

LIFESTYLE

Loss of furry family member brings time of mourning, remembrance

Winter time became a little colder at our house last week when we lost one of our beloved Chihuahuas to heart failure. Shug was 12 years old – not terribly old for a small dog like him – but getting on in years, nevertheless. He also had a bad back, likely caused by his stubborn insistence on jumping onto and off any bed or sofa he pleased – even though we’d placed doggie steps in strategic spots for his convenience. Knowing he’s no longer in pain goes a long way toward soothing ours.

Fortunately for our sake he went quickly, collapsing as he instinctively sought out his favorite hiding place in the den and dying a few minutes later. In his typical no-nonsense style, Shug saved us the heart-

wrenching decision of whether or not euthanizing was the kinder course. We’ve been down that road before and were dreading the thought of having to travel it again.

One of the drawbacks of being dog parents is we know our canine companions won’t be with us for long as compared to a normal human life span. But when they come into our lives, steal our affections and make themselves at home wherever they darn well please, we become pleasantly accustomed to their steady presence, and losing them leaves dog-shaped holes in our hearts.

There was a time when under similar circumstances, Jimmie and I would rush out and find another dog to fill the vacancy created in



June Mathews
Somewhere in the Middle...

our home. But neither of us is quite ready. Come spring, we’ll probably feel differently, but right now, the thought of house training a puppy in winter weather holds no appeal whatsoever. Nor are we finished mourning our feisty little Shug just yet.

Shug joined our household in late 2002. For some reason, I’d decided that Jimmie “needed” a white male Chihuahua for

Christmas, so I scanned the classifieds until I found a breeder with puppies at a reasonable price. I called the number in the paper and sure enough, one of them was a white male.

So I excitedly put a hold on the little fellow, and the next day we drove up to Sand Mountain to check him out. It was love at first sight, and we couldn’t have left him behind if we’d tried.

We named him Shug after the legendary Auburn coach to give some balance to the cul-de-sac; the neighbors had a brown Chihuahua named Bear.

Shug was a tiny pup, able to perch comfortably on Jimmie’s shoulder. I knew they were meant for each other when one of the first things they did when we got home was fall asleep together in front of

the TV. Since I worked at home, however, Shug and I bonded more closely. He became my furry baby, and I became his willing servant. By the time we got our second Chihuahua, Dobbie, almost two years later, I was the best-trained dog mama around.

If anyone misses Shug more than we do, Dobbie does. Several days later, he’s still waiting for Shug to trot down the hallway or appear in his customary spot on the sofa. The first time we left Dobbie alone for any length of time following Shug’s death was to go to church that Sunday and out to eat afterward. When we returned home, he met us at the door, whiny and panicked, evidently fearing we’d disappeared, too.

“It was just a dog,” I can imagine a non-dog lover

saying as they read this tribute. “So what’s the big deal?”

But that would be wrong. Shug wasn’t just a dog, and I daresay most dog owners would say the same about their canine companions.

He was a unique little individual with his own personality, as well as a valued friend. He was also a much loved member of the family.

Yes, we’ll adopt another dog one day, but not as a replacement. You see, that would be impossible. Just as there will never be another you or me or Great-Aunt Frances or Uncle J.B., there’ll never be another Shug.

Rest in peace, little buddy. You are greatly missed.

Email June Mathews at jmathews120@charter.net.

Looking at options other than LASIK

I get asked the question several times a week from patients who haven’t qualified for LASIK eye surgery if there are other options out there. For many patients, their nearsightedness is too high for regular LASIK. In the last few years, a new procedure is available for these patients. The Visian Implantable Contact Lens provides vision correction that goes beyond what LASIK can do for certain patients. The ICL actually goes underneath the surface of the eye and acts like a contact lens would, but internally.

When compared to other refractive surgical procedures, the ICL can create sharper vision for those with extremely high prescriptions when compared to LASIK. This is because LASIK eye surgery requires that the patient has a specific thickness of the cornea to be a candidate. The ICL eliminates the cornea as a variable, so it can be a nice option for patients who are too nearsighted or farsighted for LASIK.

The implantation procedure for the ICL involves a procedure



DR. ZACK STEELE, O.D.

similar to that of cataract surgery. The main difference is that, unlike cataract surgery, the ICL procedure doesn’t require the removal of the eye’s crystalline lens. Unlike the LASIK or PRK refractive procedures, the ICL procedure doesn’t involve the removal of corneal tissue. Like cataract surgery, the ICL procedure is a 15-minute outpatient procedure.

