



## Here's the Beef!

Carrying forth a tradition started in 1955 by the Alabama CowBelles, Gov. Kay Ivey signed a proclamation urging residents to eat beef for Father's Day. See Page 11 for details.

## On Alert

The EMA is moving forward with a new emergency alert system that will provide mass messaging across social media. See story Page 9.

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# Three's a crowd

## June 3rd a special day for local family

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

June 3rd has always been a special day for Courtne Gray.

It's her birthday, it's her mother Helen Campbell's birthday, and it's the birthday of her daughter Lynlee Gray, who just turned one earlier this month.

Gray, who lives in Tharptown with her husband Nathan, was told by doctors her due date would be June 13,

See 'THREE,' Page 10



COURTESY PHOTO  
Courtne Gray (left) shares a birthday with her mother, Helen Campbell, and also her daughter, Lynlee Gray, born on June 3, 2017.

# Warhurst has big shoes to fill as new principal at PCES

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Jennifer Warhurst says she's not going to try and replace Jackie Ergle as Phil Campbell Elementary School principal. Instead, she's going to build on the many positive things already in place at the school.

Warhurst was hired to replace Ergle at the Franklin County Board of Education's June 12 meeting. Ergle recently retired after a 44-year educational career, including serving as PCES principal since 2001.

"I'm not there to replace her. I'm there to

grow as a leader and enhance the things already going well at Phil Campbell Elementary School," Warhurst said.

Warhurst has 19 years of experience in education, including 15 years at the elementary level. She has served as Russellville Middle School assistant principal the past two years. Previously, she served as Haleyville Middle School assistant principal for two years.

Warhurst has taught first grade, kindergarten and sixth grade, as well as serving as a reading coach. Her teaching experience includes time in Russellville City

See 'WARHURST,' Page 5



Jennifer Warhurst

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**Billy Lee Woods**, Russellville, age 75

Died Thursday, June 14, 2018. Graveside service held at Tharptown Cemetery. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville assisted the family. The family is asking for friends and family to consider making a donation to Spry Memorial Chapel to help cover the funeral expenses.



**Letters to the Editor**

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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# Board terminates Odom as assistant principal

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education unanimously voted to terminate Jonathan Odom as Tharptown Elementary/High School assistant principal at its June 12 meeting.

Odom was transferred to a nine-month mathematics teaching position at Tharptown High School with the commensurate reduction in pay, effective August 1, 2018.

Pursuant to the Alabama Students First Act, administrators who are already tenured as teachers become tenured when hired in an administrative position. In order to terminate an administrator, there must be justifiable cause shown according to Ala. Code 16-24C-7. The notice must be in writing and delivered by mail 15 days before any action is taken.

Franklin County Schools superintendent of education Greg Hamilton said he was unable to discuss personnel issues and declined to state the cause of the termination.

The administrator has the right to request a hearing. Hamilton confirmed that Odom did not request a hearing and that allowed the board to vote on the termination last Tuesday evening.

Last fall, an investigation into possible misuse of a Tharptown High School credit card ended with a Franklin County grand jury declining to issue an indictment. The investigation involved use of a school-issued credit card by Odom. No charges were ever filed against Odom, and through his attorney Odom denied any wrongdoing. His attorney said he fully cooperated with law enforcement in the investigation. Odom testified before the grand jury that looked into the matter.

“My representation of Mr. Odom was to assist him in fully cooperating with and making him available to officials,” said attorney Tim Case in November. “This was not because he was worried about anything he might have been accused of, but to help him through the process and get him cleared.”

Odom will maintain his tenured status as a teacher with Franklin County Schools going forward.

According to the school’s website, Odom began coaching and teaching at Tharptown in 2006. He previously coached basketball and track at the school before being named assistant principal.

In other personnel moves, the board approved:

•Resignation in Supplement: Douglas Jackson, head softball coach at Phil Campbell; and Tanna

Benford, head softball coach at Tharptown.

•Retirement: Jackie Ertle, Phil Campbell Elementary School Principal, effective July 1, 2018.

•Resignation: Georgia Jeffreys, Youth Tobacco Grant Coordinator; and Jonathan Hill, Band director at Red Bay.

•Employment: Caleb Beason as agriscience education teacher at Phil Campbell; Carrie Seahorn as elementary teacher at Red Bay; Kevin Barnwell as general social science teacher at Phil Campbell; Sherry Parker as half-time general science teacher at Tharptown; Brianna Glass as elementary teacher at Belgreen; Jason Cooper as half-time mathematics teacher at East Franklin; Walker Kennerly as half-time biology teacher at East Franklin; Thomas Horton as secondary English teacher at Tharptown; Leigh Burks as assistant principal at Red Bay High School; Molly Martin as mathematics teacher at Red Bay; Kendra Ward as elementary teacher at Tharptown; Georgia Jeffreys as school counselor at Belgreen; Shane Nichols as history teacher with possible coaching duties at Red Bay; Jennifer Warhurst as Phil Campbell Elementary School Principal; and Delany Roberts as elementary teacher at Belgreen.

# Scott arrested, charged with receiving stolen property

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A former Franklin County Schools employee and coach was arrested last week and charged with the felony offense of receiving stolen property, 3rd degree.

Chris Scott, 42, of 2800 Hwy. 244, Russellville, was arrested by investigators with the Russellville Police Department and charged with RSP 3rd degree, a Class D felony. The allegations are that Scott unlawfully possessed property owned by the City of Russellville Parks and Recreation Department, where he was formerly employed.

The items found in Scott’s possession, according to police, were two weed eaters, a chainsaw and a hedge trimmer. If the value of the items is less than \$500, the charge is a Class A misdemeanor, but with a value between \$500 and \$1,499, as alleged in this case, the offense becomes a Class D felony, punishable by a sentence of between a year and a day and five years. In the event a prison sentence is ordered with a Class D felony, the sentence shall be served in a community corrections facility and may not exceed two years according to Alabama law.

An RPD spokesman said his department was contacted by an employee of Franklin County

Schools about an item belonging to the City of Russellville being in Scott’s possession at school.

Further investigation revealed additional items belonging to the city were located at Scott’s home.

According to the spokesman, Scott admitted having the items, but his reasoning was that he used his personal items when he worked for the City of Russellville, and once those items tore up, he believed the city’s tools became his.

Scott was employed until recently as the custodian and varsity softball coach at Belgreen. The Franklin County Board of Education voted June 12 not to rehire Scott, who was a nontenured employee of the system.

# Council continues discussions on employee pay scale

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A 95-minute public discussion that involved the Russellville City Council, officials from Auburn University’s Government and Economic Development Institute, and City of Russellville employees resulted in the council voting to table an agenda item to consider approval of a new City of Russellville Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual at the council’s June 4 meeting.

The discussion was the latest step in a process that began two years ago when the city contracted with officials from Auburn University to study bringing city employee salaries in line with other similarly situated towns.

The council previously voted to amend the employee pay scale based on guidelines and recommendations from Auburn officials. The latest step deals with how to effectuate pay raises moving forward. The council froze certain step raises last year until such time as a new policy incorporating the institute’s recommendations could be approved.

The previously approved salary increases cost the city approximately \$124,000, which was

included in last year’s operating budget.

Maria Tamblyn, human resources manager with the Auburn institute, said their goal was to work with the council to prepare a workable plan that meets the city’s needs.

“We are here as a resource for you so that the policy and procedures manual and other products approved by you will be functional for the city,” Tamblyn said.

The proposed plan discussed at the council’s June 4 meeting incorporated most of the changes recommended by the City of Russellville Civil Service Board, but council members had plenty of questions and concerns.

Councilman David Palmer said the entire process is a work in progress, designed to end up with the most workable plan for the city, its employees and its taxpayers.

“It’s always been my hope that what we’re doing makes it better for both the taxpayers and our employees,” Palmer said. “The system that was in place is dysfunctional. It’s old and outdated and didn’t work well for the administration or the employees.

“The way this has come about has taken a long time, which it should, because it’s basically an

overhaul of the entire policy and procedures manual and pay scale.”

Palmer said he hoped the concerns and questions shared at Monday’s work session would be incorporated into a revised version of the policy and procedures manual that would be workable moving forward.

