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TRAVELING FOR CHRISTMAS?



STATE RAISES BUDGET PREDICTION



CARAVEL ACADEMY WRESTLING VICTORY

Photo by Downtown Wilmington (Facebook)



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



WINTERTHUR'S 2022 JACKIE O EXHIBIT TO BE BASED ON LETTERS IN ARCHIVE

BY BETSY PRICE

Winterthur's big exhibit for 2022 will bring Jackie O. to Delaware. "Jacqueline Kennedy and Henry Francis du Pont: From Winterthur to the White House," which runs May 7 to Jan. 8, 2023, will follow the former First Lady and the country's biggest collector of Americana in renovating and restoring the White House when John Fitzgerald Kennedy became president.

Among other exhibits will be the dress that Jackie wore when she gave the television tour of the White House after the work was done. At the time, it was the most-watched television program.

The exhibit is based on the research of Elaine Rice Bachmann, who earned her master's in Winterthur's and the University of Delaware's Early American Culture Program, in 1993.

The program requires a thesis, which often focus on a single a historic object, but Bachmann realized that the archives had copies of all the letters that Jackie and du Pont wrote to each other about the project.

She was particularly interested in the connection because her mother frequently talked about how interesting and impressive Jackie's television show had been.

"The archives had collected all of Mr. Du Pont's correspondence with Mrs. Kennedy and all the materials related to it," she said. "So it was sitting right there, but no one had really critically looked at it yet as an academic exercise."

She was lucky, she said, that there were so many people still living who remembered or were involved in it, including the late John A. H. Sweeney, the former chief curator of Winterthur.

Bachmann, now Maryland state archivist and commissioner of land patents, went on to co-author "Designing Camelot: The Kennedy White House Restoration" with James Archer Abbot.

H.F. du Pont had fallen in love with American-made furniture and was one of the first people to champion using American goods and to focus on American style rather than English or French. He and Jackie traveled in similar circles, but didn't socialize.

By the early 60s, many of the furnishings of the White House formal rooms were worn. The country's youngest First Lady, who was 31, described the White House's interior as a combination of "dentist office and bomb shelter."

She wanted to restore their splendor with a re-do that also restored the sense of history and elevated it into place of pride for the entire country.

Jackie asked du Pont—then 80—to be head of her advisory committee. By doing so, she not only gained access to his enthusiasm and expertise, but also his connections among collectors, museum experts, academic experts and auction houses.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)



DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION CAFE HOPES TO TRAIN WORKERS FOR JOBS

That next job is the focus of the new jobs training program for adults at Victoria’s Kitchen. The 1,000-square-foot building opened Dec. 1 and is home to the café, gift shop and office space for the full-time employees of the association.

The new café, named Victoria’s Kitchen after client Victoria Elizabeth Marsh who died in July, will employ adults with Down syndrome in a rotating system. Seven adults will be employed at one time for a 12-week internship. All employees are paid \$10 an hour.

For now, the café’s tentative hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. After the new year, the café is expected to be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

To organizers’ knowledge, the café is the only one of its kind in the area. It already regularly sees visitors from Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey.

The goal of the internship is to teach adults with Down syndrome tools and experience to enter the work force. The DSA would like for interns to be able to have a competitive job lined up by the end of the 12 weeks.

“One of my son’s goals is to work at Buffalo Wild Wings,” said Ariadna Avila, mother of Eric Mena, who interns at the café until January. “A few weeks ago, we were there, and I spoke to one of the waiters and actually got the contact information for the manager. So little by little we’re working there.”

Avila said that since the pandemic began Eric had seen a little bit of regression in speech and is now going to speech therapy on top of working at the café a few days a week.

“I get up, brush my teeth, get dressed, have breakfast and then get on the bus,” said Ian Currie, who works at the café. “When I get there, I clock in and start in the kitchen.” Ian’s learned how to cook on a grill, bake cookies and make smoothies while working at the café.

However, because Ian trains in powerlifting several times a week for the Special Olympics, he and his family aren’t sure if employment after the internship would be the best decision for him. They aren’t sure other employers will be understanding of that.

One thing that often hinders adults with Down syndrome is the fact that most of them aren’t allowed to drive. They need to rely on their parents or on public transportation, which can be unreliable if you are punching a clock. Because regular employers sometimes aren’t as understanding about late arrivals, one of the DSA’s internship goals is for their interns to work out the kinks of traveling to work before regular employment.

The interns are interviewed before being hired, have their own schedule to keep, clock in and out of work and take their own breaks.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

Karlo Carrio enjoys making cookies and smoothies at the new Down Syndrome Association of Delaware’s new café that offers a jobs training program for adults with the genetic disorder. “I love it,” said Carrio, 29, who works at the café. “I’ve learned to be more independent and to talk to other people.” She also likes working with the customers.

After her internship at the café, Carrio wants to find herself another job. She said that it doesn’t matter what kind of job; she’d work anywhere.



DELDOT ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF ROUTE 141 ROAD PROJECTS

BY CHARLIE MEGGISON

The Delaware Department of Transportation has announced that it has completed its improvements to Route 141 between Newport and New Castle. A press release from the agency called the completion of the projects an “early holiday gift.”

The improvements are the culmination of a decade of work involving multiple projects on the Route 141 corridor from Route 4 in Newport to Route 13 in New Castle. The corridor is one of the most heavily traveled non-interstate roads in Delaware, according to DelDOT. The projects along the corridor required extensive work to address safety and capacity needs and replace aging infrastructure.

All major work for the most recent project from the I-95 interchange to Jay Drive, which began in August

2019, has been completed ahead of the original spring 2022 completion date by the contractor, R.E. Pierson.