Good candidates for the ICL include patients who:

- Are between the ages of 21 and 45
- Are nearsighted with or without astigmatism or farsighted, including those with mild, moderate, and severe myopia (as low as -3D to as high as -20D prescription) with minor or no occurrence of astigmatism. The Visian

Toric ICL, capable of correcting myopia with astigmatism, is currently under review with the U.S. FDA. The Visian TICL is currently available only outside the U.S.

- Have sufficient anterior chamber depth and acceptable endothelial cell density
- Haven’t had a change in their eyeglass prescription of more than 0.5D in a year
- Aren’t currently pregnant
- Have no other contraindications including no known allergies to medications used during refractive surgery
- Have dry eyes, severe myopia, or a thin cornea (non-LASIK candidate)

It’s important to note that several of the ICL risks are potential complications of all refractive procedures, including halos, glare, and double vision, infection, over-correction and under-correction, and vision loss. ICL risks, such as halos, glare, and double vision tend to occur less frequently than the same laser eye surgery complications. Also, unlike

LASIK vision correction and PRK surgery, over-correction and under-correction of refractive errors can be remedied by simply replacing the ICL with another implantable contact lens that has the correct prescription.

But the bad news? It’s expensive, often two to three times more expensive than LASIK. It does,

however, work for patients who aren’t able to have LASIK.

The message for anyone who’s thinking about refractive surgery is this: if you’re happy with glasses and contact lenses, then stick with that. If you hate glasses, hate contacts or just can’t wear them, then consider the refractive surgery options if you

have the means. I would encourage you to first ask your eye care professional to recommend a surgeon he or she knows and trusts.

Dr. Zack Steele is a 2003 graduate of the UAB School of Optometry. His practice, Trussville Vision Care, is located on Chalkville Mountain Road in downtown Trussville.

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Trussville Teen Council team of the week

From staff reports

The Trussville Teen Council was recently named the Charter Media Academic Team of the Week.

This group of teenagers meets regularly to discuss ways to give back to their community and school.

Their first project was serving a meal to a family at Ronald McDonald House. Several other activities are planned, and the group recently helped with the "Love Your Neighbor" food drive in Trussville.

Fifteen Hewitt-Trussville students make up this inaugural team of student volunteers.



photo courtesy of Diane Poole

Front row from left are Bethany Burgess, Elizabeth Weyerman, Abby Chappell, Kaley Cochran and Melissa Lawrence. Back row from left are JaRon Godbolt, Alan Roper, Anna Leigh Justice, Lauren Smith, Tessa Kirk, Chase Mathews, Megan Patterson, Rebekah Dennis, Bobbie Roper, Madison Plyman and Makenzie Plyman.

The Trussville Teen Council is a new program of the Trussville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Clay-Chalkville FCCLA prepares dinner at nonprofit

From staff reports

Clay-Chalkville High School's Family, Career and Community Leaders of America group last week performed a community service event at Three Hots and a Cot's Ryan Winslow Veterans Center.

The students prepared dinner for the local veterans at the nonprofit organization.

They made homemade chili, grilled cheese sandwiches and chocolate chip cookies that were purchased with money they earned during a cake pop fundraiser they did in the fall.



submitted photo

Clay-Chalkville High School FCCLA members

Students wore FCCLA T-shirts that have this Eleanor Roosevelt quote: "To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart." Co-sponsors of the group are Carol Chambers and Charlotte Mizell.

Clay-Chalkville English teacher wins \$1,000 grant

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A Clay-Chalkville High School English teacher recently received a \$1,000 grant from WIAT's One Class at a Time promotion.

Melanie Gaines, an AP language and composition, and 12th grade English teacher, received the grant, which she plans to use to buy five Samsung Galaxy tablets for her classroom.

Gaines received five



submitted photo

Melanie Gaines

Samsung Galaxy tablets in November 2014 from DonorsChoice.org.

"I use technology quite a bit in my classroom and especially like the ease of use of the tablets for multimedia projects," Gaines said.

Gaines has been at Clay-Chalkville High School six years.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Clay-Chalkville DECA group wins first place

From staff reports

Clay-Chalkville High School's DECA group recently finished in first place in the Business Services Operations Written Event.

Team members are Chad Murdock, Chase Russell and Rebekah Sewell.

The trio had to write a 30-page research paper and do a 15-minute presentation before a judge.

The trio is eligible to represent Alabama and compete at the International Career Development Conference



photo courtesy of Michael Lee

From left are Chad Murdock, Chase Russell and Rebekah Sewell.

that will be held in Orlando, Fla., in April.



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OPINION

Legislature has big hole to dig out of

The legislature and Gov. Robert Bentley are preparing for the first regular session of the quadrennium. The session will begin March 3.

