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Photo by Bud Keegan

www.budkeeganimages.com

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Photo by John Garrick

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SPCA RESCUES ANIMALS



FOCUS ON WILMINGTON STUDENTS



MIDDLETOWN WINS TITLE

Photo by Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (Facebook)



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY BETSY PRICE

The Historic Odessa Foundation has two things to celebrate this holiday season. First, Louisa May Alcott’s “Little Women” will be the basis for the return of the historic houses’ Christmas tradition of recreating scenes from classic literature to celebrate the season.

Second, but perhaps most important, the foundation this week met its \$3 million goal to create an Independence and Perpetuity endowment fund one year earlier than expected. The fund will enable the foundation to sustain the preservation of its six historic museum properties and 72-acre site, its collection of more than 7,000 decorative art objects and its Living History educational programming.

The early goal was particularly gratifying to Debbie Buckson, executive director of the foundation, who once feared the whole site would be lost.

“Our goal was to raise \$3 million in three years, and

ODESSA HOLIDAY TRADITION RETURNS AS FOUNDATION BEATS GOAL EARLY

we exceeded that by \$70,000, a year ahead of schedule,” she said Thursday. “This is going to make all the difference in securing the future of the foundation in perpetuity.”

The site has made tremendous progress since 2005 when the foundation was established. “It’s stunning how supportive and generous the MOT community and the people of the state of Delaware have been, in addition to all the donors who have a connection to us. We can’t thank our community enough,” she said.

“Historic Odessa was nearly gone. It came so close to disappearing as a museum...a public site. It took a lot of effort from a lot of people and now we have a secure future, which was our goal from the beginning.”

The foundation will celebrate with a ceremony Monday, Dec. 13, to unveil a donor plaque.

Historic Odessa was forced to skip its customary Christmas festivities last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, it installed thousands of white lights along the roof lines of the old buildings to brighten the December nights.

This year, though, the Wilson-Warner House, built in 1769, is the setting of the “Little Women” recreations, marking the 35th anniversary of the tradition. Alcott’s book was published at Christmas in 1868, nearly a century after the Wilson-Warner house was built.

This is the second time the book has been chosen for the holiday treatment. It was originally picked in 1991 and was scheduled to repeat last year, said designer

Brian Miller. “It was always on my shortlist,” he said. “So we got to do it this year.”

The coming-of-age novel is a perennial favorite at holiday time, with multiple film and television versions. Christmas plays a big part in the story of the family struggling to cope while the father is away as a chaplain during the Civil War.

Alcott’s characters were way ahead of their time in allowing the daughters the choice of what they wanted to do with their lives and who they married, Miller said.

To prep for the Odessa show, Miller visited the Louisa May Alcott Orchard House Museum in Concord, Massachusetts. Ultimately, he chose to condense the book’s 46 chapters into several scenes, including a parlor decked out for Christmas, festive dining room set for Christmas dinner, the four sisters’ bedroom and the home of a poor family the family visits on Christmas Day.

His favorite is the bedroom of Meg, Jo, Amy and Beth. “At the foot of their bed, on a chair or near their bed on a chest of drawers, there are the things that characterize each girl and that shows the differences between them,” he said. The sister’s bedroom is one of the scenes on the Odessa tour.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)



SPCA BRINGS 75 CATS, DOGS BACK FROM TORNADO-STRICKEN KENTUCKY

“As soon as we saw the impact, we started planning, knowing there would be a significant need for help,” said Adam Lamb, CEO of Brandywine Valley SPCA, in a press release. “These are the times we all need to come together for both pets and their people, and we’re proud to have the resources to step up in such times of crisis.”

The Kentucky Humane Society is the Bluegrass State’s largest animal adoption agency. It provides support to under-resourced animal shelters in over 35 Kentucky counties, including Mayfield, which was ravaged by a Dec. 11 tornado.

Kat Rooks, initiatives director at Kentucky Humane Society, said it has provided the Mayfield-Graves County Animal Shelter with low-cost spay and neuter surgeries and transported more than 1,600 shelter animals from there in the last three years.

“We are heartbroken to see this community we love and know so well shattered by these storms,” Rooks said in a press release.

The Brandywine Valley SPCA often steps in to aid fellow animal welfare groups in other states after natural disasters and other catastrophes. In August, the group received more than 100 animals after an **emergency airlift** brought them from Louisiana to Delaware when Hurricane Ida hit, only to see the remnants of Ida cause massive flooding and destruction in Delaware.

The Kentucky shelter dogs and cats arrived at their Animal Rescue Center in Georgetown late Monday night. They will be up for adoption on Wednesday at the organization’s **locations** in Delaware and Pennsylvania. Donations to support the animals and the SPCA can be made at <https://bvspca.org/kentucky-tornado/>.



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A Brandywine Valley SPCA emergency response team has brought 75 adoptable cats and dogs back from the Kentucky Humane Society in the wake of a deadly tornado outbreak across six states.

Relocating the animals will allow the Louisville shelter to have more space to accept lost and displaced pets from communities impacted by the deadly tornadoes.

The cats and dogs are expected to start becoming available for adoption Wednesday. They include large and small animals, as well as kittens and puppies.

