catcher Kaycee Wilson.

The coaches selected Emma Dempsey, Belgreen's freshman pitcher, as area Player of the Year. Chris Scott was voted Coach of the Year.

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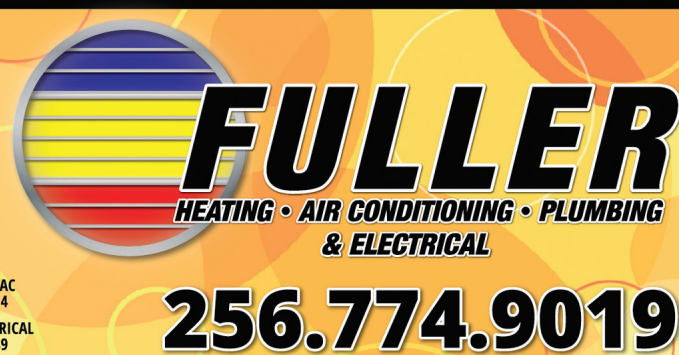
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## 'FOURTH' from page 13

was gonna be positive, and he has been."

A first-inning at bat in Game 1 seemed like a long shot for Lloyd, who was batting in the No. 8 spot. Then again, with the way the Golden Tigers have been swinging the bats in these playoffs [they were batting .360 as a team and averaging 9.8 runs per game in the postseason entering Friday], perhaps the odds weren't so slim after all. The bottom of the first began with a single by Noah Gist and a walk to Fernandez, and then senior Landon Ezzell continued his monster playoff run with a three-run homer to left off Mortimer Jordan starter Chas Austin to give Russellville an early 3-0 lead.

Austin retired the next two batters, but back-to-back hits by Devin Buckhalter and Hunter Briles brought Lloyd to the plate with two on and two out. The big lefty had homered twice in his postseason career, once last year in the first round against these same Blue Devils and again two weeks ago in a Game 3 rout of Lee-Huntsville, but both of those blasts came when the outcome was no longer in doubt. This was his best chance in a while to truly impact a critical game, and he wasn't about to miss it.

Not three times, any way.

"I swung through the first two pitches," Lloyd said. "They weren't as slow as I expected them to be. After that, I was just trying to put a good swing on it and hit it hard somewhere."

Ahead of Lloyd 0-and-2, Austin threw him a curveball down—at the knees or below—but right over the plate. Lloyd jumped all over it, hammering it over the fence in right-center for Russellville's second three-run homer of the inning. Eight batters in, the Golden Tigers were already up 6-0 and well on their way to drawing first blood with a 12-4 win.



"Coach made a good decision," Parker said later on Friday night after striking out a season-high nine batters in six innings of two-hit ball in a 7-0 Game 2 win that sent the Golden Tigers (30-15) to Montgomery for a fourth consecutive season. "I was able to push off [the pitching rubber] without any problem, but I couldn't really run. It would have been hard for me to play in Game 1. Then Jeff comes up in the first inning and WHAM—a bomb. It was great."

Lloyd now has three career home runs at the varsity level—all in the postseason, all in Russellville victories and none more important than Friday's tone-setting blast.

"I'm proud of him. He played well tonight," Heaps said of Lloyd, who drove in another run with a bases-loaded walk in the sixth inning of Game 1 and then came off the bench to smash an opposite-field double to deep left-center in the seventh inning of Game 2. "Having a bat like that to come off the bench is big for us. The other night at Lee, a home run. Tonight, another home run. And he hit the snot out of that double in Game 2."

Russellville's roster is filled with guys like Lloyd who have earned a ring or two during the team's current run of three consecutive state titles but are playing far more meaningful roles in the quest for number four. Fernandez, who improved to 7-2 on the mound with five solid innings in Friday's opener, has been the Golden Tigers' most consistent hitter from start to finish this season, batting .347 with six homers and 35 RBIs. Gist, who had a productive season in 2017 as a junior but played only sporadically once the playoffs began, has been a mainstay in the leadoff spot as a senior, leading the team in both walks (33) and runs scored (38) while reaching base at a .443 clip.