Legislators need to arrive in Montgomery with their lunch pails and sleeves rolled up ready to go to work because the proverbial chickens have come home to roost. They are facing a gargantuan budget crisis in the state general fund. They can't spend this four years cussing Obamacare and passing unconstitutional and meaningless bills dealing with federal issues like immigration and abortion.

They can't kick the can down the road any longer. If they don't fix the cash-strapped general fund, they're going to start getting calls from angry constituents telling them that Aunt Susie is being kicked out of the nursing home and she's coming to

live with them, and their daughter went down to the courthouse to get her driver's license on her 16th birthday and nobody was there to give her the test, and their wife was in a car accident on I-65 and she sat in the car for two hours until a state trooper arrived, and, by the way, there are a couple state convicts hanging out in their front yard.

The legislature has a big hole to dig out of for next year. Those legislators who were proud of being placed on the budget committees during the organizational session may want to rethink their committee assignments. Their appointments may appear more like a prison sentence.

For the next fiscal year, the budget hole in just the general fund is more than \$261 million. However, the projected shortfall over the next few years will be



Steve Flowers
Inside the Statehouse

more like \$700 million. Bentley has to take the lead in steering the state out of this crisis. The governor proposes and the legislature disposes.

Bentley has said the time has come when the state isn't able to postpone dealing with the issue any longer. "Taxes would be the last thing I would look to as far as raising a new tax. But I cannot see getting through this without having to raise new revenue." Bentley continued, "We're broke and we don't have

enough money to cover what we owe." In his defense, he didn't cause the problem. He inherited it. His predecessor left the cupboard bare. Bob Riley spent any and all cash in the Rainy Day Funds and the federal stimulus money has run out.

It's no secret that the major culprits causing the dilemma in the general fund are Medicaid and prisons. Bentley is adamant that he doesn't want to expand Medicaid under the Federal Medicaid Expansion Act. He has consistently stood on the position that we can't expand because we can't afford what we have now.

The prison problem is pressing. Alabama's prison system is at almost double its capacity. This overcrowding is creating safety problems and is teetering on an emergency situation. There may be some long-term solutions.

Some of the problems could be alleviated by alternative sentencing measures. There have got to be other ways to punish crimes besides incarceration. Other states have had success taking this approach. Sen. Cam Ward has taken the lead in prison reform. He will be at the forefront of any reform measures.

In the meantime, any alternative sentencing guidelines will take years to implement. This crisis must be addressed immediately. The state will have to allot more funds for adequate jails or risk having a federal takeover of the state prison system. There is a precedent for this in the state. The bill for the federal takeover was extremely expensive.

We will shortly see what Bentley has to offer as solutions to the state's financial woes. When the governor makes his proposals March 3, the

presiding officer in the House will be Speaker Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn. He's been indicted on 23 felony ethics charges accusing him of using his office for personal gain. His trial is set to begin in October.

Campaign records show he's spent close to \$300,000 for legal fees using his campaign funds, which has been ruled allowable by an attorney general's opinion issued in 2000. The advisory opinion says that criminal defense costs can be paid out of campaign finance funds if the accusations are related to how the person performed in office.

Steve Flowers is Alabama's leading political columnist. His weekly column on Alabama politics appears in over 60 Alabama newspapers. He may be reached at www.stevflowers.us.

A statewide lottery is a tax

By Joe Godfrey
For The Tribune

Pro-gambling and pro-lottery forces are pushing Alabama once again to legalize gambling. What is different this time is that some conservative Republican legislators are "cozying up" to the idea. One new House member recently stated in a public forum in his district that, given the choice between raising taxes and voting on

a lottery, he would vote on a lottery.

What this legislator and others need to realize is that lotteries have proven to be one of the biggest public policy failures of the last 40 years. The Arkansas News recently reported:

"State lawmakers got a sobering picture Wednesday of the Academic Challenge Scholarship's future as proceeds from the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery, which funds the

scholarship, dwindle in the face of declining ticket sales."

Legislators should also recognize that a lottery is a tax. In fact, it's the worst kind of tax for two reasons. First, it's a regressive tax on the poorest citizens of our state. A careful analysis of data from states that currently have a lottery indicate that upper- and middle-income citizens don't play the lottery on a regular basis. Their purchases of lottery

tickets would not provide the level of income to the state touted by the pro-gambling forces. The "real" money spent on lottery tickets comes from lower-income individuals and families who don't always understand they're far more likely to lose than to win.

That brings us to the second reason a lottery is "the worst kind of tax." For a lottery to bring in the revenue needed by the state, the state actually has to deceive its own citizens in order to get them to purchase large numbers of lottery tickets. The state becomes a "bookie" and spends great sums of money on expensive, creative, attractive and often humorous advertising in order to trick its citizens into paying for a little card with numbers on it, most of which are thrown into the trash can after one or two winners are announced. The state, which is set up to protect its citizens from "enemies, both domestic and foreign," actually becomes an enemy of its

own citizens, deceiving them into throwing away their hard-earned money on mostly worthless lottery tickets.