The animals brought to Delaware were already up for adoption in Kentucky and were not lost or displaced by the tornadoes.

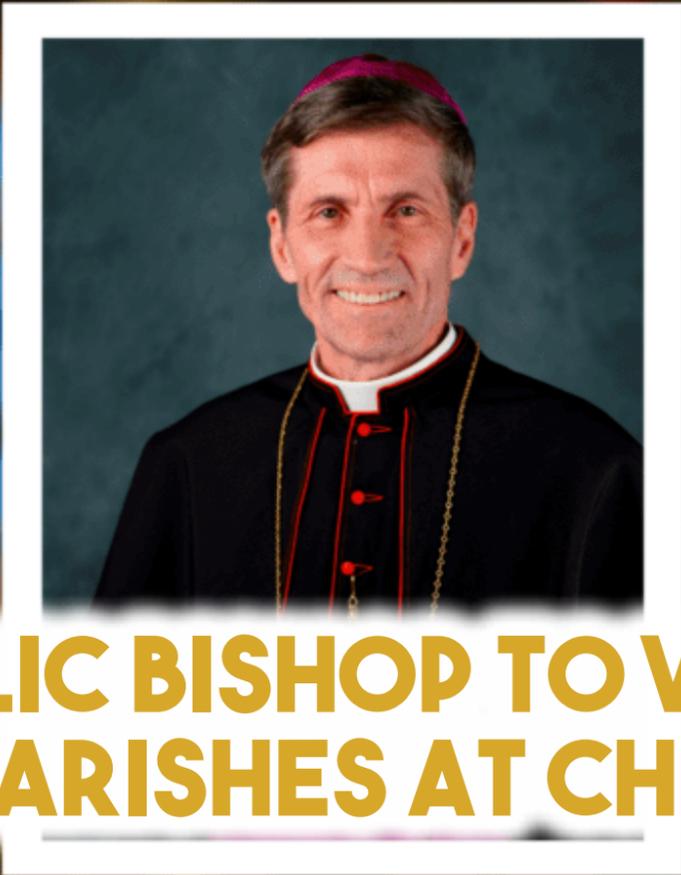
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NEW CATHOLIC BISHOP TO VISIT FOUR DELAWARE PARISHES AT CHRISTMAS

BY CHARLIE MEGGISON

Bishop William E. Koenig of The Catholic Diocese of Wilmington will tour the state for his first Christmas as Bishop. This will be the new Bishop's first Christmas as shepherd of the more than 240,000 Catholics who live in Delaware and on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

On Christmas Eve, Koenig will preside at the 4 p.m. Christmas Vigil Mass at the Church of the Holy Cross, located at 631 South State Street in Dover. The Bishop will then preside over an 8 p.m. Christmas Eve liturgy at Mary Mother of Peace Church near Oak Orchard, located at 30839 Mt. Joy Road in Millsboro.

On Christmas Day, Koenig will celebrate the Nativity of the Lord at the 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Jude the Apostle Church, located at 152 Tulip Drive in Lewes. He will then

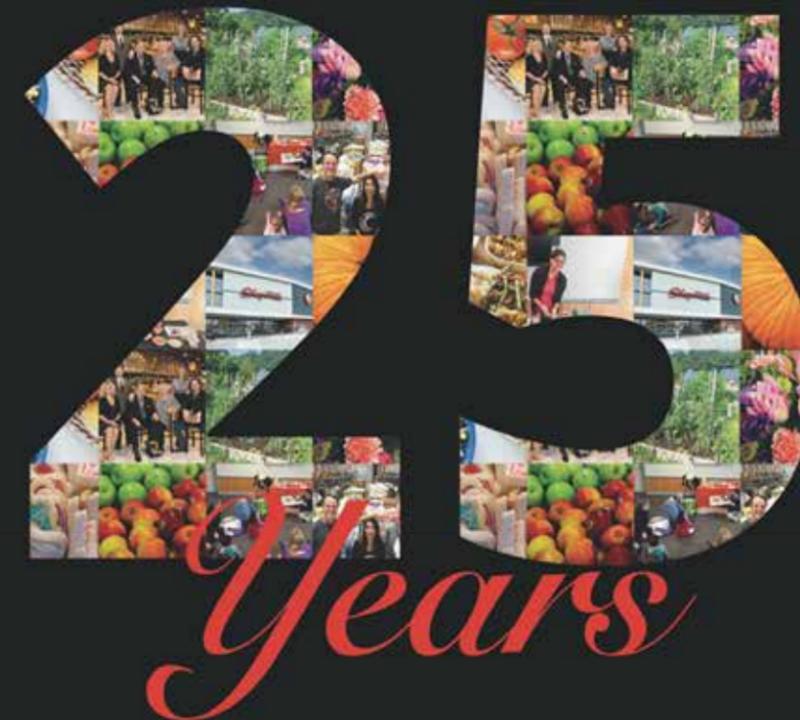
join parishioners for the 11 a.m. Mass at St. John the Apostle Church, located at 506 Seabury Avenue in Milford.

Additionally, Bishop W. Francis Malooly, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Wilmington, will preside at the 6 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at St. Mary Magdalen Church, 7 Sharpley Road in Wilmington.