Improvements include:

- Complete reconstruction of the I-95/141 interchange consisting of eight interchange ramps and four bridges
- Constructing an additional left turn lane from Commons Boulevard to Route 141 northbound
- Constructing additional Route 141 through lanes at the Commons Boulevard intersection
- Pedestrian and transit infrastructure improvements
- Full-depth pavement reconstruction and drainage improvements
- Rehabilitation of the Route 141 Newport viaduct

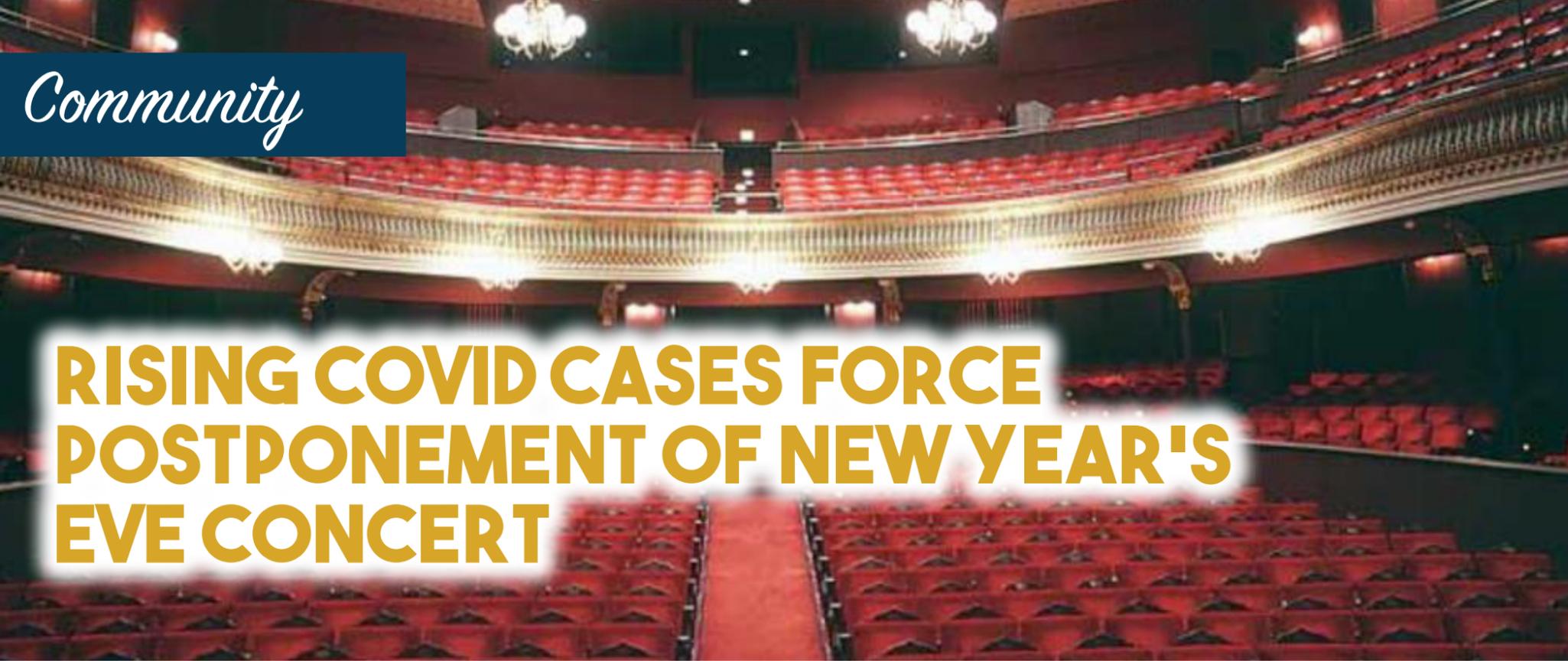
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RISING COVID CASES FORCE POSTPONEMENT OF NEW YEAR'S EVE CONCERT

BY BETSY PRICE

A New Year's Eve concert planned by the The Grand, Delaware Symphony Orchestra and OperaDelaware has been postponed. The concert, which would have seen the symphony and the OperaDelaware play in the first half and Tony-award winner Brian Stokes Mitchell play in the second, will be rescheduled for a 2022 date.

On Wednesday, the number of new COVID-19 cases sat at 743 over a seven-day average, with 392 hospitalized and a total of 2,240 deaths. Six weeks ago, the number of new daily cases was averaging 20 per day, and health officials are warning the new Omicron strain is far more infectious and will spread quickly.

Patrons who have already bought tickets are asked to wait to be contacted by The Grand about what happens next. "There are a number of logistical pieces related to postponing an event of this size and your patience is

highly appreciated," said Mark Field, executive director of The Grand, in a press release.

He said the three organizations didn't want to put their audiences, artists and special guests at risk for infection as a new wave of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are surging forward, with experts predicting that they will rise even higher after the holidays.

Brendan Cooke, general director of OperaDelaware, said, "This concert was intended to be a joyful return to live performance by all three organizations, but that will need to wait until it is safe to gather in such large numbers again."

"One of the great aspects of this chosen program of light classical and Broadway music is that it will be delightful to hear at any time of the year," said J.C. Barker, executive director of the symphony.



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TRAVELING FOR CHRISTMAS? HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Suspending planned lane closures

The Delaware Department of Transportation has announced that it will suspend planned lane closures on I-95, Route 1, US 13, and US 113 to minimize the effect on holiday traffic. The closed lanes will be reopened beginning at 12 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 23 and will remain open until 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 26.

Traffic accidents and other unpredictable types of transportation incidents may cause delays and/or lane closures along major roadways, DelDOT said in a press release.

Construction-related lane closures on major roadways will also be suspended beginning at 12 p.m. on Thursday, Dec 30, 2021 until 12:01 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 2, 2022.

Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

DMV offices will be closed on Friday, Dec. 24, 2021. The offices will re-open at 8 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 27 and will close at 4:30 p.m.

DMV offices will also be closed on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021 and will remain closed until 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 3, 2022. Offices will again close at 4:30 p.m.

For more information about DMV hours, visit this [link](#).

Transportation Management Center

DelDOT's Transportation Management Center monitors Delaware's multi-modal transportation system, coordinates DelDOT's response to any incident that impacts the transportation system, including adjusting traffic

signals. Motorists can contact the Transportation Management Center 24/7 by dialing #77 from any cell phone in Delaware or by calling 302-659-4600.