There is another fact that should be mentioned at this point: Money spent on lottery tickets can't be used to pay for legitimate goods and services. Thus, the general tax base from sales taxes drops and the overall economy suffers. If gambling, whether through a lottery or through casino gambling, solved all the economic woes of a community or state, then why are so many counties and states, where gambling is a central part of their economy, struggling?

Nationwide, two-thirds of the citizens never or rarely gamble. As a result, they're apathetic to the problems associated with gambling and will often argue, "Well, since I don't gamble, if someone wants to do so, who am I to stop them?" Those individuals need to understand that you pay even if you don't play. All the big predatory gambling states are in a

mess financially. Why? In a 2009 report by the Rockefeller Institute on Government it was concluded that predatory gambling exacerbates long-term budgetary problems for states.

We appeal to the Alabama Legislature to resist the temptation to fund the important and admirable work done by our state and local government employees and the services they provide with money deceptively taken from the pockets of unsuspecting citizens. Instead, we call for a continued reduction in wasteful spending, and when necessary, a restructuring of the Alabama tax code that will result in taxes that are fair and understandable, rather than based on trickery.

Joe Godfrey is the executive director of the Alabama Citizens Action Program and a member of the national Stop Predatory Gambling Board. For more information, visit <http://stoppredatorygambling.org>.

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CALENDAR

Georgiana Davis Masonic Lodge meetings

Georgiana Davis Masonic Lodge No. 338 in Trussville meetings are at 7:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Monday each month. Practice nights are on the first and third Monday. Family nights are on the fifth Monday of the month. The lodge is at 190 Beechnut St. in Trussville. For more information, call Bryan Stover at 205-706-5220.

Springville Military Order of the Purple Heart meetings

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2213, Springville, meets at the Smokin Grill at 85 Purple Heart Boulevard on the first Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.

Trussville Sons of Confederate Veterans meetings

Nathan Bedford Forrest Camp 1435 meetings are the third Thursday each month at First Baptist Church Trussville from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Meetings are open to the public.

2015 Trussville City Council meetings

The 2015 Trussville City Council meetings will be March 10, March 24, April 14, April 28, May 12, May 26, June 9, June 23, July 14, July 28, Aug. 11, Aug. 25, Sept. 8, Sept. 22, Oct. 13, Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Nov. 19, Dec. 8 and Dec. 17. All meetings are at 6 p.m. at Trussville City Hall on Main Street.

Cahawba Art Association meetings

The Cahawba Art Association meets monthly on the second Monday at 6:30 p.m. at the Trussville Public Library.

2015 Clay City Council meetings

The 2015 Clay City Council meetings are scheduled for March 2, March 16,

April 6, April 20, May 4, May 18, June 1, June 15, July 6, July 20, Aug. 3, Aug. 17, Sept. 7, Sept. 21, Oct. 5, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, Nov. 16, Dec. 7 and Dec. 21. All meetings are at 6:30 p.m. at Clay City Hall on Old Springville Road.

Republican Women of Trussville meetings

Republic Women of Trussville meetings are at Sherry's Cafe on Valley Road near Trussville the first Thursday of each month. Meet and greet is at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting follows at 6 p.m. The March speaker is Alabama Republican Party National Committee Woman Vicky Diamond. For more information, visit www.rwot.net or email cherylamathews@gmail.com.

Center Point Masonic Lodge meetings

Center Point Masonic Lodge No. 872 located off Old Springville Road meets every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. For more information call Mike Lann at 205-687-7160.

2015 Trussville City BOE meetings

The first half of 2015 Trussville City Board of Education meetings will be March 16, April 20, May 11 and June 15. All meetings are at 6 p.m. at the Central Office with work sessions at 4:30 p.m.

TACC annual banquet Feb. 28

The Trussville Area Chamber of Commerce annual banquet is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 28 at the Trussville Civic Center. For more information, visit www.trussvillechamber.com or call 205-655-7535.

Friends of the Library meeting

Friends of the Library will meet at 11 a.m. Tuesday, March 3, in the meeting

room at the Trussville Public Library.

Jeff State 5K March 14

Jefferson State Community College will hold an inaugural Judy M. Merritt 5K Run and One-Mile Fun Walk for the community on March 14 at the Shelby-Hoover Campus. The 5K will begin at 8 a.m. at the Judy M. Merritt Memorial Highway (Valleydale Road) in front of the Health Sciences Building adjacent to Veterans Park. The One-Mile Fun Walk will begin at 9 a.m. For more information or to register, visit www.jeffersonstate.edu/5K.