The Most Reverend William E. Koenig was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York on May 14, 1983. On April 30, 2021, the Holy See announced that Pope Francis had appointed him the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, succeeding Bishop Malooly.

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PHASE TWO OF I-95 REHABILITATION; NEW TRAFFIC PATTERNS, CLOSURES

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

As the I-95 Restore the Corridor project in Wilmington transitions to its second phase, DelDOT officials have announced upcoming changes to traffic patterns.

Phase 2 construction will require closures of I-95 Southbound in Wilmington throughout the month of December, including:

- Monday, Dec. 13 through Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021: overnight closures (9 p.m. to 5 a.m.) of I-95 Southbound from Exit 7 Delaware Avenue/SR 52 to I-295 split and the I-95 SB on-ramp from N. Jackson St.
- Friday, Dec. 17 through Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021: overnight closure (9 p.m. to 9 a.m.) of I-95 Southbound from the PA Line to I-295 Split.
- Friday, Dec. 17, 2021: ramp closure (9 p.m.), Exit 6: I-95 SB off-ramp to MLK Boulevard/4th St. This ramp will remain closed for the first portion of Phase 2 construction.
- Friday, Dec. 17, 2021: ramp closure (9 p.m.), N. Jackson St. on-ramp to I-95 Southbound. This ramp will remain closed until Phase 2 construction is completed.

- Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021: ramp closure (9 a.m. to 10 p.m.), Exit 7B, Delaware Ave./SR 52 North.

DETOURS:

- Monday, Dec. 13 through Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021: (I-95 SB overnight closures): Take Exit 7B Delaware Ave. to Jackson Street, left onto MLK Boulevard, right onto US 13 Southbound, to I-495 Southbound.
 - Friday, Dec. 17 to Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021: (I-95 SB overnight closure): Motorists will be directed to I-495 Southbound at the PA Line. Local traffic entering I-95 Southbound from Naamans Road, Harvey Road or Marsh Road will be directed to Exit 8, US 202 Northbound to SR 141 SB to I-95 SB.
 - Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021: (Exit 7B daytime closure): Motorists will be directed to Exit 7A, Delaware Ave./SR 52 South, left onto Adams Street, left onto Delaware Ave.
- For additional information for the I-95 Corridor Project, visit www.restorethecorridor.com.



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NEW CASTLE COURT HOUSE MUSEUM TO BE CLOSED THROUGH SPRING 2022



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Beginning Dec. 31, the New Castle Court House Museum will be closed for the installation of a fire sprinkler system throughout the historic building. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2022.

According to a press release announcing the closure, all contractors considered for the project were required to have experience working with historic buildings.

Design schemes were reviewed by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

New Castle residents and visitors may experience some minor inconveniences during the time that installation is taking place. “Division staff and contractors will

make every effort to keep disruptions to a minimum and to facilitate the timely installation of a fire suppressant system that will make the court house a safer place for both visitors and staff,” the release says.

Prior to installing the sprinkler system, the museum’s contents will be made safe from damage and staff will continue to work in alternative locations in the building while installation is taking place.

Built in 1732, the New Castle Court House is one of the oldest active courthouses in the United States and was Delaware’s first state capitol. At the court house in 1776, New Castle, Kent and Sussex counties declared their independence from Pennsylvania and England

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During its nearly 300 years of history, the National Historic Landmark has played many pivotal roles in the political, social and commercial life of both New Castle and Delaware.

Operated by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, the museum is a partner site in the First State National Historical Park. The court house and museum is located at 211 Delaware Street in New Castle.



Photo by Fauxels for Pexels



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

WILMINGTON WINS \$15 MILLION DIGITAL FINANCIAL TECH COMPANY HEADQUARTERS

BY BETSY PRICE

A company that digitally links cash management accounts will build a \$15.37 million headquarters and customer service center in Wilmington, in hopes of adding 395 new jobs.

Investor Cash Management will become the newest addition to the city's hub of financial companies.

The company, which started in 2018 and now employs 30, offers a platform as a service. The company uses an application programming interface—or API-driven technology—to link cash management accounts directly to specified investments, transforming investment products such as mutual funds, exchange traded funds and/or shares into digital transaction currencies. The technology combines banking, investing and payments to drive client acquisition and increase assets.

Investor Cash Management will use \$4.26 million in state grants. The jobs will include tech positions, such as coders and programmers, along with sales, marketing,

customer service, administrative, finance and managerial positions.

The announcement was one of three pieces of happy economic news revealed Monday. The other two were **New B&M Meats'** \$18 million expansion, new building and 190 new jobs, as well as **Analytical Biological Services Inc.**, which will spend \$4.2 million to expand lab space and double its work force.

Delaware Prosperity Partnership began working with the financial company earlier this year to find a site.

The company will use a performance-based grant of \$3,797,310 and a capital expenditure grant of \$461,100 from the Delaware Strategic Fund. Those funds are dependent on the company achieving goals as outlined in their proposal to the CDF, which reviewed and approved the request.

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WILMINGTON MEATS MANUFACTURER TO BUILD \$18 MILLION PLANT, ADD 190 JOBS

BY BETSY PRICE

A manufacturer of raw sandwich steaks and chicken steaks will invest more than \$18 million to build a new 80,000-square-foot plant and add 190 new jobs. New B&M Meats Inc.'s addition to Wilmington's food production industry will use \$1.1 million in state grants to support the project in the city's Seventh Street Peninsula.