But some city employees remain frustrated that their step raises remain on hold.

“All these police department guys are leaving as quick as they are hired because of this, not to mention it’s hurting all the veteran employees’ retirement,” said one city employee, who wished to remain anonymous due to concerns about retaliation from city officials. “We can’t say anything because we get in trouble, but you as the local paper can, and it might help make them do something if the public is aware of what’s going on.”

Councilman William Nale asked Tamblyn about why police officers are paid based on an 80-hour pay scale even though they are required to work 84 hours.

“Why are we punishing our patrol officers on our pay scale?” Nale said.

Tamblyn explained that the council could make

# Today's Honey Do List: Primer paint? Really?

One of the most unusual products I have seen hit the market in the last several years is paint with primer in it. I have always thought this was a marketing scheme started by a certain national chain store, and everyone else followed. Here's why. Even though primer may be "in the paint," most jobs still need a base coat of primer. Actually, there is only one situation in which I wouldn't use it. I'll get to that in a minute. So, why primer?

**The only time a base coat of primer is not needed is when you are repainting, the old paint is in good shape and you are using a color similar to the existing paint.**

Primer does three things. It makes the paint stick to the surface better; it makes the paint more durable; and it protects the surface being painted better than paint alone. In addition, primer/sealer can block stains, or darker colors, from coming through the finish coat of paint.

If there are stains (i.e. water, smoke, discoloration), use primer. If you are making a drastic color change, especially covering a darker color, use primer. If the existing paint leaves "dust" when you wipe over it, clean it and then use primer. If you are painting new, never-painted drywall, use primer.

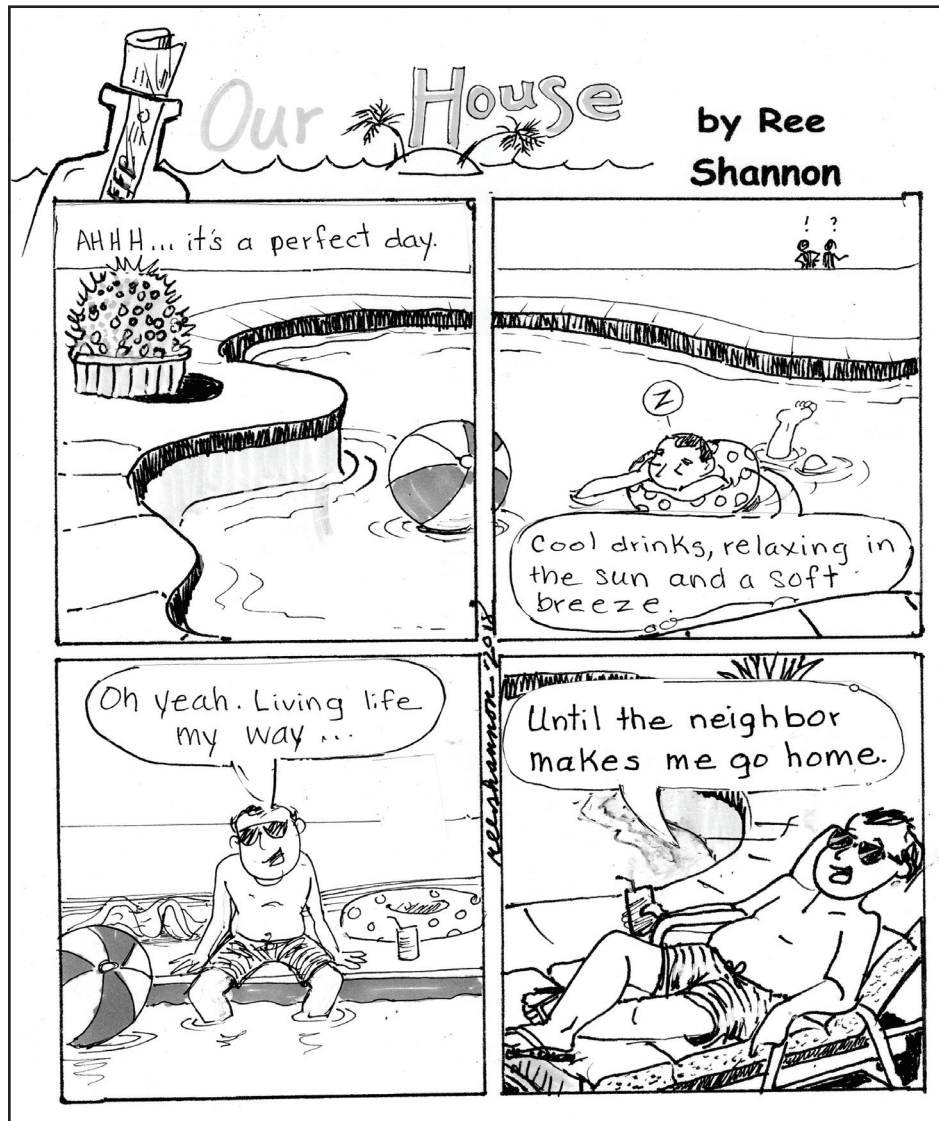


Doug Green

The only time a base coat of primer is not needed is when you are repainting, the old paint is in good shape and you are using a color similar to the existing paint.

A good-quality top coat of paint with a good primer base will yield a truer color, be easier to clean and maintain, and should last for years.

Remember, any surface that is to be painted should be clean and dry. The perspiration is in the preparation. Help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



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[www.davesays.org](http://www.davesays.org)  
by Dave Ramsey

**Take care of the basics**

Dear Dave,  
I just graduated from college, and I'll be starting my first real job soon. What can young adults who are just getting started do to avoid money problems now and in the future?

Ben

Dear Ben,  
Congratulations! I'm glad you realize the importance of being responsible with your money and planning for things down the road.

There are three or four important things a recent college graduate—or anyone, really—can do to make the most of their money and protect themselves financially. The first is to always live on budget. When you write down a budget on paper and give every dollar a name before the month begins, it helps you know what your money is doing instead of leaving you in a situation where you're wondering where it went.

Two more important practices are saving money and staying out of debt. Your income is your biggest wealth-building tool. When you're saddled with debt, your money goes to creditors

instead of into your pocket. Saving money prepares you for all the things life will throw at you—both good and bad.

I'd also include investing. I know you're young, but you still need to think about life after retirement. If you start investing just a little bit each month now in good mutual funds, you could retire a millionaire.

These are all very simple, basic things, Ben. But they'll make a huge difference in your financial situation now *and* in the years to come!

Dave

**Creativity is the key**

Dear Dave,  
How do you have a wedding without debt?

Brooklyn

Dear Brooklyn,  
It's pretty simple. To have a wedding without debt, you must be creative and think within your budget. In other words, you pay for a wedding with the money you have.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with a small, inexpensive wedding. Once you realize and understand that fact and start thinking about things with a budget in mind, you'll realize you can scrimp and save and still have a great small wedding. Lots of people have beautiful ceremonies, and even small receptions, for well under \$1,000.

Sure, you can go into debt by renting the fanciest venue and buying a \$9,000 wedding dress to wear for just a few hours on one day. Or, you can realize it's not the place and the clothes that make a wedding special. What about an outdoor wedding at a friend or family member's house? When it comes to a dress, you can opt for something simple and inexpensive, or even one that

# Board rejects low bid on Vina building demolition

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education unanimously voted to reject the low bid price of \$87,000 for the demolition of the Vina High School science building and band hall at its June 12 meeting.

The low bid price was submitted by Complete Demolition Services. Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton recommended to the board that it reject that bid due to his belief that it was excessive.

The board approved a bid of \$49,015 from Mobile Fixtures and Equipment for a new service line in the Vina High cafeteria. In other action, the board:

- Awarded the 2018-19 paper bid to American Paper and Twine Company with costs of \$27.20 per case of 8.5" x 11" paper and \$37.50 per case for 8.5" x 14" paper.

- Awarded a bid for LP Gas to Bear Creek Propane at a bid price of \$1.189 per gallon.

- Awarded the bid for diesel fuel to Tatum Oil Company at a rate of \$2.476 per gallon.

- Awarded the bid for Tharptown School improvements and addition project, known as Phase II, to First Team Construction for an amount of \$1,397,753.