'Beat the Odds' casino night at Regions Field March 14

The Junior Board for the Alabama Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention will hold its first annual "Beat the Odds" Casino Night at Regions Field on March 14 at 7 p.m. Tickets for the event are \$35 per individual and \$60 per couple. To purchase tickets or to find out how to become a sponsor of this event, visit <http://afsp.donordrive.com/event/beattheodds>.

2015 Pinson City Council meetings

The Pinson City Council typically meets the first and third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. The meetings are at Pinson City Hall, located at 4410 Main St. in Pinson.

Friends of the Library book sale March 12-15

The Friends of the Trussville Library's annual spring book sale is Thursday, March 12 through Sunday, March 15 at the Trussville Public Library's meeting room. The library is located at 201 Parkway Drive. Sale hours are the same as library business hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and

1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Junior League of Birmingham 5K for Kids March 21

The Junior League of Birmingham 5K for Kids is Saturday, March 21 at Regions Field. The 5K begins at 9 a.m. with a one-mile fun run scheduled for 10 a.m. For more information, visit <http://www.jlbonline.com/5kforkids>.

Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt March 21

The Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt will be March 21 at 6:30 p.m. at the Trussville Civic Center. The hunt is for children ages 2 to 8. There will be 6,000 candy- and toy-filled eggs to search for.

Trussville Leadership Conference March 19

The Trussville Leadership Conference is scheduled for Thursday, March 19 at the Trussville Civic Center. For more information, visit www.trussvillechamber.com or call 205-655-7535.

Trussville City Schools Recruiting Day March 22

Trussville City Schools Recruiting Day is March 22 at Hewitt-Trussville High School from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, visit www.trussvillecityschools.com.

Trussville City Fest set for May 2

Trussville City Fest is set for Saturday, May 2 at The Mall in downtown Trussville. More information about the event will be released as the date nears.

Jazzercise at Trussville Civic Center

Jazzercise is Mondays at 5 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., and Saturdays at 9 a.m. at the Trussville Civic Center. For more information, contact Beth Gilbert at 205-966-9893.

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SPORTS

Hewitt baseball playing in 'field of teal' games for ovarian cancer research

From staff reports

The Hewitt-Trussville varsity baseball team will compete Saturday, Feb. 28 in a three-way matchup to raise awareness for ovarian cancer.

Pelham, Oak Mountain and Hewitt-Trussville will play games starting at 11 a.m. at Pelham High School.

The Huskies are tentatively scheduled to face Oak Mountain at 1:15 p.m. and Pelham at 3:30 p.m.

Instead of traditional team colors, the field will be accented in teal, and the teams and fans will be wearing teal -- the color for ovarian cancer awareness -- in honor of Tammy Anderson, wife of Pelham baseball coach Sean Anderson. She is currently receiving chemotherapy treatments for Stage 2 ovarian

cancer. Tammy Anderson's mother lost her battle with Stage 4 ovarian cancer several years ago, while Hewitt-Trussville head coach Jeff Mauldin was the head coach at Pelham.

Donations made during the awareness and fundraising event will benefit the Laura Crandall Brown Ovarian Cancer Foundation to help fund research for development of early detection tests and raise awareness of symptoms.

In addition to raising funds for research for early detection, Tammy Anderson hopes to increase awareness about ovarian cancer's signs and symptoms. She asked for assistance from her CanSurvive GYN Cancer Support Group, which is now a program of the Laura Crandall Brown Ovarian Cancer Foundation. It will



file photo by Ron Burkett

Pelham head coach Sean Anderson and Hewitt-Trussville head coach Jeff Mauldin embrace after Game 2 of the 2013 Class 6A state championship series in Montgomery. Pelham won the series.

provide literature and teal arm bands to the first 150 fans and

will be accepting donations to be used for awareness campaigns, patient support, and research grants. Donations may be made at www.thinkoflaura.org.

Ovarian cancer is most treatable when found early. With only 27 percent of women with Stage 4 ovarian cancer living five or more years, it's critical for it to be found early. Even though routine pap smears can detect cancer in the cervix, currently there's no early screening test specifically for ovarian cancer. If an ovarian cancer mass is large enough, it can be detected by a gynecologist during a yearly exam. However, as in Tammy Anderson's case, the mass is often not large enough to be detected at the time of the exam, but instead it causes symptoms that should cause a woman to seek immediate medical

attention. Research for an early detection test is ongoing, but until a reliable one is found, women should be aware of the signs and symptoms.

Signs of ovarian cancer include bloating, eating and filling quicker than normal, abdominal pain, trouble urinating, abnormal bleeding, back pain, and a change in bowel habits.