"Noah has been doing a great job setting the table for us," Heaps said of Gist, who went 3-for-5 in last Friday's first game and is now batting an even .400 (12-for-30) in the playoffs with at least one hit in nine out of ten games. "Every time he comes up, it's barrel, barrel barrel. He hit the ball hard several times in Game 1."

Briles, a junior, has blossomed this season as well, transforming from a defense-only catcher to a legitimate two-way contributor who is just as productive at the plate as he is valuable behind it. With three more hits in Friday's doubleheader (including a key two-out RBI single off Blue Devil ace Dalton Hall in a four-run first inning in Game 2), Briles is now batting .419 (13-for-31) in ten playoff games and .312 on the season as a whole.

"I think we just have better focus," Briles said of both his and the team's steady late-season improvement at the plate. "We're not chasing as much, and we're swinging at better pitches."

Senior second baseman Brock Malone, whose 24 at bats as a junior in 2017 all came during the regular season, has been remarkably reliable with the glove this year while also producing in the middle of the order. He collected four hits in last Friday's sweep, raising his playoff average to .364 and his season average to .296 with six doubles and 28 RBIs. Buckhalter, who got just three plate appearances last year as a sophomore while contributing almost exclusively as a courtesy runner, has had a big season at the plate, batting .336 with 43 hits (third-most on the team), 26 RBIs, 28 runs and 15 stolen bases.

Then there's Parker, whose only appearance in a varsity game last season consisted of two innings of relief work on the mound. He's been a pleasant surprise at the plate and then some, batting .325 and ranking second on the team with a .456 OBP and 12 doubles. His most valuable contributions, however, have come on the mound, where Friday's Game 2 gem improved his season record to 8-2 with a 2.30 ERA. Parker has gone 3-0 in his first three career playoff starts, out-pitching a pair of aces (Lee lefty Ludany Rodriguez in round two and the hard-throwing Hall on Friday) and winning a do-or-die game against Springville in the quarterfinals.

"Caden has really shown a lot of competitive greatness," Heaps said on Friday night, breaking out a superlative he uses in only the rarest of circumstances. "Being at your best when your best is needed—that's competitive."

See 'FOURTH,' Page 19

PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**LEAN ON ME** - Heaps (right) said after last Friday's sweep of Mortimer Jordan that Ezzell, batting .441 in the playoffs with four home runs and 23 RBIs in 10 games, is "carrying this team."



## 'FOURTH', from page 18

greatness. Caden did that for us tonight, and he did it on a bum knee."

Bum knee or not, Briles knew after warming up Parker in the bullpen prior to Game 2 that his classmate was about to do something special.

"No doubt. He was throwing really well," Briles said, "and that usually carries over a lot into the game. His location was great, and we were able to mix it up. He's able to change things up with his fastball. He can throw it at 78 [miles per hour] and he can throw it at 82. That keeps guys off balance."

Parker painted the outside corner with that fastball all night, holding the Blue Devils (31-14) hitless until sophomore DH Boo Prisoc grounded a single up the middle with two outs in the bottom of the fifth. After hitting a batter and giving up a single to Joseph Swann to start the bottom of the seventh, Parker gave way to reliever Jaret Ward, yet another player who has flourished this season in an expanded role. Ward threw just 5.1 innings last season as a junior, but he leads the pitching staff this year with 18 appearances, 17 of which have come in relief. The senior sidearmer is 5-2 with a 2.12 ERA and just 29 hits allowed in 42.2 innings.

Ward, who picked up the win in last Monday's decisive Game 3 against Springville in the quarterfinals, worked out of a bases-loaded, nobody-out jam after relieving Parker on Friday, preserving the shutout and sealing Russellville's fourth straight trip to the state finals. In many ways, this one may be the most satisfying, given that few observers expected the Golden Tigers to make it back to Montgomery following the departure last May of five college-bound senior players, a group headlined by current Auburn Tigers and all-time Russellville greats Cody Greenhill and Judd Ward.