The company plans to start construction on the new facility in 2022 and open it in late 2023 or early 2024.

The announcement was one of three economic good-news pieces Monday. The other two were [Analytical Biological Services Inc.](#), which will spend \$4.2 million to expand lab space and double its work force, and [Investor Cash Management's](#) \$15.37 million new headquarters.

Delaware Prosperity Partnership, the state's nonprofit public-private economic development organization,

and Wilmington's Office of Economic Development have been working with New B&M since 2020 to evaluate scenarios for combining operations in the region to expand. The meats company now employs 98 people in Wilmington. The company will use a state Performance Grant of \$195,975 to add 70 jobs to support organic growth at its Commerce Street location.

The new facility will be completed along East Seventh Street on three parcels of land totaling 10 acres with support from a Capital Expenditure Grant of \$555,300.

A second Performance Grant of \$359,450 will help the company add another 120 jobs at the new site to support increased production capacity, diversified product offerings and operational expansion through entry into new markets.

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BY BETSY PRICE

A Delaware-paid \$4.2 million renovation of a New Castle biological services company will set the stage for it to double its workforce in the First State. Analytical Biological Services Inc. is retrofitting 30,000 square feet of space in New Castle for its new office headquarters and lab space.

The company, part of the state's life sciences sector, will use two grants from the Delaware Strategic Fund to meet significant projected growth and add 36 new high-paying, full-time, skilled trade and professional-level positions—more than doubling its current workforce.

The announcement was one of three economic good-news stories released Monday afternoon. The other two said [Investor Cash Management](#) of Chicago, Ill., would

COMPANY PROVIDING TISSUE, CELL CULTURES WILL DOUBLE WORKFORCE

put its new \$15.37 million headquarters in Delaware and that [B&M Meats Inc.](#) will add 80,000 square feet and 190 new jobs in Wilmington.

For more than 30 years, Analytical Biological Services has provided cell culture services, gene editing, human biospecimens, cell and tissue preparations and analyses, and samples storage. Its clients include nearly every major pharmaceutical and biotechnology company in the world that is involved in early-stage drug discovery or diagnostics research.

“When we realized we had a shortage of lab space for them to use as they grow their business, we made sure there was funding available for what we call Lab Space Grants,” said Gov. John Carney in a press release. “The life science industry is essential to both public health and Delaware’s economic future...We want companies that start here to stay and grow here.”

The company’s leadership asked the Council on Development Finance for a Performance Grant of \$262,260 and \$1 million from Delaware’s Lab Space Grant incentive program.

The Performance Grant, to be drawn over the next three years, is for the creation of 36 new full-time high-quality Delaware jobs ranging from skilled trade to professional level. Qualified Delaware residents will have first opportunity for employment.

Analytical Biological Services will lease 30,000 square feet of a 48,000-square-foot office building in New Castle that will be purchased by ABS BioAccelerator LLC, a separate but related entity. The company will renovate 10,000 square feet for offices, and the Lab Space Grant will help ABS invest \$3.7 million to renovate 20,000 of those square feet at roughly \$188.13 per square foot for lab space. The grant requires ABS to remain in Delaware for five years.

The company employs 33 full-time workers at its current location in Wilmington’s Cornell Business Park. Its growth has been driven by investment in a larger and more highly trained business development team, along with continuous improvement of processes and business systems. Their ability to increase revenues has resulted in what will now be further investment in more staff and equipment—all to remain right here in Delaware.

In 2019, ABS engaged the services of Delaware Prosperity Partnership—Delaware’s nonprofit public-private economic development organization facilitating the important conversations that drive growth, increase investment and support the talent needs of statewide employers—to help identify suitable R&D and lab space to accommodate their expanding needs.

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Photo by Jonathan Borba for Pexels



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

WILMA'S HOPES FOR STRIKE WITH DUCKPIN BOWLING, NEW ORLEANS DINING



BY BETSY PRICE

Wilma's, a new duckpin bowling alley and creole eatery on Market Street in Wilmington, ticks a couple of boxes for the owners and for future clients.

The new restaurant—half vibrant colors for the bowling and half soothing streamlined earth tones in the bar and dining room—starts by giving new life to 902 N. Market Street. It's a location that's been a death sentence for at least three other restaurants in the spot during the last decade.

"I've heard everything from it's on Indian burial ground to it's a cursed space," says Rich Snyder, director of food and beverage for developers Buccini/Pollin Group. "I think it's just the right concept going in there at the right time. And I feel this is both."

For customers, it offers a place to socialize that goes a step beyond a bar. Snyder says that's important to a lot of young professionals who want to do more than sit around with a drink in their hand at a bar.

"We figured we'd do something that would create an activity that could attract people to the bowling activity but also have great food to complement the bowling," he said.

Already popular in places like Nashville, Cleveland, Baltimore and Atlanta, duckpin bowling also appeals to families because both the pins and the balls are smaller than traditional 10-pin bowling. Wilma's lanes are half the length of a typical alley.