DelDOT mobile app

Motorists may adjust their routes or travel times by using DelDOT's smartphone application. The DelDOT app is available for Apple AND Android smartphones and tablets. The app can be downloaded for free. To download, simply search for "DelDOT" on Apple and Google Play stores.

You can view real-time traffic cameras, travel times, delays, advisories, DART's Real-Time Transit Information on the DelDOT App or listen to WTMC 1380 AM.

DART

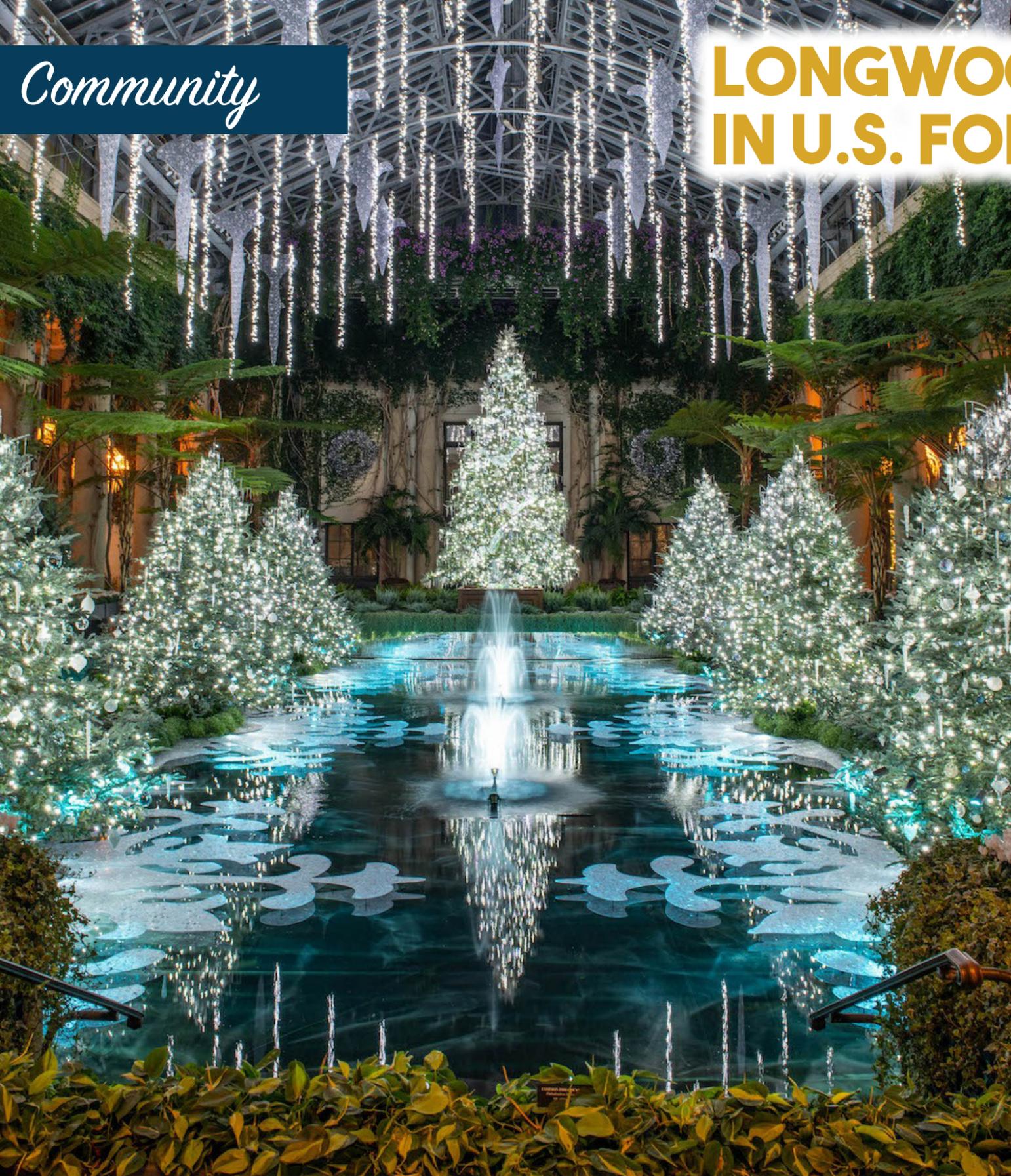
DART First State's statewide transit services, both fixed route and paratransit service will not operate on Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

Some routes will operate on a reduced schedule on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. The reduced times will be posted on the printed and online schedules. Additional transit information can be found on DART First State's [webpage](#).

SEPTA

SEPTA's Wilmington/Newark line train service will operate on a modified holiday schedule. For specific times, please check this [link](#).





LONGWOOD WINS BEST HOLIDAY LIGHTS IN U.S. FOR FOURTH STRAIGHT TIME

BY BETSY PRICE

It might be a no-duh moment for a lot of people in the Mid-Atlantic, but Longwood Gardens has just been named the country’s best holiday lights display in a botanical garden for the fourth year running.

Its Longwood Christmas display, with a theme this year of Fire & Ice, was chosen from 20 gardens in a contest sponsored by *USA TODAY*’s **2021 10 Best Readers’ Choice Awards**.

“To win this national recognition is so rewarding for our entire team of staff and volunteers who plan and work tirelessly all year long to create our ‘A Longwood Christmas’ light display,” said Longwood CEO Paul Redman in a press release. “Our thanks and appreciation to all who supported and voted for our Gardens.”

The exhibit features more than 500,000 outdoor lights and fountains that dance to holiday classics, as well as lights and displays in the Conservatory.

In addition to the last four years, Longwood also was named best botanical garden in 2014, 2016 and 2018.

But people in the area know that. Timed tickets routinely sell out and now, and from the day the Christmas display opens, it’s widely featured on all forms of social media by its visitors. Sales this year were limited by COVID-19, and most night times are gone from now through the week after Christmas.