"This one means a lot, because we showed everybody we could do it even without guys like Cody and Judd," said Lloyd, one of the team's 11 seniors. "Those guys were great players, but this one is special because these are the guys I've been playing with since I was little. I've been playing with them my whole life."

That group includes guys like Ezzell, who is putting together a postseason performance for the ages to wrap up his four-year varsity career. His first-inning blast in Friday's Game 1 was his fourth home run of these playoffs, to go along with a .441 average and a staggering 23 RBIs in ten games.

"He is carrying this team," Heaps said Friday of Ezzell, who is now batting .298 on the year with nine home runs, 14 doubles and 43 RBIs in 45 games. "He's our glue guy. He's the straw that stirs the drink."

Ezzell and fellow varsity veterans Houston Kitterman (.348 average this season with three homers, 34 runs scored and a team-best .468 OBP) and Tom Barkley Scott (nine extra-base hits, including three homers, with 20 walks, 24 RBIs and 32 runs scored) have all been vitally important to this year's success—just as they were a year ago. Guys like Gist, Parker, Fernandez, Malone, Buckhalter, Briles, Lloyd and Ward have now joined them as key cogs on a team bound for Montgomery. This time, they're not just along for the ride.

"Going to Montgomery last year was great," Parker said on Friday, "but it's even more memorable when you're a bigger part of the team. That makes it more fun, more special."

Winning a fourth consecutive state championship would *really* be fun and special—not to mention unprecedented and historical. Russellville is one of only three programs (along with Hartselle from 1990-92 and Spanish Fort from 2010-12) to win three straight titles in Class 5A; no 5A team has ever

### Russellville Golden Tigers

Record: 30-15 (8-2 playoffs) Runs/game - 6.8 Runs allowed/game - 4.0  
Head coach Chris Heaps: 192-78 in six seasons at RHS (38-7 in playoffs)

Team Batting: 354 hits in 1,219 AB (.290), 23 HR, 4 TR, 64 DB, 206 BB, 49 HBP, 273 K, 46 SB, 27 sac bunts, .403 OBP  
DH Noah Gist: 33 hits/118 AB (.280), 3 DB, 10 RBI, 38 runs, 11 SB, .444 OBP  
SS Rudy Fernandez: 50/144 (.347), 6 HR, 8 DB, 35 RBI, 37 runs, .449 OBP  
1B Landon Ezzell: 42/141 (.298), 9 HR, 14 DB, 43 RBI, 29 runs, .426 OBP  
3B Houston Kitterman: 48/138 (.348), 3 HR, 3 DB, 21 RBI, 34 runs, .468 OBP  
2B Brock Malone: 40/135 (.296), 6 DB, 29 RBI, 27 runs, .371 OBP  
RF Devin Buckhalter: 44/131 (.336), 6 DB, 26 RBI, 28 runs, 15 SB, .393 OBP  
P Caden Parker: 27/83 (.325), 12 DB, 26 RBI, 18 runs, .456 OBP  
C Hunter Briles: 20/64 (.312), 1 DB, 12 RBI, .380 OBP  
CF T.B. Scott: 27/126 (.214), 3 HR, 2 TR, 4 DB, 24 RBI, 32 runs, .320 OBP

Team Pitching: 2.86 ERA, 303.1 IP, 266 hits, 254 K, 139 BB, 51 HBP  
Caden Parker: 8-2, 2.30 ERA, 60.2 IP, 57 hits, 49 K, 18 BB, 16 HBP, 1 SV  
Rudy Fernandez: 7-2, 3.68 ERA, 59 IP, 62 hits, 64 K, 26 BB, 7 HBP, 1 SV  
Landon Ezzell: 6-4, 2.05 ERA, 57.2 IP, 44 hits, 53 K, 17 BB, 7 HBP, 2 SV  
Jaret Ward: 5-2, 2.12 ERA, 42.2 IP, 29 hits, 26 K, 26 BB, 9 HBP, 2 SV  
Houston Kitterman: 1-1, 3.18 ERA, 21.2 IP, 10 hits, 22 K, 16 BB, 3 HBP  
T.B. Scott: 2-3, 1.96 ERA, 24.2 IP, 25 hits, 17 K, 17 BB