BPG describes duckpin bowling as a cross between

skeeball and 10-pin bowling, with slightly different rules. Players have three turns, instead of two, to score using a grapefruit-sized ball without holes.

BPG hopes the lanes also will inspire families who want to hold children's birthday parties during the day.

The first full-service restaurant owned and operated by The Buccini/Pollin Group, the name Wilma's also is a play on the term "Wilmo," which many people use to refer to Wilmington.

The red-haired vixen seen above the four-lane bowling alley is a character created by BPG who is envisioned to be equally at home on a motorcycle or in an opera audience. She's been given life in the distinctive style of Wilmington artist Lauren E. Peters, whose self-portrait in the bar also is a more dynamic version of Wilma.

Announced in early 2020, Wilma's opening was delayed until this month by the pandemic and also by supply chain problems. The pin setters, for example, weigh 1,500 pounds each and were ordered from Belgium. They were supposed to arrive Oct. 22 in New York. They didn't get there until Dec. 7. And then somewhere between New York and Philadelphia, they were lost.

Snyder said he's been told by a Wilmington company who helps them find furniture and fixtures that it's "complete piracy" out there.

Wilma's ended up getting two new reseters from the installers' inventory and two off a showroom floor. They should have arrived from Pittsburgh and be up and running Wednesday, Snyder said.

Ultimately, BPG spend about \$2 million to transform a 100-year-old bank space with 30-foot walls.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)

Photo by Brian K. Leonard



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



FIVE DELAWARE BEACHES SET FOR REPLENISHING IN JANUARY

BY BETSY PRICE

DNREC will begin replenishing Pickering Beach, Kitts Hummock, Bowers, South Bowers, and Slaughter Beach communities in early January 2022, largely because of recent storm damage. The sand will come from inland sources, including reusing dredged material.

The nourishment, as the Shoreline and Waterway Management Section calls it, introduce sand into the shoreline system to offset the effects of erosion. The state spends millions adding sand to combat erosion and other problems because the beaches and dunes are an important natural line of defense between the Delaware Bay and inland public and private infrastructure, including houses and roads. The Delaware Bay beaches and dunes also provide habitat to plants and animals, as well as providing recreation for people.

These five beaches ranked high in DNREC's 2020 assessment of beach vulnerability, a press release said, and planning for the project has been underway since mid-2021.

Beach surveys and monitoring by the Shoreline and Waterway Management Section, together with resident and community feedback, show these five communities were among the most impacted by coastal storms that produced widespread damages throughout the Delaware Bay shoreline in October and November.

DNREC crews will use trucks to haul in sand from a clean inland source and put it on sections of the beach and dunes most degraded by erosion and storms, but not along the entirety of each beach. DNREC expects the cost of sand to be high and availability limited because of high demands for sand from the construction industry.

At South Bowers, beach-quality sand will be dredged from the Murderkill River Inlet and entrance channel and placed on the beach. The re-use of dredged material is a regional sediment management technique that allows sand to remain in the local coastal system and provides cost advantages via mutual benefits from a single project.

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NEWARK MAN INDICTED FOR POSSESSING, DISTRIBUTING CHILD PORN

BY BETSY PRICE

A 34-year-old Newark man has been indicted by a federal grand jury in Wilmington for distributing and possessing child pornography.

Melvin Janvier III has been in state custody since his arrest on July 20, 2021, according to a press release from David C. Weiss, U.S. attorney for the District of Delaware.

“The production, distribution and collection of child pornography is a heinous shadow industry that targets the most vulnerable among us—our children,” Weiss said. “Our office is dedicated to combatting this abhorrent industry and bringing those who lurk in its shadows to justice.”

If convicted, Janvier faces a mandatory minimum penalty of 15 years in prison, with a maximum penalty of 40 years incarceration. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors.

The case was investigated by the Crimes Against Children and Human Trafficking Squad of the FBI Maryland Child Exploitation Task Force and will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Briana Knox.



Cancer isn't waiting for COVID-19 to be over.

One in three Delawareans will get cancer. Unfortunately, many have put off their cancer screenings in the past year. Screenings detect cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you've skipped or canceled a screening due to the pandemic — for breast, cervical, colon, lung, or prostate cancer — don't wait one more day. **Call your health care provider to schedule your cancer screenings today.**

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Photo by Tima Miroshnichenko for Pexels



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

UD NOT AS HARD HIT FINANCIALLY DURING FALL SEMESTER AS OFFICIALS PREDICTED

BY BETSY PRICE

University of Delaware President Dennis Assanis's dire warnings of huge financial deficits in fall semester didn't come true, he told UD's Board of Trustees Tuesday. The school had expected an operating shortfall of up to \$30 million. Assanis said it was actually closer to \$9 million, a number that could be "completely wiped out with a solid winter session," Assanis said.

He credited the involvement of staff members in planning COVID-19 precautions, especially Dr. Tim Dowling who was director of Student Health Services and now has accepted a job as associate clinical professor at Touro University's College of Osteopathic Medicine in California.