Rounding out the top five in the 2021 contest were Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia; Nights of a Thousand Candles at Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina; Gardens Aglow at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine, and Illuminations at Botanica Wichita in Wichita, Kansas.

Tickets are available at www.longwoodgardens.org.





DEC. 26 IS COMING. HERE'S HOW TO RECYCLE YOUR CHRISTMAS TREE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Taking down your Christmas tree may not be on your mind just yet—but when the time comes, DNREC’s got your back. The agency is encouraging Delawareans to “regift their real Christmas trees to the environment” by recycling them at one of the many yard waste recycling facilities located throughout the state.

Once donated, trees are processed into mulch which DNREC uses to “conserve and enhance First State soil,” according to a press release from the department.

Christmas tree recycling also saves valuable space in Delaware’s landfills. More than 158,000 tons of yard waste, including grass, leaves, brush, trees and other lawn and landscape materials were recycled in 2020.

Prior to Delaware’s yard waste ban, many of these materials—considered reusable resources—were sent to landfills, taking up space rather than being handled through local markets for mulch and home composting.

Residents can drop off their Christmas trees from their choice of many sites across Delaware. Some of the sites accept trees at no cost, while others charge for the service. Before you drop off your tree, DNREC advises you to call the site in advance to see what restrictions are in place and if there is a charge.

Residents who pay for curbside collection service should call their waste hauler to see if they offer Christmas tree pickup. If pickup is unavailable from their haulers, you should check the list of yard waste drop-off sites on the [DNREC website](#).

Trees may be accepted as soon as Dec. 26 and as late as Jan. 28, 2022, but each facility has its own schedule. Commercial haulers or landscapers should call a facility prior to delivering loads of trees.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)

Holidays at Hagley

“Home for the Holidays: A Celebration of Family”

Gingerbread House Contest – November 26 to January 2

Santa Days - December 4 & 11

Twilight Tours – December 14, 15, 21, 22, 28 & 29.

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Photo by Fauxels for Pexels

Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





MOUNTAIRE EMPLOYEES VOTE BY BIG MARGIN TO OUST UNION

BY BETSY PRICE

Mountaire Farms employees in Selbyville have voted to remove the United Food and Commercial Workers union from their plant.

The plant, which processes fresh chicken products, was the only Mountaire plant that had unions, which were in place when the plant was bought by Mountaire in 1977. It also has plants in Arkansas, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina.

Members of the Local 27 union voted by mail, and the vote count Thursday showed that they said by 356 to 80 that they wanted the union out. The vote is expected to be certified Dec. 23. The move flies in the face of much more union activity across the country, especially in media groups and even at Amazon.

“After 44 years of union representation, the Selbyville plant takes a huge step forward today,” said Phillip Plylar, president of Mountaire Farms, in a press release. “Our employees have just been asking for their voices to be heard, and today, they were heard loud and clear.”

A Selbyville employee filed a petition in October to decertify the union.

Last summer, employees asked for decertification of the UFCW but were denied the option due to a technicality. A mail-in ballot was held but the union filed numerous challenges and, ultimately, the NLRB threw out the vote without counting it.

This fall was the first opportunity employees had to again ask for an election.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE!](#)

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.**

If you don't have a provider, we can help. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may be eligible for free screenings. To learn more about eligibility requirements and recommended cancer screenings, and other information, please visit HealthyDelaware.org/Cancer.

To schedule your cancer screening by phone:

Call your health care provider, dial 2-1-1, or speak directly with a nurse navigator at the health system nearest you, below.

ChristianaCare: 302-216-3557
Bayhealth: 302-216-8328
Beebe Healthcare: 302-291-4380

DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
 Division of Public Health
 Bureau of Chronic Diseases

HEALTHY DELAWARE



Photo by Brian K. Leonard



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

STATE TO PERFORM QUARTERLY AUDITS OF COVID RELIEF, INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Delaware has set aside more than \$3 million to audit agencies and nonprofit organizations that receive funding from federal infrastructure and COVID relief bills. The state will perform quarterly reviews of agencies and organizations receiving funds to monitor the efficacy of investments and ensure compliance.

Behind those efforts is Claire DeMatteis, senior counsel and special assistant to Gov. John Carney. She shared her plans during a Dec. 20 meeting of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council, commonly known as DEFAC.

Delaware received \$925 million in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. Separately, towns and cities in the state received \$335 million from the bill. The state is also earmarked for \$112 million from the American Rescue Plan Capital Projects Fund to carry

out critical capital projects that directly enable work, education, health monitoring, including remote options.

The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which was signed into law in November, will send at least \$2.4 billion to Delaware for improvements to the state's roads, bridges, public transit, broadband internet, water and wastewater projects, airports and more.

In addition to federal funds, Delaware passed the largest bond bill in state history in 2021. The spending package totaled \$1.35 billion for road, school, and courthouse construction, and other one-time items such as library upgrades, college campus improvements, state park maintenance and clean water programs.

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STATE RAISES BUDGET PREDICTION TO INCLUDE MORE REVENUE, \$823.8 MILLION SURPLUS

BY BETSY PRICE

Fueled by stronger than expected corporate and personal income tax, a state committee is now forecasting that Delaware will have an \$823.8 million surplus in its 2023 budget. Michael Houghton, chairman of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council on Monday called the announcement “almost incomprehensible” after the state needed to inject money into its 2021 budget to cope with COVID-19 and then forecast a nearly \$1 billion surplus for the current budget.

Now it has predicted a budget for fiscal year 2023, which starts July 1, of \$5.491 billion. Ultimately, that means the council is forecasting an additional \$264.3 million in General Fund revenue that can be spent by

the Delaware General Assembly, said Joe Fulgham, spokesman for the House Republicans.

If predictions follow what seem to be current trends, it’s also possible the state budget may cross \$6 billion in revenue for the first time. The council refers to a surplus as “extraordinary revenues.”