- Approved an out-of-state trip for Franklin County Career Tech Center FBLA to National Conference in Baltimore from June 27, 2018-July 2, 2018.

- Updated the qualifications of the Career/Technical Education Director from certification in Career/Technical Administration to certification in School Administration and/or Supervision.

- Amended board policy to require that students enrolled in grades 5-8 must pass reading, math and one additional core course each year in order to be promoted to the next grade, with an amendment that the discretion of the principal can be used in the best interest of the student.

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, July 17, with work session at 4 p.m. and meeting to follow.

## 'WARHURST' from page 1

Schools, Haleyville City Schools and Colbert County Schools. She will begin her new position July 1, 2018.

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton said there were five candidates for the job. What stood out about Warhurst, he explained, was her experience and passion for elementary education.

**"I'm not there to replace her," Warhurst said of Ergle, who had served as PCES principal since 2001. "I'm there to grow as a leader and enhance the things already going well at Phil Campbell Elementary School."**

"Her love of children, her 19 years of experience and her dedication to elementary education were what stood out about Mrs. Warhurst," Hamilton said. "She is a very hard worker and has administrative experience as well."

Warhurst said the job was attractive because it was an opportunity to advance to a principal's position as well as allowing her to return to the elementary level.

"It's the smiles and greetings you get from young children each day," Warhurst said. "The hugs...the true enjoyment of learning. They are like sponges soaking up anything and everything positive you give them."

"I love an environment where people truly care about kids. I feel that's the most important aspect of education."

Warhurst and her husband Chad have three children. They live in Russellville.

## 'DAVE' from page 4

has been worn once, for just a few hundred dollars. If you think that's awful, let me tell you something that's worse—going tens of thousands of dollars into debt for an event that lasts just a few hours!

Most people don't have lavish, expensive weddings, and guess what? Years down the road they're still happily married, very much in love, and they look back on their wedding as the best day of their lives.

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 14 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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# Father's Day

## Prize Package Winners!



Father: **Marcos Calderon** Submitted by: **Kellie Calderon**

Our daddy Marcos is the greatest dad because he cares for us, works hard to provide for us and gets us nice things. He is our biggest supporter. He is also an amazing husband to my mom. Thank you daddy for all you do for our family. We are so blessed to have you. We love you. Your girls, Madison, Madilyn and Morgan Calderon

daryl worley

Father: **Darron Hood** Submitted by: **Anna Kate Hood**

My dad is the best because he loves me with all his heart and he takes care of me and he keeps a roof over my head. He cooks for me and he buys us stuff that we need and toys that we don't really need. He makes us laugh and he helps us have fun and he helps us match our clothes. He helps us with our homework and never lets us go anywhere that we could be in danger. I love my dad so so so much!

Father: **Scott Godsey** Submitted by: **Haley Godsey Watkins**

My Dad loves his family unconditionally. He works so hard but is always there when we need him. All I have to do is call and he will drop what he's doing to come help me. Over the years he has sacrificed so much of his time and money for his kids. He has done everything from coaching tball, being there for every game or performance, chasing us around the house, having conversations with us that would last hours, taking us fishing, buying us vehicles, to helping us pay for college.

He is literally good at everything. He always wins every game we play. He can fix or build anything. If he doesn't know how to do something he will learn how to do it or just figure it out on his own. He takes pride in his work and always wants to do his best. I couldn't have asked for a better Dad. I'm proud to be your daughter. Love You!

Father: **Gary Gunderman** Submitted by: **Leah Gunderman**

I feel my dad, Gary Gunderman, is the best because he has made several sacrifices for his family. He began his career as a teacher and football coach, but in 2004, he returned to the University of North Alabama to get his Bachelors Degree in Nursing. He now teaches at Tharptown High School during the school year and works at Helen Keller Hospital in surgery during the summer. He also goes to work at the hospital when school is out for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Spring Break. Dad treats everyone with the same respect whether it's a student, patient, or doctor. If one of his football players is ever injured and taken to the hospital, dad will go to the hospital and check on his player, sometimes arriving at home past midnight. He also serves as a deacon at our church and takes our youth group to various events. He also tells some pretty good 'dad' jokes too!

Father: **Jamie Purser** Submitted by: **Leigha-Paige Purser**

I will start by saying this, the song by Brad Paisley 'He didn't have to be' was written about my dad. No not really but it could have been. My mom met my dad when I was 21 months old. He has raised my brothers and myself since 2005. My mom came from a bad marriage and her ex-husband ended up not taking care of us like a dad should. He stepped up to the plate when another man walked away and helped my mom raise her children. In 2011, he legally adopted me. He became my legal dad. God knew what he was doing when he placed this man in my mom's life.

He has coached my brothers in football and baseball and helped them through life with their problems.

So in the words of, Brad Paisley, "Looking back all I can say about all of the things he did for me, is I hope I can be half the dad (mom) that he didn't have to be."

Father: **Brandon Cothrum** Submitted by: **Erica Cothrum**

Our dad Brandon Cothrum is the greatest because he gives us money, takes us to Walmart & buys us toys, he helps with my homework, he provides for our family, works really hard and sometimes is gone from us for a long time with a deployment. He may be a soldier to some but to us our favorite hero! We love you! Aaliyah, AnnaFaye, & Ariel.

**Father: Chris Waldrep Submitted by: Hannah Waldrep**

My dad is the greatest dad. He takes me to the most fun places like Dollywood, the races, Skyzone, Space and Rocket Center, Parks, American Girl Doll Store, and Splash Pads/Parks.

The second reason my dad is the greatest is that he takes me on a lot of vacations like Gatlinburg (Tennessee), Pigeon Forge (Tennessee), Nashville (Tennessee), Hurricane Mills (Tennessee), Destin (Florida), and we have so much fun!

My third reason my dad is the greatest is that we go to fun places on Saturdays like Shiloh National Military Park, Lawrenceburg (Tennessee), Flea Markets, the mall, and eating!

My last reason is he grills the best food and anything I break he can fix.

As you can see my dad is the greatest dad!

**Father: Dale Howell Submitted by: Julie Petty**

Dale Howell is the most amazing Dad. He has taken on the role as Dad to a 15 year old daughter and an autistic 5 year old son. He filled the shoes that the biological Dad could not fill. We are lucky to have Dale in our life he is understanding, kind and an amazing bowler.

**Father: Chris Jones Submitted by: Savannah Jones**

Let me tell you about my dad. His name is Chris Jones and he is the most hard-working, family loving, and vehicle cleaning dad that I know! Throughout my childhood, I had the pleasure of making many different memories with my dad. One of my favorite memories is each month he always took the time to carry me to Lowes AND Home Depot. We would attend their Kid's Workshop to build a wooden birdhouse, racecar, spice rack, planter, etc. We always could not wait to find out what we were going to build next! I'll let you in on a little secret about my dad. Everyone thinks that my mom is the one who always wants us to go to Disney on vacation each year. . . . NOPE!! It's my DAD!!! He casually starts wearing Disney shirts all the time and begins looking for a week off of work. His hints must work, because I have been to Walt Disney World 10 times and Disneyland once! I love spending time with my dad and I can't wait to make many more memories with him!

The absolute best part about my dad is that I have him all to myself! I am an only child.

**Father: Matt Cooper Submitted by: Madeline Cooper**

My Dad is the greatest Dad on this planet, every day he gets up at 7:00, (even though he would love to sleep till 10) gets ready to go to work, and then has to go to work from 8-6, which is 9 whole hours. As soon as he gets off of work, he usually has to rush home, change his clothes, and head back out the door to a baseball game or a dance class. He never stops going. I know that oftentimes Daddy would love to just sit down after a long day of work, but he keeps going and puts the needs of his family first. The second reason my Daddy is the best is that he teaches his kids about Jesus. My Daddy gets two days off a week, Saturday and Sunday. On one of my father's two off days, Sunday, he takes our family to church. He has always made sure that our family is at church every time the doors are open. In everything my dad does, he honors the Lord, and he has made that very evident in his life. He has always taken time to explain the Bible to us and teach us about God's love. The final reason that my dad is the best, is that he loves me. No matter what I do, I always know that Matt Cooper has always got my back, and he always loves me, this is why my daddy is the best.