A woman's lifetime risk for developing invasive ovarian cancer is 1 in 75. Ovarian cancer is the 11th-most common women's cancer but it is the fifth leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women and the deadliest of the GYN cancers.

"Together we can make a difference; help us improve these statistics for future generations," Tammy Anderson said in an email.

Pinson Valley sweeps Pleasant Grove

by Kyle Parmley

For The Tribune

The weather finally cooperated. For just long enough.

A day after dealing with icy weather and treacherous travel, temperatures rose into the upper 50s Saturday afternoon. Pinson Valley took advantage, sweeping Pleasant Grove in the Indians' first home set of the baseball season. The second game concluded at an opportune time, because a heavy rain shower moved into the area less than 30 minutes following the final pitch.

Pinson Valley took the first game 8-4, going ahead with five first-inning runs and never relinquishing the lead. The Indians held off Pleasant Grove in the finale 3-1, thanks to a strong performance on the mound from Raul Tafoya and a game-winning hit from senior Jacob Brown.

"It was good to come out here today and have guys do what needed to be done to win the game," Pinson Valley head coach Shane Chappell said. "We found ways to do it, getting the clutch hits and the pitchers threw good

all day."

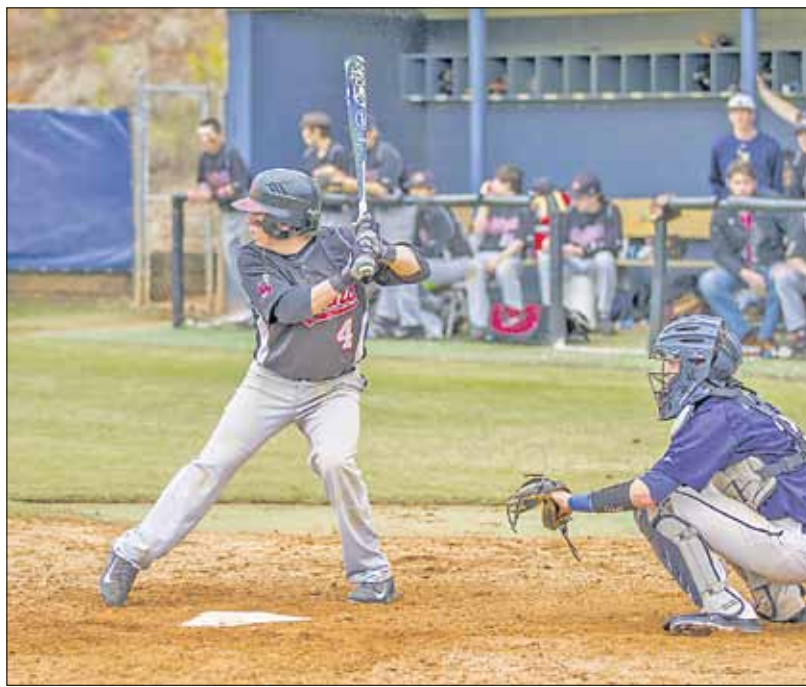
In the second game, the two teams split a pair of run-scoring singles from Pleasant Grove's Jordan Smith and Pinson Valley's Jacob Ingram to leave the score tied 1-1 after two innings. The Spartans threatened again in the sixth inning, leaving two men on after a double and single. But the bottom half of the frame would belong to the Indians.

Following a flyout to deep right field from Baker Hodge, first baseman Jody Graves stepped up and laced a double into the gap. Two batters later, Brown delivered a first-pitch shot back up the middle to plate two runs and break the tie.

"It was a big hit," Chappell said. "We only got three hits the whole game, but they were in clutch times. I was proud to see that we can win those games."

Tafoya had no trouble finishing off Pleasant Grove with a 1-2-3 seventh inning to close out the game. The junior hurler pitched around eight hits and recorded six strikeouts to notch the complete game victory.

Pinson Valley got off to a rough start in the initial contest, trailing



file photo by Ron Burkett

Pinson Valley senior Baker Hodge bats in a game last season.

by three following the top half of the first inning due to an error that allowed in two additional runs. But the Indians responded with a five-spot in the bottom half. The first three men reached base, and Graves cleared the bases with a single and an error. Brown and Turner Shankles added RBI hits later in the inning.

The Indians may have had

a chance to add to their lead in the second inning, following Rudd Mauldin reaching on a hit-by-pitch. Catcher Blake Sisson ripped a shot to third, but the ball was slowed by a deflection off the third baseman's glove. Mauldin was thrown out attempting to advance to third. Pinson Valley was on the positive end of a deflection in the next frame, as

a liner bounced off of Mauldin's glove and Hodge retrieved the ball at short and fired it to first to record the out.