Houghton marveled at the outcome. “To have an \$823 million extraordinary revenue number is almost incomprehensible,” he said. “But I’m sure our friends in the General Assembly and all their wisdom working with the governor’s office determine what will happen with it. I can only pray that what happens is good and thought out and wise, and I say that somewhat tongue in cheek.”

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GOODBYE, RODNEY DORMS. HELLO, HILLSIDE PARK'S PLAY AREAS, FISHING, TRAIL

BY DANIEL LARLHAM JR.

Newark's 37th park opened this month, replacing a portion of the property where the University of Delaware's Rodney Dorms once stood. The seven-acre Hillside Park includes a playground, natural play area, fishing pier and paved walking trail.

"We wanted something that was going to be unique," said Newark Parks and Recreation Director Joe Spadafino about the natural play area. "Not just your swing set and typical play features. We wanted to make the amenities something that was unique in our park system, and I think we've done that with Hillside Park."

The city invited residents to suggest names last year. The list was whittled down to seven and sent to

Newark's mayor and council, who chose Hillside Park, suggested by Barbara Morris, who was first to suggest it. She won a \$100 gift card and the chance to go down the park slide before it officially opened.

Hillside Park was originally planned to open sometime in August, but rain days and supply chain issues caused delays. Instead of waiting until the following spring, the city decided to open it when it was ready. The city is still waiting to receive the materials to construct two pavilions on the property. They should be up by spring.

Beyond public enjoyment, the park serves a serious purpose as a storm water drainage pond.

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



AS COVID CASES RISE, DEL. DEPT. OF EDUCATION HOSTS MASK-FREE PARTY

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

On the same day that the first **four cases** of the highly contagious COVID-19 omicron variant were confirmed in Delaware, staff from the state's Department of Education hosted a mask-free party for outgoing education secretary Susan Bunting.

The department is now facing growing outrage after images of the event posted on its own **Facebook** account show hordes of unmasked attendees—with some of them traveling to the party from as far as Arizona.

The Dec. 17 event—which was paid for by staff and not using state funds—took place less than a week after Gov. John Carney formally extended the mask mandate for Delaware's K-12 public and private schools until Feb. 8, 2022.

“On Friday, Delaware Department of Education staff surprised Secretary Susan Bunting with a celebration to thank her for her leadership to the department and state of Delaware before she leaves her role at the end of the year,” the department wrote in a Facebook post.

“Members of her family traveled from Arizona and Pennsylvania to be part of the surprise,” the post says. “Cape Henlopen Superintendent Bob Fulton and Caesar Rodney Superintendent Kevin Fitzgerald also joined to bring special gifts and words of appreciation from the state's chief school officers.”

At the time of publication, the post had garnered nearly 150 comments—many of them thanking Bunting for her service to the state.

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UD: ALL SPRING STUDENTS MUST BE VACCINATED, BOOSTED



BY BETSY PRICE

The University of Delaware will require all spring students to be vaccinated with a booster shot by Jan. 24 whether they are on campus, online or in a blended schedule. In an email announcement to students hursday, the school credited the fact that 90% of the campus had been vaccinated with keeping the number of new cases and the rate of positive tests low.

“However, the pandemic continues to affect our community—especially through the recent emergence of the widespread Delta variant and the more-contagious Omicron variant—and research shows that the effectiveness of the initial vaccine doses wanes over time,” it said.

The notice came as other colleges around the country are cancelling classes and moving exams online because they have had so many new COVID-19 cases in recent weeks, many of them the Omicron variety.

Delaware health officials say no cases of Omicron had been found in Delaware until Friday when it announced four cases were found in New Castle County, even though the variant had been found in surrounding states.

The UD email pointed out that the students who were vaccinated for fall semester are likely eligible for boosters and should get them.

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Health

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Gov. John Carney has no immediate plans to reinstate mask or social distancing mandates. Instead, the state will continue to rely on voluntary compliance, he said during a COVID-19 briefing Tuesday.

“I think the objective obviously is to get people to wear masks, to be socially distanced,” Carney said. “We currently don’t have a state of emergency to that effect—that doesn’t mean we couldn’t put one in place, obviously. But our objective really is to have voluntary compliance there. We have a lot of businesses that have put in place mandates in their business establishments and we support that.”

He said that all Delawareans—even those who are fully vaccinated—should wear masks indoors to combat the winter surge the state is facing. While the Omicron

NO IMMEDIATE PLANS TO BRING BACK MASK MANDATE, CARNEY SAYS

variant has quickly become the dominant strain of coronavirus in the United States, the majority of the state’s cases remain Delta variant cases.

“Probably the most important thing after getting vaccinated yourself is to wear a mask in when you’re indoors and in close quarters with others,” Carney said. “Be cognizant of the fact that we have this surge going on and be careful about places that you go.”

He emphasized low-vaccination rates in the 18-30 age group and said, in addition to getting those numbers up, booster shots will be essential to fighting the winter surge.

“There’s a way that you can say ‘thank you’ to the nurses and first responders and frontline health care workers that we’ve relied on so much over the last two years to protect all of us, to provide needed health care for those that are sick, and they’re pretty simple,” Carney said.