**Father: Allen Pierce Submitted by: Keagan and Rylan Pierce**

Our dad is the best because he knows how to do everything. Well, everything except how to cook! He knows how to make us feel better, how to fix broken toys, how to tell the best joke, and how to make Mommy not be cranky (and that can be hard work sometimes).

Our dad wakes up early to make sure we have a good breakfast and get to school so we can be as smart as him. He is really smart. He tells funny jokes or sings funny songs on the way to school. His jokes are the best! The absolute best thing about our dad is that he loves us so, so much and never stops showing it. No matter what happens we know he will be there for us.

**Father: Brian Pace Submitted by: Lily Cate Pace**

I only have 250 words to describe why I think my dad is the greatest. This is going to be hard to do.

To begin, he is the kindest person I know. He stands up for me if I am getting bullied. He is always there when I need him. He always tells me the truth.

He plays lots of games with me and watches movies that I like. He always takes me fishing and hunting when I want to.

Also, he is an amazing Christian, and let me tell you that is an important thing to me. He is very strong with his hands and also with his heart. He is super athletic, creative, smart and an amazing artist, just like me.

He can fix or build anything he puts his mind to. Most of all, he loves me no matter what, just like Jesus does.

Brian Pace—AKA daddy—is the GREATEST dad!



invites the community to a free, educational seminar & luncheon

## PROTECTING OUR SENIOR CITIZENS FROM ELDER ABUSE



### Friday, June 22, 2018

Lunch & Seminar · 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

## A.W. Todd Centre

201 S. Washington Avenue · Russellville, Alabama 35653

**FREE** Lunch Catered by Pilgrim's Place  
Courtesy of First Metro Bank

### Presentations by:

First Metro Bank · Russellville Police Department  
Franklin County Department of Human Resources

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# What's Happening

256.332.0255

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

**A**ttention 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.

**T**he next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be this Thursday, June 21 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m.

**T**he East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department will be serving William Bishop's smoked chicken and pulled barbecue pork plates from 4-7 p.m. this Friday, June 22. Proceeds will be used to purchase residential 911 address signs. Plates are \$10 each and will be available at the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department, 10443 Hwy. 81.

**F**irst Free Will Baptist Church, Russellville, will hold a "Kid's Crusade" for Pre-K through eighth grade this Saturday, June 23 from 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. There will be Bible preaching, music, crafts and games. Snack and lunch provided. Church is located at 16140 Hwy. 43 North.

**N**orth Russellville Baptist Church will host Vacation Bible School, "Beach Party, Surfin' Through the Scriptures," this Saturday, June 23 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Lunch will be provided. For more information, call 256-460-2301. The church is located at 1401 Waterloo Road in Russellville.

**R**ock Bridge Canyon Equestrian Park in Hodges will host a Fun Day and Donkey Penning on Saturday, June 30 at 5 p.m. There is no admission, but donations will be taken at the door. There are a variety of fun events, including Buddy Pick-Up Race, Flag Race, Pony Express Race, Key Hole Race and Scoop Race, as well as the donkey penning event. For more information, contact Kayla Ables at 256-436-9591 or Kaysha Galbreath at 205-412-3675.

**J**ust a little reminder that this is the off year for the Reedtown Roundup. But if you plan to be in the city of Russellville during the week of July 4, we have a couple of family-friendly events scheduled. On Tuesday, July 3, there will be a Meet & Greet held at the Back to Basics Life Skilled Center, Inc. from 4:30-6:30 p.m. The annual talent show will be held that night from 7-9 p.m. at the Chucky Mullins Center (\$5 donation to attend). All proceeds will go toward the Back to Basics Life Skilled Center, Inc. If you are interested in displaying your talent, whatever it may be, please call Ella West at 256-332-7721, Rose Hillman at 256-412-2296, Tammy West at 256-668-7649 or Michelle Nelson at 256-324-4442. Let's get excited, and let the fun begin!

**T**he Cotton Flats Cruisers will hold their ninth annual Car Show on Wednesday, July 4 at Sloss Lake on Hwy. 24 East in Russellville. All cars, trucks and bikes are welcome! Registration is from 7-11 a.m. Registration fee is \$25 for the first car, truck or bike, and \$15 for each additional entry. Multiple registrations must have the same name and address. There will be a grand prize of \$1,000 cash, plus a 50/50 drawing and many other cash prizes. There will also be a People's Choice Award, Mayor's Choice Trophy and Memorial Trophy. Swap meet space is available as space permits. Open to car, truck, bike parts and tools only. Fee is \$10 for 20' X 20' space. For more information, call Barry at 256-332-6585, Daryl Gholston at 256-436-2499 or Gary Hester at 256-394-3904.

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# First Metro hosting free seminar and luncheon

Submitted to the FFP

In an effort to combat all types of elder abuse, First Metro Bank will host a free community education seminar called "Protecting Our Senior Citizens from Elder Abuse."

The one-hour seminar and luncheon will be held at the A.W. Todd Centre this Friday, June 22 and will begin at 12 p.m.

Representatives from First Metro Bank, Franklin County Department of Human Resources, and the Russellville Police Department will present information to community members about the various forms of elder abuse and describe measures individuals can take to prevent, detect and report abuse. This free educational seminar and luncheon is open to all interested members of the community.

Lunch catered by Pilgrim's Place Barbeque and Catering will be provided for seminar attendees

courtesy of First Metro Bank.

"Please join us to learn how you can help protect yourself and your loved ones from elder abuse," said Alana Parker, First Metro Bank Community Reinvestment Officer. "It happens within our communities more often than we realize, and many citizens don't know how to prevent, detect or report these crimes. This seminar will provide great information for caregivers, senior citizens, healthcare workers and anyone else who has an elderly person whom they love and wish to protect.

**"Franklin County DHR hopes to incorporate a more strategic collaboration with our community to help strengthen understanding of our respective roles in alleviating elder abuse," said Yocom. "Many of the elderly don't receive the care and attention they need; therefore, they are primary targets for abuse, neglect and exploitation."**

"We are so grateful for the partnership with the Russellville Police Department and the Franklin County Department of Human Resources in this endeavor."

Leah Yocom serves as the Family Service Supervisor for Adult Protective Service and Foster Care.

"Franklin County DHR hopes to incorporate a more strategic collaboration with our community to help strengthen understanding of our respective roles in alleviating elder abuse," said Yocom. "Many of the elderly don't receive the care and attention they need; therefore, they are primary targets for abuse, neglect and exploitation."

All interested community members are encouraged to attend Friday's seminar. Seating for this event is limited. Please contact Alana Parker at 256-314-1627 or by email at [aparker@firstmetro.net](mailto:aparker@firstmetro.net) to reserve your seat for this free, community event and luncheon.

# County EMA moving forward with new alert system

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission authorized Franklin County Emergency Management Agency director Jody Hitt to move forward with an emergency notification alert system that will provide mass messaging to people across social media.

Commissioners approved an agreement with Alertsense, a company that works with businesses and governmental entities to provide prompt emergency notifications through text messages, email and even voice messaging.

"We simplify incident reporting, enable efficient

multi-lingual collaboration, streamline crisis response, and transform business continuity and crisis management plans into actionable, role-based, task-lists and critical information," says Alertsense's web site, [www.alertsense.com](http://www.alertsense.com).

**The service is free to the public and can be utilized after citizens download a free app on their cell phone and indicate whether they want text or email notifications.**

The one-year service contract will cost the county \$4,500 and is expected to be online by July 1, 2018, according to Hitt.

The service is free to the public and can be uti-

lized after citizens download a free app on their cell phone and indicate whether they want text or email notifications.

Hitt said Alertsense will simplify notification about severe weather situations, road closings, wildfires and man-made disasters like accidents involving vehicles carrying hazardous materials, etc.

Citizens wanting to subscribe to the service can download the free app by searching for AlertSense News Alerts.

Hitt said there was a possibility the system could also notify citizens of local Amber Alerts involving

See 'ALERT,' page 11

# Walker speaks to Franklin County Bama Carry group

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County Bama Carry coordinator Gary Blackburn regularly schedules elected officials and candidates to speak at his group's monthly meeting. When he scheduled Riggs Walker earlier this year, Walker was a candidate for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, Place One.