Pleasant Grove's best chance to get back into the game came in the sixth inning, as the first two men reached and one was singled home Andrew Hudson to cut the lead to four. Hudson tried to steal second base to draw the throw and get another run in, but the Indians were not fooled. Sisson threw the ball down to a waiting Ingram at second base, who quickly returned the throw to Sisson to catch the runner at the plate.

Shelton Clevenger threw five innings for the Indians to pick up the win, giving up only a single hit while striking out five to go with three runs allowed. Blake Mayes closed out the proceedings, pitching the final two frames.

Chappell is just ready for the weather to get its act together.

"I'm a big routine guy and baseball is a big routine sport. But we can only control what we can control, and we have done a good job with that so far."

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Clay-Chalkville WR commits to Alabama

by Erik Harris

Sports Editor

When Clay-Chalkville wide receiver T.J. Simmons took the field at Hoover's Buccaneer Stadium for the first game of his junior year, he did so with the task of replacing Brian Clark — one of the top pass catchers in the state in 2013.

Clark ended his senior year as a member of the Alabama Sports Writers Association Class 6A All-State team after carrying the Cougars' passing game with 48 grabs for 869 yards and 13 touchdowns. None of his teammates managed more than 19 receptions during the 2013 season. That season, Simmons caught 15 passes for 309 yards and six touchdowns.

"Me and Brian talked every practice," Simmons said. "We were together every practice and he taught me little things that he knew and I just watched him play and practice and I took everything in and he helped me develop my game."

Everyone on the field knew the ball was bound for Clark, yet no one could stop it from happening and when it was all over, the task of filling his shoes seemed pretty unlikely to everyone other than



file photo by Ron Burkett

Clay-Chalkville wide receiver T.J. Simmons

Simmons, who was a sophomore at the time.

"I knew that the receiver corps that we had would be good, just like we were the year before, but I knew that I had to step up and be like the top receiver that we had," Simmons said. "It just made me be more of a leader."

Simmons' 2014 debut was televised on ESPNU, which means everyone got to watch him become that leader, tallying two touchdowns in Clay-Chalkville's 44-23 win over Niceville (Fla.). He only grew from there and eventually did the unthinkable, which was exceed his predecessor's numbers.

The junior pulled in 43 catches for 965 yards and 17 scores in an offense that prided itself on running the football. He also rushed five times for 54 yards and two scores. His production landed him on the 2014 AHSAA Class 6A All-State team, and it might land him on another state team come February 2016.

When Simmons takes the field at Middle Tennessee State University's Johnny "Red" Floyd Stadium to start his senior campaign with the Cougars, he will do so as a University of Alabama committed player.

"I went to every Alabama home game this year, so they told

me that they liked the way that I was always up there and the people on the staff grew fond of me," Simmons said.

The Crimson Tide extended the offer last Thursday and Simmons wasted no time playing the recruiting game. He told Alabama head coach Nick Saban that he would like to commit via phone shortly after the offer was placed on the table.

According to 247Sports, offensive line coach Mario Cristobal is Simmons' primary recruiter. Cristobal was recently awarded the 2015 Rivals.com Recruiter of the Year after pulling in Shades Valley's Daron Payne in the Class of 2015.

Simmons also has offers from Mississippi State, Cincinnati, South Alabama, Southern Mississippi, Troy and Western Kentucky.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to hear from T.J. Simmons about his verbal commitment to Alabama.



Local baseball players talk about weather delays

by Erik Harris

Sports Editor

With Mother Nature having her way with the opening week of baseball season, area players try to stay focused.

Pinson Valley managed to squeeze in a doubleheader on Wednesday at Corner, which they split, but it took three attempts to finally make it happen.

With third-year Indians head coach Shane Chappell urging his guys to keep the right perspective, two of his seniors have received the message.

"It hasn't affected our rhythm," said fourth-year catcher Gage Farley. "We're just eager to get out and play someone other than ourselves. And Chappell you can tell wants to play these games, but understands you have to adjust. He

says, 'Control what you can control.'"

Senior second baseman Baker Hodge has chosen to keep a similar outlook on the situation.

"Yeah, can't control Mother Nature," Hodge said. "Just trying to do what we can and stay ready to play."

The Cougars, under the direction of second-year head coach Bubba Roberts, have been unsuccessfully trying to host Springville

since last Monday.

Senior pitcher Matthew Calvert hasn't let the endless cancellations get under his hat.

"It really isn't hard at all," Calvert said. "Every game when I know I'm going to be on the mound, I have a mentality that is

set and I'm just ready to do my job. Just have to move on to the next day and set that mentality again and be ready when your number is called."

Fellow Clay-Chalkville senior Tyler Duke is ready to put his tireless preparation to good use.