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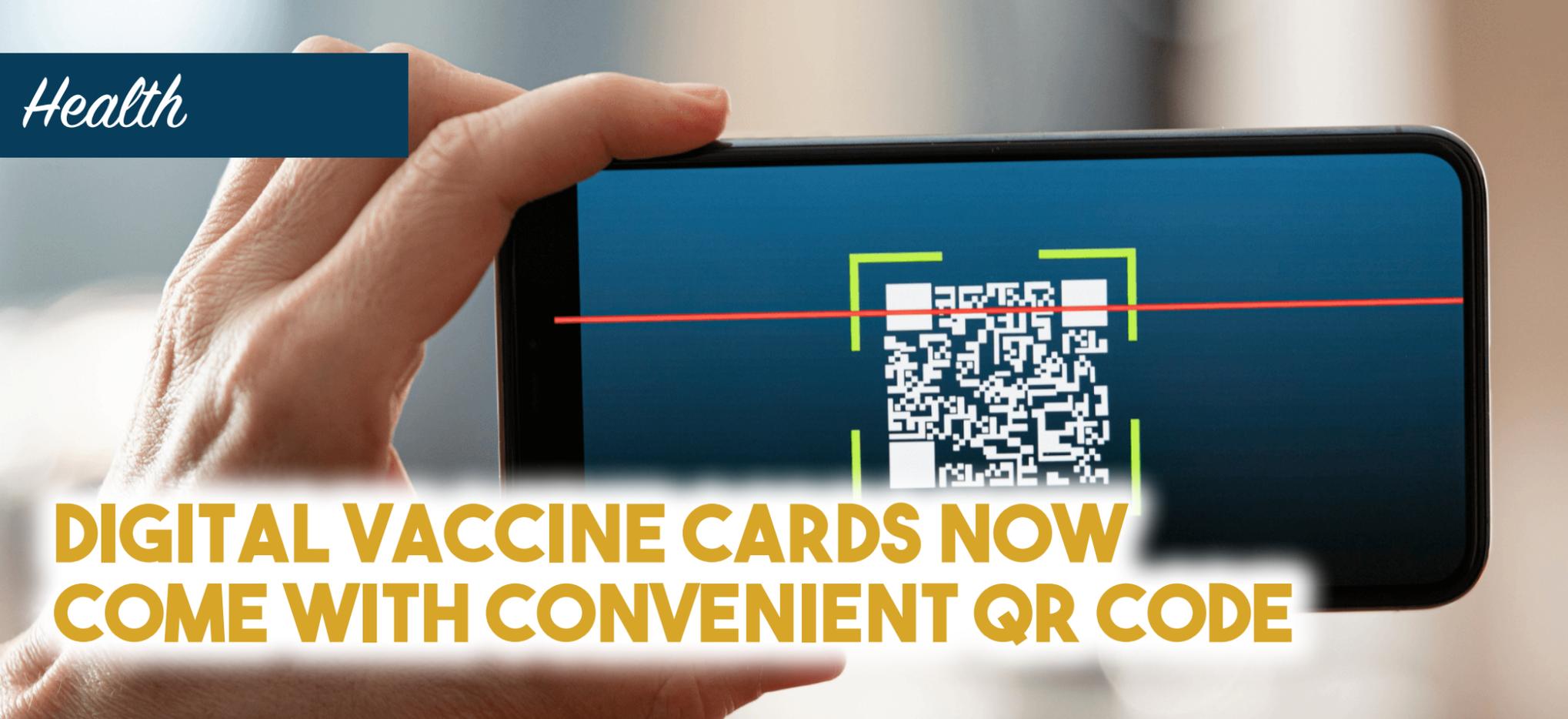


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DIGITAL VACCINE CARDS NOW COME WITH CONVENIENT QR CODE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Individuals vaccinated in Delaware will now have access to a QR code when downloading their COVID-19 vaccination record. The digital COVID-19 vaccination card now includes the QR code and is available through the [DelVAX Public Portal](#), a site where those who were vaccinated in Delaware can access their immunization records.

When the person accesses their COVID-19 record they will be able to download a PDF version of it, which resembles a vaccine card and includes the QR Code. The image can then be saved to a phone gallery, or printed on paper. The technology allows anyone to show proof of vaccination with a digital or printed QR code instead of a paper card.

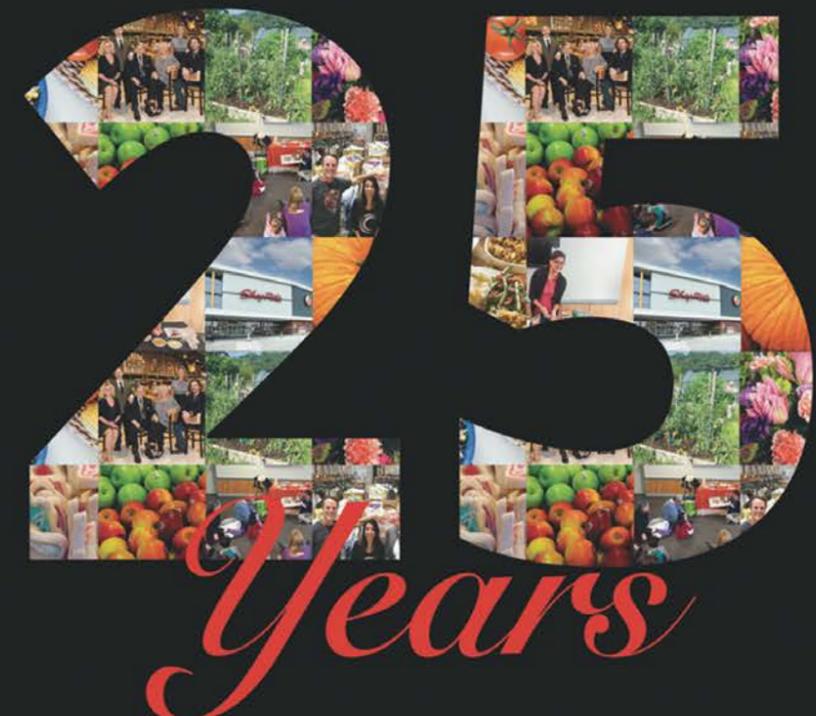
QR codes contain the same information as paper records, but in a format that offers greater security and efficiency. The QR code is digitally verified by the Delaware Division of Public Health.

“This new feature provides individuals convenient access to their COVID-19 vaccination record in a way that keeps their personal health information secure,” said DPH director Dr. Karyl Rattay in a press release. “This offers a protected link to your COVID-19 vaccination record on the go.”

Businesses that choose to verify an individual’s vaccination status can scan QR codes using a SMART Health Card verifier app. Individuals do not need to download an app to obtain their QR code.