Although Walker lost in the June 5 Republican Primary, he honored his commitment and came to Russellville to speak to the group at its June 12 meeting.

Walker, an assistant district attorney in the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office, has 19 years of experience prosecuting felony cases, including capital murder, murder, assault, burglary, robbery and theft charges.

Walker said he learned about Bama Carry, a statewide gun rights organization dedicated to "the fight against gun control and enemies of the U.S. And Alabama Constitutions," and joined the group this spring.

He said many of Alabama's problems result from people not taking responsibility for themselves.

"People feel no obligation to get a job, earn a living or pay their bills," Walker said, "and they feel when they get in trouble it's not their fault, it's someone else's fault."

Walker cited certain social causes and movements that are premised upon the idea the system is unfair.

"That message is in contradiction to the message I'm all about, which is individual responsibility and personal accountability," Walker said.

"We dream up programs to deal with all the problems in our society. If we're ever going to make progress on these problems, we need to return to a strong family structure and teach children to take responsibility for themselves.

"So many people I prosecute come from the type of home where they don't take that responsibility."

Walker campaigned as a pro-second amendment candidate, and he's a gun owner as well.

"The second amendment was given to us to protect all other amendments," Walker said. "Free people need the right to protect themselves, their property and their freedom."

Blackburn told Walker he appreciated him honoring his commitment to come to Russellville even after losing his primary election.

"I appreciate your words about individual responsibility and personal accountability, too," Blackburn said. "We don't hear that often enough, but that's what Bama Carry is all about. It's a responsibility, not a show, to carry a firearm. For the simple action of pulling a trigger, you may not think you need training, but you definitely need the training because of the responsibility."

Bama Carry's Franklin County chapter meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Taylor's Restaurant in Russellville.

For more information on the group, log onto [www.bamacarry.org](http://www.bamacarry.org).



COURTESY PHOTO

Although Riggs Walker (above) lost in the June 5 Republican Primary for the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals, Place One, he honored his commitment and came to Russellville to speak to the Franklin County Bama Carry chapter at its June 12 meeting.



# Classifieds

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Yard Sale this Friday & Saturday, June 22-23 from 7 am-until at 460 2nd Street, Russellville. A.B. Hester Subdivision, at Frosy Inn going south, turn left on 2nd Street. Clothes (boys', girls', men's and women's), entertainment center, summer items, lots more items to sell!

Yard Sale this Friday and Saturday, June 22-23 from 7 am-until at 1207 College Ave. Lots of stuff! Ya'll Come!

Yard Sale this Saturday, June 23 from 7 am-until at 639 Duncan Creek Road.

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1964 Chevrolet Truck Hood for sale. Good condition. \$75. Call 256-810-1808. (5)

*Franklin Free Press Classified Rates*  
*Yard Sale Rates: FREE, Deadline Monday at Noon; Real Estate-Homes, acreage, lots for sale or rent. \$25 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 40 words per ad; Vehicles, Boats, RVs, Motorcycles for sale. \$15 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Pets For Sale only \$10 for six consecutive weeks. Up to 25 words per ad; Free of Charge: Lost & Found, Giveaways, and Items Under \$100 (Private Parties Only). 15-word limit; Commercial Classified Rates: \$25 for Businesses, 15 words or less for six weeks. Ads exceeding word limit add \$10 per additional 15 words. The number in parentheses represents*

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## 'PAY,' from page 3

any changes or policy it wants to, subject to federal laws.  
"Our concern is for the city, and our commitment is to the city for the health of your city," Tamblyn said. "But we hope it's also a good situation for city employees."  
Auburn officials met with city officials and members of the Civil Service Board recently in an effort to gauge what changes the council wanted.

"I think the next step will be for Auburn to take those concerns and recommendations and go back and revamp some of the things there were issues about and offer up their next set of recommendations," Palmer said. "We'll get the next stage of this process, and if it's good and everybody is on board with the recommendations, then we can pass that moving forward and have something we all can be proud of."

"The problem with the old system is there were a number of raises built in that caused rate disparity between individuals who work in the same department with the same job classification. Many times that had to do with things that were outside the talents and work ethic of the individuals--not always, but sometimes. Those are things we needed to get under control so as not to have that situation any more."

## 'THREE' from page 1

2017. But baby Lynlee (named after Courtne's father-in-law) had other ideas.  
"I went into the hospital on June 2 and had her on the third," Gray said. "My husband actually called it. He said he was certain she'd be born on my birthday. I went into labor early, and she was born at 3:11 a.m., June 3, 2018."  
If you're wondering about the odds of three generations of family members sharing the same birthday, they're overwhelmingly small. According to Cristina Aston, statistics professor at MacEwan University, the chances of that happening are one in 48,000,000.  
Yep, that's one in 48 million. Your chances of the following are much more likely:  
•Shark attack: One in 3,748,067.  
•Being struck by lightning: One in 700,000.

•Winning the English National Lottery: One in 14,000,000.  
•Achieving sainthood: One in 20,000,000.  
Earlier this month, Helen, Courtne and Lynlee shared a birthday cake that had each of their names on it, but June 3, 2018 was all about baby Lynlee.  
"We wanted it to be her special day," Courtne said. "We just had our names split on the cake for her first birthday. Everyone thought it was the neatest thing, but Lynlee had her own special party. She had a smash cake, cookies with her own name on them, and she had a blast.  
"It's always going to be about her."  
Campbell is a first-grade teacher at Tharptown Elementary School. Courtne said her mother has always enjoyed sharing a birthday with one of her

daughters, and she was thrilled to have a granddaughter share the same day.  
"She was ecstatic," Courtne said. "Everywhere we go, she makes sure to tell everyone we know we all three have the same birthday. It's a big deal for her."  
Gray, who had two previous miscarriages before Lynlee, describes her daughter as a 'gift from God.'  
"She is just the happiest baby. She smiles all the time," Courtne said. "She got her name from her papa Tony, who passed away four years ago. His middle name was Lyn, so that's how we got Lynlee."  
If you ever visit the Campbells or the Grays on June 3, remember to bring a birthday gift.  
Or two, or three....

# Local establishments receive satisfactory ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The six Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of June 4-8 each had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range. Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

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

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property. The six Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 92 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The highest score was 99, received by Subway #37464, 13675 Highway 43, Russellville. Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

- Bojangles Chicken and Biscuit, 13810 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 92. (Flies all in kitchen).
- Papa John's Pizza, 14520 Hwy. 43 Ste. 1, Russellville, 93. (Dented cans)
- Panaderia Adonai, 311 S. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 95. (No paper towels at hand sink, no soap in rest room).
- 43 Grill, 15110 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 96.
- Pizza Hut #2938, 13450 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 97.

Of the inspections done in Colbert County from June 4-8, no restaurants scored below the satisfactory range. The high score for the week in Colbert County was 99, received by Fiesta Mexicana, 4001 Jackson Hwy., Sheffield.

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



**Letters to the Editor**

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)!

## 'ALERT', from page 9

missing persons.

In other action, the commission:

- Approved the resignation of David Nulph and Stuart Wright as temporary employees in the Solid Waste Department and approved the hiring of temporary employees David Nulph and Jason Devaney.
- Approved the hiring of Gwendolyn Foster as a

corrections officer/dispatcher in the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.

- Authorized Bill Cheatham to accept bids for a new HVAC system at the Franklin County Circuit Clerk's Office.
- Approved the hiring of Donnie Hastings and Daniel Uptain as temporary employees with the Franklin County Highway Department.

•Authorized David Palmer to sign a contract with Civil Group for preliminary engineering for County Road 138 bridge project in the amount of \$44,554.

•Authorized probate judge Barry Moore to sign an agreement for the County Road 60 project agreement in the amount of \$133,123.40.

•Agreed to advertise for a public hearing to consider vacating Humpries Road on August 20.