More than 90% of the UD community was vaccinated and more than 100,000 surveillance tests have been administered since September 2020 to keep the virus

from spreading. There was no evidence of classroom spread, Assanis said. Students and staff are being encouraged to obtain booster shots as soon as they are eligible, he said. He said he wasn't sure what problems the more infectious Omicron variant would create. "But I'm staying conservatively optimistic that we will know how to deal with it," he said.

A drop in the number of students because of COVID-19 will roll through the system for years, he said. But bringing many people back to campus also has resulted in increases in first-year enrollment, graduate enrollment and UD's first-to-second-year retention rate.

UD already has already received nearly 26,000 applications for the Class of 2026, which will star in the fall. That's a 7.8% increase from 2020 and reflects increases from Black, Hispanic, multi-race, Delawarean



and international students, he said.

The school also is trying to make the institution more accessible for all Blue Hen hopefuls with special programs in Kent and Sussex counties. They include a targeted admissions strategy and hosting events that increase UD's visibility and engagement in underrepresented areas.

UD is extending its [Delaware First](#) fundraising campaign, striving for a new goal of \$1 billion, Assanis said. "The end game is all about our people, our culture and our operations," Assanis said. "We want to make an even stronger impact on the world."

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CARNEY HAWKS IDEA OF NEW BOARD TO FOCUS ON WILMINGTON STUDENTS

BY BETSY PRICE

A meeting to get buy-in for a new program that would focus efforts on improving education for Wilmington school children often ended up in the same place: questions about the plan's details. "That's been one of the more difficult things about selling the concept," Gov. John Carney told people Tuesday night at Pulaski Elementary School.

It was one of four stops he plans to make by Dec. 21 to sell the Wilmington Collaborative Learning Program, which asks Brandywine, Christina and Red Clay school districts to agree for a new board to be set up that would oversee learning in the city.

They are three of the four school districts who educate Wilmington children through a confusing decision made under desegregation rulings in the 1970s. The number of city students in each district comprises 15% or fewer of its student body, which means decisions



made for the majority often don't work for them. Colonial also educates city students, but has no physical schools in the city. Their kids are bussed to Colonial schools in the burbs.

The collaborative is designed to focus on programs and resources that bear on issues that affect city learners in much greater degree than they do suburban learners, including poverty, crime, trauma, food insecurity, transiency as families move, and more teachers leaving city schools.

Ultimately, organizers want to create consistency for students while empowering educators, school leaders and communities to help them. All of that will result in improved outcomes for Wilmington students, they believe.

"People want me to tell them what we're gonna do, but that's not the way it works," Carney said as the meeting was nearing its end after an hour and 16 minutes. "It



works from the bottom up and engaging parents and teachers and educators, working as a team."

Carney and others repeatedly said the program is designed to be created from the ground up and not another case of officials telling people they've decided what's good for them. It's also not a takeover by the state, they stressed.

What was clear in what James Simmons III, chief equity officer of the Delaware Department of Education, called the organizers' 80th meeting, is that there will be no single answer, but a combination of suggestions that work to offer administrators, teachers and parents a wide range of solutions to help the children.

It's also clear that even if the program launched year, as organizers hope, the full impact will not be felt for years, and organizers know that. They already have been talking about the collaborative for four years.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)



BY BETSY PRICE

While the state of Delaware provides most of the money for school buses, it does not designate pay or benefit packages for drivers. That’s left up to the transportation company that hires the drivers and means the Appoquinimink, Christina and VoTech schools hit by a driver strike Dec. 9 cannot step in to solve the disagreement between the drivers and First Student Transportation of Ohio.

“We really don’t have any control in this situation,” said Matt Burrows, superintendent of education for the Appoquinimink School District.

The strike occurred as 60 members of Local Teamsters 326 negotiated with First Student Transportation of Ohio for better pay and health care plan, as well as a pension plan in addition to a 401K plan. The company and the drivers had reached agreement on pay, but not

DELAWARE BUS PAYMENT SYSTEM, DRIVER SHORTAGE COMPLICATE STRIKE SITUATION

on healthcare or a pension when the drivers voted 27-23 to strike.

The decision led the VoTech schools to turn to virtual classes. Appo had buses running three routes instead of two, meaning some students had to get to schools early and stay much later than normal so everybody could be in class. Delcastle and Hodgson students in Christina were expected to follow their normal schedule whether they could get to school on their own or had to work from home.

The strike comes as Delaware schools already are having trouble finding enough bus drivers, partly because the current drivers are aging and retiring and no one is stepping up to take their place.

The Department of Education has asked for bus driver compensation to be raised, and a state Senate Democratic spokesman said he expects the legislature to push for it.

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Health

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

STATE LAUNCHES NUMBER HOUSEBOUND CAN CALL TO BE VACCINATED AT HOME

BY BETSY PRICE

The state of Delaware has created a toll-free phone number that residents who can't travel because of disability, age or several illness can call to arrange for a COVID-19 vaccination or booster shot at home. The Department of Health and Social Services is partnering with independent pharmacies in each county to deliver the vaccinations to eligible Delawareans five and older.

Participating pharmacies include Ivira Pharmacy in Wilmington and Milford, Camden Pharmacy, Seaford Pharmacy and Express Pharmacy in Laurel.

The state also is launching a campaign to encourage people with disabilities, their families and seniors to be vaccinated to avoid serious illness or death because COVID-19.