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DELAWARE CONFIRMS 4 CASES OF OMICRON; 1,079 NEW COVID CASES FRIDAY

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Division of Public Health has found the first four cases of the Omicron variant among Delaware residents, it announced Dec. 17. The four cases involve two adults in their 30s, a teenager and a child under the age of 10, all residents of New Castle County. Two individuals were fully vaccinated and two were unvaccinated. None of the individuals had a known history of travel.

Those close to the people who were infected are being monitored in an attempt to slow the spread of the much more infectious form of COVID-19.

Across the country, health officials have warned there will be tsunami of cases coming because the variant, first discovered in Africa, is so infectious. It already has been discovered in surrounding states and the number of cases in New York and New Jersey are multiplying quickly.

Also Dec. 17, the Division of Public Health reported 1,079 new cases of COVID, with 359 people in the hospital and 42 in critical condition. The day before,

Thursday, Dec. 16, it had reported 677 new cases. The state usually measures COVID stats from Friday through Thursday each week to compare with the week before.

For the week ending Dec. 16, the average number of daily new cases was 677, up from 596.6 the week before. The seven-day average for percentage of positive tests was 9.8%, up from 9.3% the week before. On Dec. 17, the percentage of new positive cases was 38.2.

Hospitalizations during the week were up by 42 and critical cases by nine. During the week, 23 new deaths were recorded, bringing the total to 2,234.

The New Castle County Omicron cases were detected through random routine genomic sequencing of test specimens that are done by the Delaware Public Health Laboratory. Genome sequencing is a public health surveillance tool used to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 variants; it is not used to diagnose individuals with a specific strain of COVID-19, as treatment recommendations do not differ based on variant strains.

COVID-19 tests will say whether you have a COVID-19 infection, but not which variant of the virus the individual might have. “With cases of the Omicron variant detected in our surrounding states, it was only a matter of time until we detected this variant in Delaware,” said Dr. Karyl Rattay, Public Health director. She noted that many people who have it have reported milder symptoms than other strains have caused.

“We still have a lot more to learn about Omicron,” she said. “Therefore, we need to do what we know works to combat all strains of COVID-19: get vaccinated, get tested when appropriate, wear a mask in indoor public settings, socially distance from others and wash your hands regularly.”

The state expects an increase in demand for testing in the next several weeks because of the holiday and the new Omicron cases, but it hasn’t seen statewide testing being affected. “However, in general, we are not seeing major issues meeting testing demand currently, given there are multiple testing options in Delaware,” said Jennifer Brestel, a Public Health spokeswoman.

Those options included Curative testing trailers, state service centers and freestanding clinics—Canby Park, University Plaza, Blue Hen and Georgetown Plaza, state-sponsored Walgreens testing sites, other retail pharmacies, health care clinics, and the school testing program, she said.

In addition, she said several over-the-counter at-home tests are available from a variety of locations such as Walgreens, CVS, Rite Aid and Amazon. “We expect supply of those tests to increase as well,” she said.

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Photo by Delaware Sports



Sports

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DELAWARE LIVE SPORTS TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

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CARAVEL ACADEMY CRUISES IN 50-16 MAT VICTORY OVER SUSSEX CENTRAL

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The defending Division II state champion Caravel Academy went on the road to Sussex Central on Wednesday night to start its dual meet season and on the strength of winning 11 of the 14 bouts won the dual meet 50-16.

The match began at 106 pounds where the state's top-ranked wrestler in that weight Malachi Stratton scored a 15-0 technical fall to put the Golden Knights up 5-0, but that would be the last bout they would win for a while.

The Bucs reeled off 10 straight wins, which included three pins as Caravel began to stretch its lead. "When you see your teammates winning, it generates excitement to keep the wins coming," Caravel head coach Mike Welch said.

Defending state champion Eddie Radecki won a 7-0 decision at 113 pounds to close the score to 5-3, that would lead to the night's most exciting bout.

Sussex Central's #5 ranked Evan Cordrey and the Bucs #6 ranked Marcello Ioannoni met at 120 pounds. Cordrey scored the first takedown, but Ioannoni came back with an escape and takedown of his own to take a 3-2 lead. Ioannoni took a 4-2 lead with an escape at the end of the second period, but Cordrey answered in the third period with a reversal to tie the match.

In sudden victory, Ioannoni scored a takedown on a scramble to earn a 6-4 victory and giving Caravel Academy a 6-5 lead in the match.

"The team always seems to come up big during dual meets because they know they are not just wrestling for themselves, that extra incentive is especially effective in these close matches because the energy comes from the bench," Welch said.

Caravel's Luke Poore recorded a pin at 126 pounds followed by back to back technical falls by Dylan Knight (132) and Michael Kling (138). Jordan Miller gave extended the Bucs' lead in the dual to 25-4 with an 8-4 decision at 145 pounds.

John Antonio kept Caravel's string of wins going with a 12-3 major decision at 152 pounds before the Bucs reeled off three straight pins. Alex Poore recorded a pin in 1:37 at 152 pounds, Nick Hall at 160 pounds recorded a 38-second pin and Matt Duarte got his fall in 3:33 at 182 pounds as Caravel sealed the match leading 47-4 with three bouts left in the match.

In the 10-bout streak, the Bucs amassed 17 bonus points to help pull away in the meet.

"Before the dual we go over where we are on paper against an opponent then explain where we think we can score bonus points, that will be the deciding factor. With that mindset each wrestler is motivated to maximize their team points," Welch said.

Sussex Central's Josh Negrón stopped the Caravel run with a pin in 1:06 at 195 pounds followed by Gabe Cannon's pin at 220 pounds in 4:41. The Bucs Alex Diluzio ended the match with a 2-1 decision at 285 pounds.

Both teams will compete in the Beast of the East Tournament at the University of Delaware on Saturday and Sunday. Caravel hosted Cape Henlopen on Wednesday.



LATE-GAME HEROICS BY PENN'S VALMOND SINK APPO

BY NICK HALLIDAY

No. 6 William Penn Colonials boys' basketball team travelled to Middletown to face off with the No. 8 Appoquinimink Jaguars in a Blue Hen Conference matchup of two top-ranked teams Tuesday night. Both teams came into the competition sporting 1-0 records after their first games.