## Here's the beef!



COURTESY PHOTO

Governor Kay Ivey signed a proclamation Wednesday, May 30 encouraging Alabamians to eat beef for Father's Day. The Beef for Father's Day campaign began in 1955 as the first beef promotion effort of the newly formed Alabama CowBelles Association. Each year since, a gubernatorial proclamation has been signed, along with a presentation of steaks to the governor in office. Father's Day was this past Sunday, July 17. Pictured above, from left, at the signing of the 2018 Beef for Father's Day proclamation are Alabama CattleWomen's Association officers Cindy Fitzpatrick, Lowndes County; Evelyn Greene, Lee County; Crystal Barnes Key, Randolph County; Gov. Ivey; Mary Pate, Lowndes County; Bea Jai Merriman, Etowah County; and Alabama Cattlemen's Association assistant executive vice president Erin Bailey.

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**JUNE**  
**22**

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(responsible for material testing, sieve analysis, product qualification/assurance, etc.)
- **General Laborers**  
(responsible for site housekeeping and up-keep, material movement and stacking, etc.)

Only qualified individuals with appropriate qualifications and experience should apply. Previous MSHA training/experience is a plus. Drug testing and background checks will be conducted. Positions are limited. Compensation is very competitive. To obtain an application and for more information, visit:

**www.msicareers.com** (please do not contact MSI offices)

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## Heading to State

Russellville's 8U Rookie All-Stars earned a trip to Oxford in July. See story Page 14.

## Taking over at Tanner

Former RHS football star Oscar Bonds has his first head coaching job. See story Page 15.



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# ASWA has some explaining to do after snubbing Heaps yet again



**Mike Self**  
Sports Editor

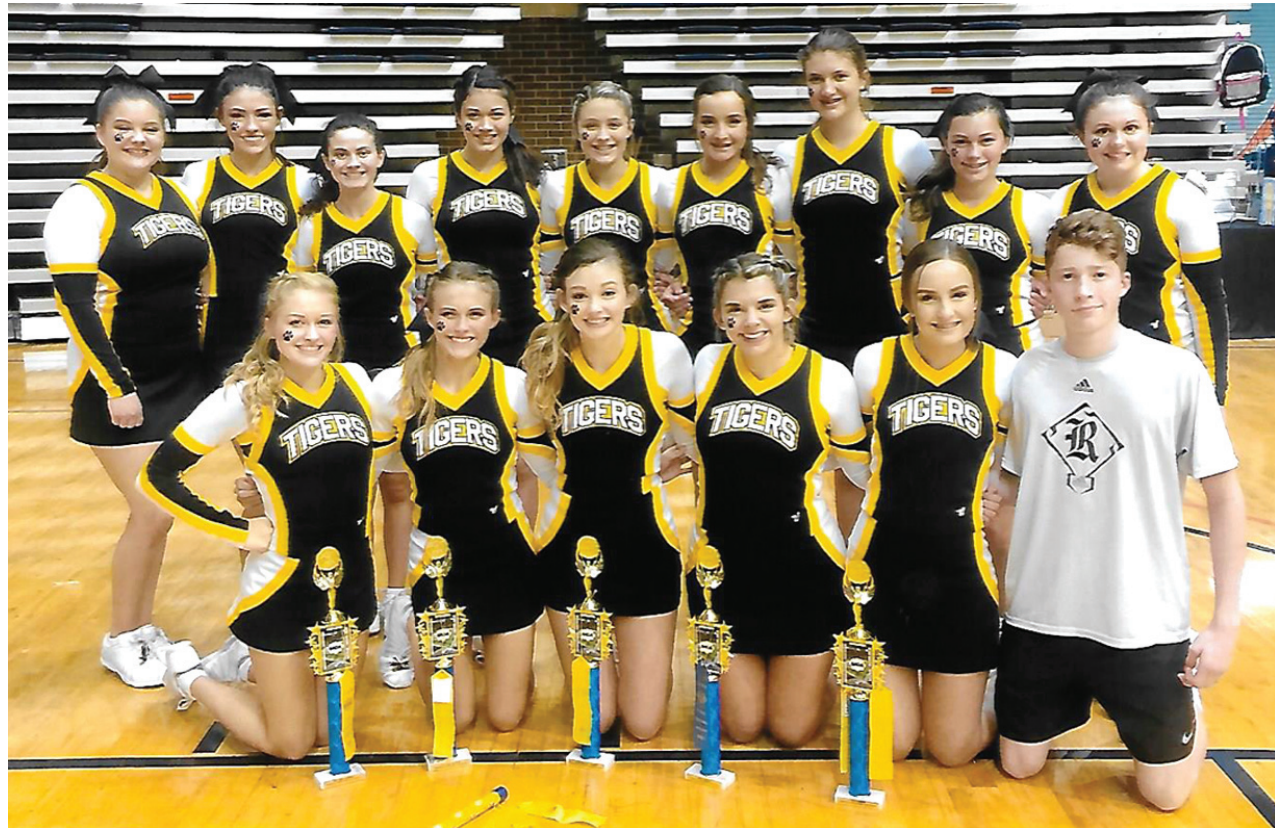
The Russellville High School baseball program has put up some incredible numbers over the past four seasons under head coach Chris Heaps: 151 total wins (including a school-record 48 in 2016), a 38-7 record in playoff games, 19 series wins in the postseason, four trips to Montgomery for the Class 5A state finals and, of course, three Blue Maps.

Without a doubt, though, the most startling number from Russellville's remarkable run is zero—as in the number of times Heaps has been chosen as 5A Coach of the Year by the Alabama Sports Writers Association.

Heaps, who has an overall record of 192-80 in six years at RHS, has led the Golden Tigers to unprecedented heights over the past four seasons, and he's done so under different circumstances and with different players. Each year, however, the writers have seen fit to pass over Heaps and recognize

See 'HEAPS,' Page 18

# Universal appeal



COURTESY PHOTO

Squad members pictured above are: Front row (L to R) – Kaydee Holland, Morgan Moon (co-captain), Peyton Reynolds (captain), Addie Scruggs (co-captain), Gracie Pounders, Jax Greenhill (Champ the Mascot); back row (L to R) – Abby Peters, Destiny Hatton, Karly Tidwell, Lauren Mae Sturdivant, Leah Grimes, Lily Pounders, Callie Palmer, Ashlyn DeArman, Shelby Carson. The squad is coached by Stephanie M. Mayfield.

## Russellville's varsity cheer squad drew rave reviews at a Universal Cheerleaders Association Camp in Auburn

*John Pilati*  
Franklin Free Press

Coach Stephanie Mayfield's Russellville varsity cheerleading squad had an award-winning week at the Universal Cheerleaders Association Camp held June 5-8 at Auburn University.

Three senior cheerleaders, Peyton Reynolds, Morgan Moon and Addie Scruggs, were named UCA All-Americans and received UCA Staff Invitations.

Addie Scruggs also received the Pin It Forward Award. This award is presented to cheerleaders who represent the attitude and spirit of what cheerleading is supposed to be about.

The squad received several team awards, including:

- Rally (Extreme) Routine, first place.
- Sideline Cheer, first place.
- Cheer, second place.
- Overall Game Day Camp Champs, first place.

Russellville's squad also earned three Gold Superior Ribbons and the Spirit Stick each day of the camp.

"Our squad credentialed and completed all of

their training and had a great week," Mayfield said.

Additionally, Jax Greenhill, Champ the RHS Mascot, was awarded Mascot Spirit Ball and trophy for Superior Mascot and UCA All-American Mascot.

**Peyton Reynolds, Morgan Moon and Addie Scruggs were named UCA All-Americans, and the squad also received several team awards.**

"I'm extremely proud of this group and very thankful to the administration and our parents for all this support," Mayfield said. "I can't wait for this new year."

The squad consists of Abby Peters, Destiny Hatton, Karly Tidwell, Lauren Mae Sturdivant, Leah Grimes, Lily Pounders, Callie Palmer, Ashlyn DeArman, Shelby Carson, Kaydee Holland, co-captain Morgan Moon, co-captain Addie Scruggs, captain Peyton Reynolds, Gracie Pounders and Jax Greenhill as Champ the mascot.

"I'm extremely proud of this group and very thankful to the administration and our parents for all this support," Mayfield said. "I can't wait for this new year."



FILE PHOTO

Over the past four seasons at Russellville, Heaps has 151 wins, four trips to Montgomery, three Blue Maps—and zero Coach of the Year honors from the Alabama Sports Writers Association.