"We are just excited and ready to finally get to step out between the lines and play," Duke said. "We've worked all offseason to get to this point and we are just ready to kick things off and get it rolling."

Fourth-graders complete undefeated season

From staff reports

The fourth grade Huskies finished their Over the Mountain season undefeated by beating Mountain Brook in the championship game 36-32.


The team finished with a 14-0 record.

This is the second straight year the team has gone undefeated, beating teams from all over the Birmingham area.



submitted photo

Top row from left are Rubie Katie Simon, Abby Kate Monski, Katherine Flannery, Brooklyn Allison and Reagan Humphries. Bottom row from left are Landry Watson, Hannah Dorsett and Kenleigh Cahalan.



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More scholarship offers roll in for Hewitt-Trussville backfield

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

In the wake of National Signing Day 2015, Hewitt-Trussville's backfield is trending among Division I programs for the 2016 recruiting cycle.

Dual-threat quarterback Zac Thomas and his favorite ball carrier, Jarrion Street, only have one more season of high school football ahead of them, so college programs are beginning to take action.

Street, a 6-foot running back, received two scholarship offers last Thursday. Southern Mississippi out of Conference USA and South Alabama out of the Sun Belt Conference showed interest in his ability. Including Arkansas



file photo by Ron Burkett

Hewitt-Trussville running back Jarrion Street

State and Mercer, that makes four offers now for Street.

Hewitt-Trussville head coach Josh Floyd expects big things from his quarterback in Year 2 under his watch, but South

Alabama, Arkansas State, Southern Mississippi and Western Kentucky have already seen all they need to see from Thomas. Both programs have extended offers to the 6-foot-2 signal caller, who Floyd



file photo by Ron Burkett

Hewitt-Trussville quarterback Zac Thomas

labels as "a student of the game."

Street and Thomas are listed as 3-star prospects by 247Sports.

"I think that could be one of the best backfields

in Alabama next year," Floyd said following the 2014 season.

Calling Street a ball carrier might be an insult, though. He's known for having some of the best

hands on the team, which should greatly help his cause at the next level. Those hands caught 23 passes last year for 245 yards and two scores, but that was merely a bonus to what he did on the ground — 1,165 yards with an average of 6.4 yards per carry and 14 touchdowns.

Thomas showed some diversity of his own as a junior. In his first season as a full-time starter, Thomas completed 58 percent of his passes for 1,738 yards and nine touchdowns. Pairing that with his 1,137 rushing yards and 18 rushing scores makes a popular resume that more college programs are sure to see.

"I'm just waiting to see who all offers me, but I really like South Alabama and Arkansas State," Thomas said.

Nick Saban offers another Clay wideout

by Erik Harris

Sports Editor

While on the phone with Alabama head football coach Nick Saban last Thursday, Clay-Chalkville head coach Jerry Hood told the coach to take the time to meet sophomore receiver Nico Collins before he offered the 2017 prospect a scholarship.

By Friday, Collins found himself in the Mal Moore Athletic Facility meeting Saban and getting his third Southeastern Conference scholarship offer. He already held a Mississippi State and Ole Miss offer.



file photo by Ron Burkett

Clay-Chalkville sophomore wide receiver Nico Collins grabs a touchdown reception against Hillcrest-Tuscaloosa last season.

"I guess (Saban) felt confident enough that (Collins) was what Alabama wanted," Hood said.

Georgia then became Collins' fourth scholarship offer Saturday.

Hood said the junior-to-be has no intentions of making a commitment quickly.

"I'm sure he wants to talk to his parents," Hood said. "He's going to have to be talked through how to handle these things and remain a good young man."

Collins was accompanied by fellow Cougar wideout T.J. Simmons, who chose not to sit on the Alabama offer he received just a day earlier. Simmons, however, is an upcoming senior

that knew the Capstone was the right place for him.

Simmons lives in a crimson-colored family, while Collins doesn't claim his allegiance to any program. The sophomore does admit to cheering for the Oregon Ducks every so often, though.

It's safe to say that the Clay-Chalkville passing game will be feared by defenses all over the state in 2015.

"They have a lot of God-given ability, but the thing I'm proudest of is both of them are great kids," Hood said. "They don't get mixed up in any trouble and they take care of their business at

school."

Between the two, Simmons and Collins went for 1,770 receiving yards and 32 touchdowns on their way to a Class 6A state championship last year.

For the second consecutive year, quarterback Ty Pigrome, who holds offers from six Division I programs, will be tossing the ball to his two gifted targets.

"Those two kids have a lot to be thankful for on behalf of their teammates," Hood said. "It's a team effort. These two kids just have been blessed with God-given ability."

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