State hospitals are once again filling up with COVID-19 cases. On Tuesday, the state said 325 people were hospitalized because of it. Right now, the state said, those cases are caused by the Delta variant.

However, national public health officials and agencies are warning that the much-more-infectious Omicron variant is about to explode in the U.S. and its spread will be quick but not as severe. Already, cases have been reported in 33 states, including New York and New Jersey, but not yet in Delaware.

People with disabilities and seniors are at higher risk for serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19. In Delaware, about 80% of the 2,218 people who have died from COVID-19 were 65 or older.

The state's new homebound vaccine number— 1-888-491-4988—will go into effect on Wednesday. Live operators will staff it from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays. They will assess calls.

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DELAWARE COVID-19 CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS JUMP; STILL NO OMICRON

BY BETSY PRICE

The number of new daily COVID-19 cases in Delaware has risen to 603.9, up dramatically from 432.9 last week. That's fueling a rise in hospitalizations, which hit 317, up 51 from last week.

In turn, that's one of the reasons that ChristianaCare announced this week it would begin postponing elective surgeries. The hospital also cited non-COVID-related hospitalizations. That includes the flu, which had 84 cases reported in the most recent week. As of Dec. 4, there have been 125 laboratory-confirmed cases for the current season—but only a fraction of flu cases are laboratory confirmed. Many are diagnosed by rapid test kits in a doctor's office or through the if-it-quacks-like-a-duck method, meaning there's likely hundreds to thousands more circulating.

The flu cases involved 79 people from New Castle County, 12 from Kent County and 34 from Sussex County. Public health officials blame the rise in respiratory diseases on the return of cold weather and more

indoor activities, as well as the easy spread of the Delta variant, even in the face of rising vaccinations.

So far, the state has not detected a case of the Omicron variant, which has moved across the world from Africa and is said to be more infectious than Delta, but not more deadly.

To combat COVID-19, the state is recommending people be vaccinated if they are five or older, and get a booster shot if they are eligible. Everyone over the age of 16 is now eligible.

This week, the state will launch a new program that will send pharmacy employees and other into people's home to give them COVID-19 vaccines in an effort to help people with mobility or transportation issues be as protected as possible.

The state also recommends flu vaccines, which are widely available.

The Delaware Division of Public Health reported Dec. 10 that the seven-day average for the percentage of

total positive tests also rose to 9.2%, up from 8% last week. Of those hospitalized, 33 are critically ill, up only one from last week. The state has seen 2,211 deaths reported, including 17 in the last week.

At the same time, the percentage of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated continue to creep up to 62.6%, up from 61.8% last week, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

In other vaccination numbers, those five and older who have received at least one dose of vaccine is 78.8%, up from 77.7%; those 12 and over with one dose is 84.6%, up from 83.7%; and those 18 and older is 86.6%, up from 85.6%.

The number of breakthrough cases also continue to rise, with 8,341, or 1.5% of fully vaccinated individuals. That's caused 132 hospitalizations and 102 deaths.



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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DAVIS SHINES AS MIDDLETOWN WINS FIRST TITLE SINCE 2012

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

It was a perfect day for Championship Football at Delaware Stadium. The rain held off until the nightcap and that allowed for a great matchup between No. 1 Smyrna and No. 2 Middletown in the DIAA Class AAA Final. A rematch of the Harvest Bowl from way back in the regular season, a rematch in which Middletown won 28-14. A little more on the line this time around, and the Cavaliers answered the call.

If you have seen these two teams at all during the season, you knew what you were in store for. It was a back and forth contest from start to finish, with both teams experiencing some big plays on the offensive and defensive side of the ball. Smyrna would open up the scoring on the first drive of the game. The Eagles would start the drive with a flea-flicker and go 79 yards, capped off by a Wayne Knight one-yard touchdown run. Eagles lead

6-0. Later in the first, Braden Davis would find a crease on fourth down and take himself 14 yards for the Cavalier's first points of the game. Walker would add the point after, Middletown takes 7-6 lead. But before the quarter could end, the Eagles would strike again. Yamir Knight, brother of senior Wayne Knight, would take the snap out of the "earthquake formation" and scamper 50 yards around the left edge for a Smyrna touchdown. Ratcliffe would get the carry on the two-point attempt and convert, Eagles take a 14-7 lead after one.

At the start of the second quarter, the Middletown offense would get a downfield pass interference penalty that would lead to a Mikey Pearson four-yard touchdown run to tie the game at 14-14.

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ARCHMERE WINS BIG IN FIRST EVER 2A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Archmere Auks won the first ever Class 2A state championship with a big win over the Woodbridge Blue Raiders. In front of a big crowd at the University of Delaware, Archmere shut out Woodbridge by a score of 27-0.

Both teams had unsuccessful first drives that led to punts. On the second possession for the Auks, they would drive down the field for their first score of the game as Declan Pearson plowed his way into the end zone from five yards out giving Archmere a 7-0 lead with a successful PAT kick from Chris Albero with 4:22 in the first quarter.