# Russellville 8U Rookie All-Stars headed to state

## Tigers finish as district runners-up, advance to play July 5-7 in Oxford

Staff reports

Russellville's Dixie Youth 8U Rookie All-Star team finished as the district runner-up last week, earning a berth in next month's state tournament in Oxford.

The Tigers opened district play with a 17-6 win over Moulton on Friday, June 8. They lost 16-4 to Haleyville the following night before bouncing back to beat Underwood 19-7 on Monday, June 11 to clinch second place and wrap up a trip to state.

The Dixie Youth 8U Rookie All-Star state tournament will be held July 5-7 in Oxford.

Team members pictured at left are: Front row (L to R) - Shaler Stone, Braylen Willis, Christopher Fretwell, Asher Campbell, Christian Mosley, Porter Bragwell; middle row (L to R) - Bryant Holt, Raine Vincent, Tyde Boyd, Weston Fugate, Dylan Morgan, Carson Martin; back row (L to R) - Coaches Cody Bragwell, Robert Smith, Chris Fretwell, Zachery Mosley.



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# Former Golden Tiger takes over at Tanner

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Saying that Oscar Bonds is a determined individual is kind of like saying that summers in north Alabama can get a tad warm.

It's a bit of an understatement.

As a junior running back at Russellville High, Bonds suffered a broken ankle in the final game of the 1998 season against rival Bradshaw. One year later, in his final game as a Golden Tiger, Bonds steamrolled those same Bruins for a school-record 370 rushing yards in a 48-21 Russellville rout.

"I had that one marked on my calendar," Bonds said last week. "A lot of people remember that."

Russellville fans also have fond memories of the Colbert County game from September of that '99 season, when Bonds broke roughly half a dozen tackles on a long touchdown run in the Golden Tigers' 34-20 win.

"Those are the two [the record-breaking game against Bradshaw and the tackle-breaking run against Colbert County] that come up more than anything," Bonds said. "I'm pretty surprised that rushing record still stands. They've had some good running backs come through there, and every record is meant to be broken."

The same determination that drove Bonds to go from breaking his ankle one year to breaking records and breaking tackles the next should serve him well as he seeks to turn around a Tanner High School program coming off its first losing season in 16 years.

"From what I can tell, talking to the players after I got here, a lot of them hadn't worked out since December of last year," said Bonds, who was hired away from Piedmont High School in late May to revive the Rattlers, who slipped to 3-8 last year after winning 148 games and two state titles in 14 seasons under former head coach Laron White from 2003-16. "We've got a long way to go. Our first goal is to get these guys playing a good brand of football, regardless of what happens with wins and losses. We want to be well-coached at every position, play hard, be physical and try to do things the right way."

"If you do things the right way, success will come and you'll win your share of games."

**"We've got a long way to go," said Bonds, who was hired in May to revive a Rattler team coming off its first losing season in 16 years. "Our first goal is to get these guys playing a good brand of football, regardless of what happens with wins and losses. We want to be well-coached at every position, play hard, be physical and try to do things the right way. If you do things the right way, success will come and you'll win your share of games."**

Bonds is certainly no stranger to success on the football field. As an RHS senior in '99, he led the Golden Tigers to a 7-3 record (their first winning season in four years) while helping second-year head coach Perry Swindall lay the foundation for a remarkable run. [From 2000 through 2006, Russellville went 87-13 and made three trips to the Super Six.]

"Coach Swindall was a guy who brought some excitement back," Bonds said. "Russellville had dropped off a little right before we got to varsity. Then we went 7-3 my senior year, and right after that they went to the semifinals and really got on a roll for a few years. Coach Swindall brought in some coaches that really knew the game and could relate to us as players. He always tried to have us prepared in the best possible way, by watching film and everything else that went into it."

Upon graduating from RHS in 2000, Bonds went first to Tennessee Tech and then to Jacksonville State, where he helped the Gamecocks win back-to-back Ohio Valley Conference championships under head coach Jack Crowe in 2003 and 2004. As a senior at JSU in '04, Bonds rushed for 1,263 yards and a school-record 19 touchdowns on his way to earning All-America honors from both the Sports Network and the Associated Press.

Bonds gives much credit to Crowe, who ranks second on the all-time wins list at JSU, for instilling the bedrock principles that have shaped his philosophy on how to play winning football.

"Coach Crowe, I liked him a lot," Bonds said. "He believed in the value of physicality. That's something he always brought to the game. He had five



Oscar Bonds

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## 'TANNER', from page 15

keys for being a winning football team: Don't turn the ball over, be good on special teams, don't get penalties, win the field position battle and make sure you score inside the red zone. I've always preached those things to the kids I've coached, at Piedmont and now at Tanner."

One of Bonds' professors at Jacksonville State had two children who played football at Piedmont High, and that professor recommended Bonds for a job on the Bulldogs' coaching staff. He spent the next 13 years at Piedmont, coaching everything from defensive line and running backs to quarterbacks and safeties to special teams, helping long-time head coach Steve Smith build the Bulldogs into a perennial powerhouse.

Over his final three seasons at Piedmont, Bonds was a part of Bulldog teams that went 41-3 from 2015-17 while winning back-to-back Class 3A championships in '15 and '16.

"I've been around winning football for a while," Bonds said. "I worked under a legendary coach at Piedmont in Steve Smith. There were a lot of great coaches on that staff. We pretty much built the program from the ground up, from 3-7 my first year there all the way up to winning state championships in 2015 and 2016.

"With all those great coaches, I started learning from day one. I picked all their brains every chance I got. The biggest thing I learned under Coach Smith was how important it is to be structured and detailed. Everything is structured, all the way down to detailed summer workouts to how we run our practices to how we play the game."

Bonds now takes over a Tanner program desperately in need of structure and a detail-oriented approach—and not just at the varsity level.

"At Piedmont, we started from the youth leagues on up," Bonds said. "The youth league teams were running everything we were running at the high school level. We developed a weight program for the middle school kids to start as soon as they hit seventh grade. By the time they got to the varsity

level, we had a lot of kids who were already benching 200 pounds and squatting a good bit of weight. They were already starting to get strong."

Contrast that with the situation Bonds inherits at Tanner, where the Rattlers haven't even fielded a junior high program the last couple of years.

"I'll say this about Tanner—they've been good over the years, but last year there was a lot of chaos happening," Bonds said. "They hadn't had a junior high program the last two or three years, and when you don't have a junior high program, eventually that's gonna hurt you at the varsity level. That's one of the reasons they dropped off to 3-8 last year.

**"When the Russellville job opened up, I applied," said Bonds, who interviewed with the Golden Tigers. "They decided to go a different route, but I wish them nothing but the best. God is gonna put you where you're supposed to be."**

"When you don't have a junior high program, whether they haven't had the numbers or for some other particular reason, your young kids are not getting developed. Some of them probably didn't come out for football, because they didn't want to play varsity as seventh- and eighth-graders, knowing they weren't gonna get much playing time.

"Our goal is to have a junior high team and put a schedule together so our kids in the seventh and eighth grade, and maybe some of our ninth-graders, can play some jayvee games."

Bonds said early returns have been encouraging at Tanner—particularly when you take into account that he didn't even arrive as the new head coach until the final day of the spring semester.

"Right now, our junior high kids and our varsity kids are working hard," Bonds said. "Tanner's got athletes, and they're always gonna have talent. We've just gotta develop it."

After 13 years as an assistant, Bonds is adapting quickly to being the man in charge. With the August 24 season opener at West Limestone only

two months away, he doesn't have a choice.

"We've got a long way to go," Bonds said, "and not a lot of time to get there. As the head coach, you get tons of phone calls, and you stay busy more. We pretty much have a whole new staff, so I've been busy putting that together. School was out when I got here, so I've been trying to find out which kids are not playing and who we can get out here to help us. I'm trying to learn the kids as fast as possible."

So, does he know everyone's name yet?

"Not quite," Bonds confessed. "Some of them, I've had to give them nicknames, just so it'll be easier for me."

Learning how to delegate responsibility is always a challenge for first-time head coaches, and Bonds is no different. He plans on running the offense for Tanner, and he'll also be heavily involved in special teams, because special teams have always had a special place in his heart.

"I was always a Virginia Tech fan, so I grew up watching Beamer Ball," Bonds said last week. "I've always been really big on special teams. It can win or lose a game for you."