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won four in a row. The Golden Tigers will have a chance to do that in Montgomery as they lock horns for a third straight year with Faith Academy in a best-of-three series beginning on Thursday at 4 p.m. at Paterson Field.

Heaps, seeking his eighth state championship as either a player, assistant coach or head coach, was asked on Friday night how this particular team was able to get back to Montgomery despite the loss of no fewer than a dozen players to the college ranks since this run started back in 2015. Naturally, he answered with one of his favorite quotes [it's a long list], this one from the late, great martial artist Bruce Lee.

"He once said, 'Fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks one time. Fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.' This team has worked relentlessly on the little things—bunting, hit-and-running, runners in scoring position, dirt-balls, turning double plays, all that stuff. We take 25 minutes of rapid-fire groundballs every day. We have practiced that one kick 10,000 times. And we're pretty confident about it."

### Faith Academy Rams

Record: 32-3 (8-0 playoffs) Runs/game - 9.2 Runs allowed/game - 2.5  
Head coach: Matt Seymour (record N/A)

Team Batting: 337 hits in 982 AB (.343), 39 HR, 16 TR, 69 DB, 114 BB, 58 HBP, 199 K, 84 SB, 11 sac bunts, .433 OBP  
CF Jackson Bell: 38 hits/107 AB (.355), 6 HR, 7 DB, 22 RBI, 39 runs, .474 OBP  
C Chris Sargent: 50/121 (.413), 6 HR, 5 TR, 8 DB, 41 RBI, 20 runs, .444 OBP  
P Reece Ewing: 36/109 (.330), 8 HR, 12 DB, 37 RBI, 29 runs, .419 OBP  
RF Braxton Bell: 28/85 (.329), 4 HR, 7 DB, 21 RBI, 32 runs, 9 SB, .468 OBP  
SS J.G. Bell: 31/89 (.348), 2 HR, 9 DB, 21 RBI, 28 runs, 12 SB, .412 OBP  
LF Parker Mills: 30/84 (.357), 3 HR, 5 DB, 17 RBI, 22 runs, 11 SB, .423 OBP  
1B Michael Garcia: 23/91 (.253), 2 HR, 3 TR, 4 DB, 20 RBI, 18 runs, .324 OBP  
DH Eli Giles: 12/32 (.375), 1 HR, 3 DB, 6 RBI, 21 runs, .444 OBP  
3B Bryant Andrews: 18/60 (.300), 1 HR, 7 DB, 16 RBI, 18 runs, .408 OBP

Team Pitching: 1.72 ERA, 227.2 IP, 143 hits, 317 K, 102 BB, 29 HBP  
Reece Ewing: 10-2, 2.22, 63 IP, 38 hits, 106 K, 25 BB, 8 HBP  
Eli Giles: 5-1, 0.76 ERA, 46.1 IP, 26 hits, 53 K, 22 BB, 3 HBP, 3 SV  
Jackson Bell: 3-0, 2.10 ERA, 20.1 IP, 16 hits, 18 K, 5 BB, 3 HBP, 2 SV  
James Flynn: 2-0, 3.71 ERA, 17.1 IP, 12 hits, 23 K, 13 BB, 1 HBP, 1 SV  
Alex McWhorter: 3-0, 2.33 ERA, 18.1 IP, 14 hits, 28 K, 7 BB, 6 HBP, 1 SV  
Cole Howell: 1-0, 2.10 ERA, 9.2 IP, 3 ER, 10 hits, 12 K, 3 BB, 2 HBP



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