Archmere's defense would get the offense the ball right back. The Auks defense forced the Blue Raiders into another punting situation. A high snap on the punt forced the Woodbridge punter back about five yards

which allowed Cole Fenice enough time to come in and block the punt, which gave Archmere great field position. With 12 seconds left in the first quarter, Pearson got into the end zone again this time from two yards out, giving Archmere a 13-0 lead after a failed PAT attempt from Albero. That score would conclude the scoring for the first half.

Late in the third quarter, the Auks extended their lead. Johnny Kim took a handoff on a misdirection, breaking it down the sideline for 81 yards, giving Archmere a 20-0 lead with 2:40 left in the third quarter. They then tacked on another touchdown midway through the fourth quarter as quarterback Albero scored on a six-yard keeper solidifying a 27-0 victory for the first-ever Class 2A football state championship.

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Archmere's defense was dominating all day anchored by their leading tackler-lineman Scott Lucarelli, Kevin DiGregorio, and Conor Udovich. They kept Woodbridge out of the end zone coming up big in the third quarter with two fourth down stops deep in the red zone. They held Woodbridge to just 39 yards in the first half and held them to under 150 yards total in the game.

Kenny Newton led Woodbridge with 97 rushing yards on 24 carries, and six yards receiving.





LAUREL WINS 4TH STATE CHAMPIONSHIP WITH VICTORY OVER ST. ELIZABETH

BY BENNY MITCHELL

The last time the Laurel Bulldogs won a state title none of the players on the roster had even been born yet. With their 28-14 win over St. Elizabeth on Saturday night at Delaware Stadium this current group of Bulldogs are now linked with the past as football state champions.

Laurel won its fourth state football title in school history this time the new Class A state champions. These players now share in the same company as defensive coordinator Brian Hearn who played on the 1991 state title team or superintendent Shawn Larrimore who played on both the 1986 and 1987 state championship teams.

“The boss, Dr. Larrimore came on the field and gave me a hug after the game tighter than my wife did,” Laurel head coach Joey Jones said.

Laurel used a strong running game and an aggressive

defensive attack to wear down the Vikings in the second half, but it was St. Elizabeth that struck first in the game causing Laurel to play catch up early.

On a first and 16, St. Elizabeth quarterback Brett Smick dropped back off of play action and tossed a 26-yard touchdown pass to Chris Character to open the scoring. Quasim Benson ran the two-point conversion into the endzone giving his Vikings an 8-0 lead with 6:49 to go in the first quarter.

After taking the initial punch from St. Elizabeth, Laurel quickly counter punched quickly. Kyler Weaver’s 34 yard run on a counter play took the ball down to the Vikings six-yard line. A play later Javier White scored on a six-yard run around the right end extending the ball over the goalline as he was being tackled. St. Elizabeth stopped

the two point run attempt, Laurel trailed 14-6.

Just when it looked like St. Elizabeth would take the lead into halftime, the momentum swung quickly. On a third and six with 38 seconds to play in the half Smick’s pass was intercepted by Omori’yon Cannon at the Vikings’ 42-yard line who returned the ball to the 28 yard line. “That was the biggest turning point of the game, after the interception Javi said 43 lead, call it and I will score,” Jones said.

On the next play White broke a tackle at the line of scrimmage and sprinted up the middle for a 28-yard touchdown run. White added the two point conversion run giving Laurel a 14-8 lead with 19 seconds left to play in the first half.

“Javi actually called the play, he has earned that respect with the staff and the team. When he has something to say the coaches and other player’s listen, he is such a smart and emotional leader on the field,” Jones said. White had 106 yard and two touchdowns for Laurel.

The Laurel defense turned up the intensity to start the second half forcing the Vikings to punt on their first possession. The snap went through the hands of punter Matthew Ross who was able to chase down the ball and fall on it ahead of several Bulldog defenders, but Laurel would take over first and goal at the three-yard line.

Kylse Wilson went up the middle on the next play for a three yard touchdown run. Mike Gonzalez-Perez added the extra point kick giving Laurel a 21-8 lead with 9:29 to play in the third quarter.

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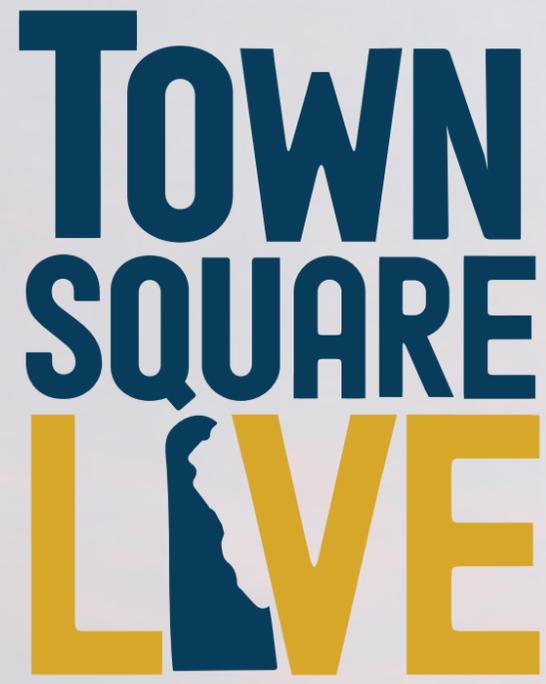
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