For reference, Bonds cites Piedmont's quarterfinal playoff game at Colbert Heights last November, when a return touchdown on the opening kickoff propelled the Bulldogs to a decisive 34-13 win.

"That kind of took all the air out of the stadium," said Bonds, who was coordinating all aspects of the kicking game for Piedmont at the time. "I'll probably have my hand in special teams a lot, just because I've done it for so many years."

In his first season as Tanner's head coach, Bonds will face a pair of teams from Franklin County. The Rattlers will visit Tharptown for a region game on September 21, and they'll host region rival Red Bay on October 19. Red Bay is coached by Michael Jackson, who was coaching running backs at Russellville back in the late '90s when Bonds was toting the rock for the Golden Tigers.

"I'm looking forward to that one," Bonds said. "Coach Jackson likes to play that physical brand of football, and that's what we're gonna try to do."

Unlike a lot of current head coaches, Bonds didn't necessarily envision himself walking the sidelines some day back when he was playing.

"Actually, I was gonna go into engineering," he said. "That and physical therapy were my top two choices. Then when I got into college, I just started to develop a passion for wanting to coach, and I decided to go that route."

Tanner wasn't the only program looking for a football coach this past spring. Russellville also had a vacancy to fill, and Bonds interviewed for the head job at his alma mater. The Golden Tigers ultimately hired John Ritter away from West Morgan, but Bonds harbors no ill will and is happy to be the new head man at Tanner.

"When the Russellville job opened up, I applied," Bonds said. "They decided to go a different route, but I wish them nothing but the best. God is gonna put you where you're supposed to be."

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# 'HEAPS,' from page 13



someone else as Coach of the Year.

Russellville's reign as the premier 5A baseball program in the state began back in 2015, in Heaps' third season at the helm. Fresh off a disappointing 16-24 showing the year before, the Golden Tigers went 35-6 in '15, winning their final 21 games in a row and capping off their dramatic one-year turnaround with a two-game sweep of Helena to win the program's first-ever state championship.

The ASWA gave its Coach of the Year award to Helena's P.J. Guy, who led the Huskies to Montgomery in their first season as a full-fledged member of the AHSAA. [Helena was a brand new high school in 2015, having split off from Pelham.]

Guy was a deserving candidate, to be sure, having achieved success with the Huskies that was both surprising and unprecedented (two key boxes to check with regard to earning postseason honors). The same was true, though, of Heaps' success at Russellville that year [the Golden Tigers weren't on anybody's short list of title contenders after missing the playoffs altogether the year before, and they had only made it as far as the state semifinals once in program history], with one glaring exception—his team *actually closed the deal* and brought home a Blue Map. Guy's team didn't.

With all but two starters returning in 2016, Russellville was the odds-on favorite to repeat as 5A state champs. The talent level and expectations were such that the Golden Tigers would have had to do something truly special for Heaps (pictured at left, with Landon Ezzell) and his staff to receive proper credit—something like challenging the national high school record for wins in a single season, for instance.

Russellville finished two wins shy of that mark in '16, posting a 48-7 record and taking two of three from Faith Academy in Montgomery to win another Blue Map. Those 48 wins—six more than the previous school record, set in 2007—and a second consecutive state championship were evidently not enough to sway the writers, who selected Faith's Matt Seymour as their 5A Coach of the Year.

The Golden Tigers entered the 2017 season looking to replace four of their top five hitters and two of their top three pitchers, and they stumbled out of the gate to a 5-5 start. They won 33 of 38 games from that point forward and finished 38-10, once again taking two of three from Faith Academy in Montgomery to bring home a Blue Map and join Hartselle (1990-92) and Spanish Fort (2010-12) as the only baseball programs in AHSAA history to win three straight Class 5A championships.

Surely, such a historic achievement would present the perfect opportunity for the ASWA to finally give Heaps his due.

Nope.

The writers gave their 5A Coach of the Year award in '17 to Jackson's Danny Powell, a coaching legend. Inducted into the Alabama Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2012 after winning three Class 2A titles at Leroy, Powell was already running the football program at Jackson when he added the duties of head baseball coach to his docket in 2016—despite having dealt with a series of health issues that nearly forced him to retire from coaching altogether the previous fall.

Jackson was eliminated from the baseball playoffs in '17 by Valley in the first round, but there was certainly a valid argument to be made for Powell as Coach of the Year, based on everything he'd overcome from a physical standpoint and what he had accomplished. It's merely unfortunate that Powell's selection came at the expense of Heaps, who had guided Russellville to a record of 121-23 with three state titles from 2015-17—all

See 'HEAPS,' page 19

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# 'HEAPS' from page 18

without a single Coach of the Year nod to show for it. Heaps, to his credit, handled what must have been a disappointing development with humility, diplomacy and perspective. "Something bigger is waiting for me," he said back in 2017, immediately after the ASWA had announced its postseason award winners. "That just wasn't intended to be my blessing. Obviously God needed someone else to have that blessing. I have what is most important—great relationships with my past and current players and a passion to keep doing what I am doing, no matter what accolades come with it other than winning young men over to seeing their full potential.

"We have truly been blessed here in Russellville thus far, and we will keep on working with a high level of enthusiasm, no matter who notices." Voters can sometimes be reluctant to recognize coaches they perceive to be working with superior talent. From 2015-17, Russellville had 10 players accept offers to play college baseball—three of whom signed with SEC schools. The better the players, the less credit the coaches usually get. That line of thinking vanished, however, in 2018—along with all of Russellville's Division I talent. The Golden Tigers still had good players, and lots of them, but it wouldn't have been shocking to see the team make an early postseason exit—or miss the playoffs entirely, for that matter, in a very competitive Area 16 race. Instead, Heaps—who excels at player development, in-game strategy and the motivational aspect of coaching—and his terrific staff pushed, pulled and prodded a hungry, hard-working roster all the way back to Montgomery. Russellville reached the 30-win mark for a fourth straight season before getting swept by a heavily favored Faith Academy team in the state finals and finishing with a record of 30-17. If winning 40 games a year on average while bringing home back-to-back-to-back Blue Maps wasn't enough to get Heaps a Coach of the Year award from the ASWA, maybe squeezing 30 wins and a Red Map out of an unsung, less experienced group of players would do the trick.

Nope. The writers bestowed the honor on Faith's Seymour for the second time in three years. Granted, the Rams went 34-3 and beat Russellville to win the state title. Nobody is arguing that Seymour didn't deserve the award. But if a gaudy record, a national ranking and a Blue Map are prerequisites for winning Coach of the Year, then why on earth did Heaps not win it in 2016 when the Golden Tigers checked each and every one of those boxes? [The award, as you recall, went to Seymour, who guided the Rams to a runner-up finish that year.]

It's a mystery. Maybe the sports writers in the southern part of the state are greater in number or in influence. Maybe it's a popularity contest. Maybe politics are at play. The word 'conspiracy' seems like overkill—especially when you consider that the ASWA did in fact name Heaps Class 6A Coach of the Year in 2012 after he led Central-Phenix City to 31 wins and the state semifinals in his first season running a program.

Six years later, Heaps already has 223 career wins (against just 96 losses, a win percentage of .699), five semifinal appearances, four trips to Montgomery and three state championships in just seven seasons as a head coach. The Alabama Baseball Coaches Association named him Class 5A Coach of the Year for 2017, and he was selected to coach the North squad this summer at All-Star Week in Montgomery.

Heaps is the best in the business right now, and he's well on his way to becoming one of the most successful and accomplished high school baseball coaches in state history. He's not driven by a quest for individual accolades, not by any means, but his mantle is already filling up with hardware. It's just not as full as it should be.

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## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Franklin County Chamber of Commerce**  
P.O. Box 44 • Russellville, AL  
Cassie Medley, Executive Director

256.332.1760 • 256.332.1740 fax  
info@franklincountychamber.org  
franklincountychamber.org

## HOUSING

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Adult Sunday School: 10:00 - 11:00  
Everyone is invited to join us for this special time of worship.

201 N. Green Street, Russellville

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**JOEY RUSHING**  
Franklin County District Attorney  
256.332.8870 • 256.710.4713  
(daytime) (after hours)

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