William Penn controlled the lead for all of the first half. It led 14-10 after the first quarter of play then took its largest lead of the half in the second quarter when Penn's superstar Gabe Valmond hit his second three-pointer of the game giving the Colonials a 27-16 lead with 3:02 left in the second quarter. William Penn would take a 29-20 lead into the half.

In the third quarter, the Jaguars threatened to take the lead from the Colonials, but couldn't take their first lead of the game since they led 3-2 in the beginning of the game. Down 36-31 late in the quarter, Owen Parrish took a pass from Haji Bell deep behind the three-point line, but without hesitation he buried the deep three-pointer. Moments later after a missed shot by Penn, Appo came back down the floor and Bell pulled up for a jumper in the lane that bounced off the rim, but Nathaniel Burlew was there for a one-handed tip to put the ball in tying the game at 36 all. Penn did not relinquish the lead though scoring five straight points to end the quarter up 41-36.

Appo used the momentum from the third quarter to finally take the lead from the Colonials who controlled

it for a majority of the game. With six minutes left in the game, Christian Barksdale hit a three-pointer from the right wing giving the Jaguars a 44-43 lead. After going back and forth for a few minutes Appo was able to maintain the lead for the majority of the fourth quarter with its largest lead of the game 53-48 with 2:43 left in the game.

With a little over a minute left in the game Appo led 53-50. However, that lead wouldn't last long. Penn regained possession after a missed three-pointer from Appo, and with the game on the line, it would look to its leader. Valmond got the ball dribbled through his legs a couple times then stepped back to drain a highly contested three-pointer to tie the game at 53. After a missed three-point attempt from Appo's Bell, Valmond got the ball back again.

Benjamin Vohm came up to set a screen for Valmond, who dribbled around to the top of the key giving him a wide open three-point attempt, but he missed the shot. The Jaguars grabbed the rebound and took off in transition back down the court as Jaeden Ysaguirre looked up court hitting a sprinting Parrish out ahead of the Colonials defense for a layup taking a 55-53 lead with 14 seconds left in the game. William Penn then called a timeout to set up its final play of the game.

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Police & Fire

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



Police & Fire

AG JENNINGS CLEARS OFFICERS OF WRONGDOING IN LYMOND MOSES KILLING

The video shows the encounter between Moses and the New Castle County Police Department and culminates with Moses' shooting.

Morgan, Lewis and Bockius, the firm retained to review the incident, reported that it analyzed video footage, dispatch recordings, witness interviews, police interviews, scene photos, police reports, autopsy and toxicology reports, policies and procedures, training records, and forensic firearms reports.

“Morgan Lewis has determined that there is no reasonable likelihood of convicting any of the three officers of a criminal offense in connection with the shooting death of Mr. Moses,” the firm’s report said. “The State would have to overcome a legal justification defense in this case because there is credible evidence that the two officers who fired their weapons...reasonably believed that doing so was necessary to protect either themselves or others against death or serious physical injury.”

The firm said that under Delaware’s legal standard for the use of deadly force by a law enforcement officer, each officer’s subjective belief that using deadly force was necessary to protect themselves or others triggers a legal justification defense. That defense, they wrote, is enough to assure that there is no reasonable likelihood of achieving a conviction if any of these officers were charged with a criminal offense.

While the officers’ actions did not rise to the level of criminality, the firm indicated that the circumstances around the shooting “are concerning and demand consideration of how these officers were trained and, notwithstanding any potential violations of criminal law, if there were deficiencies in the New Castle County Police Department’s policies and training that should be corrected in light of the shooting of Mr. Moses to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.”

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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The New Castle County police officers who killed Lymond Moses in January 2021 will not face criminal charges after Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced she had found their use of deadly force to be justifiable.

On Jan. 13, 2021, three officers from the New Castle County Police Department approached Moses in the area of Rosemont Avenue and East 24th Street in Wilmington. Following a brief interaction, Moses fled and, after being cornered on a fenced-off street, turned around and accelerated forward in an apparent attempt to flee, Jennings said. The events that happened next unfolded in a matter of just four seconds.

Reportedly fearing for their lives, Patrolman Roberto Ieradi and Corporal Robert Ellis fired at Moses’ vehicle, ultimately killing Moses.

“Those four seconds have, for nearly a year, been the focal point of intense public discussion and of an in-depth investigation by the Delaware Department of Justice (DOJ) and, subsequently, by an international law firm retained to review whether the evidence would support criminal charges,” Jennings wrote in her report. “This has been one of the most extraordinary and exhaustive use of force investigations that the DOJ has ever conducted.”

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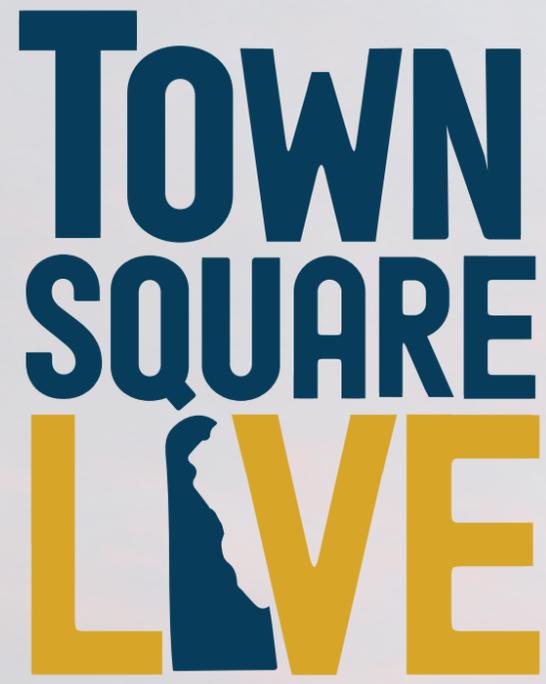
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