

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

 Town Square LIVE

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*Year In Review
2021*



Photo by SIK Imagery

Photo by Scott Evers

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FUNNY SIGN COMPETITION

NEW BEAR DRIVE-IN

2022 LEGISTALTIVE AGENDA

Photo by J&J Photography



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



KIDS SPEND AFTERNOON BUILDING SNOWMEN FOR HOCKESSIN NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

BY KAREN JAMES

With snow coming down for three days, a simple question appeared on social media Tuesday. “Do you wanna build a snowman...for nursing home residents?”

“Yes!” was the resounding answer from several kids and their parents as they responded to a social media post by Tessa Bosch of Hockessin, who lives near Regal Heights Nursing Home on Lancaster Pike and made that her first choice for the day’s uplifting activity.

Bosch saw the snowman idea circulating on Facebook: “If people with kids want something fun and kindhearted to do, go to a nursing home and build snowmen in front of the residents windows. They would love to see the kids and would love the snowmen.”

“I thought it was a great idea so I put it into action,” said Bosch. “In these challenging times, the small things

matter, like building a snowman for a smile.”

Regal Heights staff and patients were thrilled with the snowy good deed. “Seeing local children and families playing in the snow provided a delightful surprise for our residents,” said Michael P. McClatchy, administrator of Regal Heights Healthcare & Rehabilitation Center. “The snowmen may be temporary, but the kids’ act of kindness shows the warmth and compassion the Hockessin community has for its neighbors.

“The sentiment is always welcome, though it is especially appreciated now as visitation at Regal Heights remains limited for the health and safety of our residents and the surrounding community.”

The smile on the residents in the window leaves no doubt they enjoyed watching the kids build snowmen.

Jenny Howard of Wilmington and her three kids—Gianna, 7, Jillian, 5 and Carmella, 3—didn’t hesitate to grab their mittens and go. “While we were there, a lot of the staff thanked the kids and told them how much the residents loved it,” she said.

Howard’s daughter Gianna, 7, made a giant ice cream cone for the residents to see and said it was fun and felt good to help brighten the days of the elderly. “They were watching us and waving,” she said.

But the best part of the day came for Gianna’s mom when, as she was loading her kids to go home, a woman

who worked at Regal Heights rolled her window down to say, “I’m sitting here crying happy tears—this is really touching.”

The generosity of the day didn’t end with the snowman builders. “A man came while we were there and donated a box of new hats, gloves and scarves to be used,” said Taresa Schmidt, whose grandmother is a resident at Regal Heights.

Schmidt and her three kids—Ryan, 11, Amelia, 8 and Aaron 6—built a half-dozen snowmen in the courtyard outside the dementia unit.

The staff “opened up the curtains and sat the residents in the unit in chairs to watch us,” she said. “My children enjoyed building, but really loved waving to all the residents and making them laugh.”

For Veronica Macielag, the experience meant something to her both personally and professionally. The hospice homecare nurse takes care of patients with COVID-19 and has seen patients and their families struggle with the no-visitors rule.

“I cannot imagine having a loved one in a nursing home right now,” she said.

The snowman-building afternoon was the “perfect opportunity to grab every kid in my neighborhood that I could” and head over to the nursing home, she said.

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COUPLE ENDS 50-STATES-BY-AGE-50 QUEST IN DELAWARE

BY BETSY PRICE

When Katrina Baecht and Dustin Parks decided they wanted to visit all 50 states before they turned 50, they decided Delaware would be last.

“I was like, well, Delaware was the first state in the Union, so let’s make it the last on our trip,” said Baecht.

The Austin, Texas, couple completed that bucket list over the weekend, seeing Delaware Shakespeare’s “Midsummer Mix Tape” at Rockwood Mansion as part of their visit.

Their quest started about 13 years ago, when they were sitting around with her sister and the sister’s husband. The sister suggested they should all try to see all 50 states before they turned 50.

“This was alarming to me because I was the oldest,” Baecht said, “and had the fewest number of states visited on my list.” But the idea grew on them.

“It’s one of the things where you kind of started talking about it casually, and then you’re like, ‘Are we really gonna do this? Yeah. Let’s go for it,’” she said.

She and her husband got busy. Parks combined their lists and realized that they would have to revisit almost all the states because their lists didn’t match. Now, the only state they have not visited together is Florida, but they’ve both been to it.

As teachers, they needed to travel in summer. Some of their visits were via car trips to states they grouped together. Others, like trips to Hawaii and Alaska, required more \$\$\$\$ and more planning.

The most horrifying visit came on a trip where they headed first to a campground in Devil’s Den State Park in Arkansas. The campground had a stream meandering nearby. They set up their site just as it started raining, so they decided to take a nap.

An hour and a half later, Baecht woke up wanting to go to the bathroom and realized it was still pouring. They both went to use the facilities in the rain and then decided to go check out the stream.

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PIKE CREEK AUTO CENTER, RESTAURANT EXCHANGE PUNCHES VIA FUNNY SIGNS



BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

Sign war! What is it good for? Dramatically increasing your profile on social media, if you ask two Pike Creek business owners. Campanella’s Automotive & Tire Center and Crossroads Restaurant near the intersection of Kirkwood Highway and Limestone Road, have captivated the state on social media in their friendly quest to outwit each other’s marquees. A two-week-long war of words between the two shows no indication of slowing down, and they seem to be trying to drag others into the battle.

It all began when Pike Creek Automotive, who has been posting witty signs for years, spontaneously decided to challenge their neighbor: “Hey Crossroads, wanna have a sign war?” Crossroads Restaurant replied “Accepted—it’s on like Donkey Kong.” Paul Campanella, owner of Pike Creek Automotive, said he never talked with Crossroads management but was happy they decided to join in. It’s all with the goal of making people smile, according

to Campanella. “We want to have something up there that makes you slam on the brakes and turn around to take a picture,” Campanella said. Since then, the battle has intensified with exchanges such as: Crossroads: “Weekly special: PC Auto roast.” PC Auto: “Great job Crossroads! That’ll be your best dish yet.” and... Crossroads: “At least getting souped up here won’t fork your wallet.” PC Auto: “And when we soup up your car it doesn’t fork up your stomach.” The question now is: how does the war end? Matt Tyrawski, owner of Crossroads Restaurant, says his business has no plans of waving the white flag. “We’ll keep going until they quit,” Tyrawski said. “We want to win the war.”

Campanella says his business has already won every single battle. “They’re trying to compete with us but at some point in time, we’re going to have to start looking for somebody else to challenge us,” he said. Both companies turn to their employees to come up with the best rebuttals. Pike Creek Automotive even has a dedicated whiteboard where staff members write their ideas. Employees with the winning ideas are rewarded with bonuses, Campanella said.

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DELAWARE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY TO REOPEN MAY 13 WITH NEW FOCUS



BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Museum of Natural History will finish its metamorphosis next year and reopen May 13, the day of its 50th anniversary.

The \$9.8 million reinvention of the museum, founded by a du Pont with a huge shell, bird and egg collection, will end with a new name: The Delaware Museum of Nature and Science.

The new moniker will better reflect its rebirth as a series of eco-based exhibitions designed by Reich & Petch Design International in Toronto.

“Surprisingly, COVID actually has made this a lot easier to talk with people from another country,” said Darcie Martin, director of development. “Zoom has just been really easy for us and we don’t have to travel.”

Longtime favorites including the T Rex will stay, and all the changes will take place on the first floor, within the museum’s footprint.

“Concrete is expensive to break through,” Martin said.

The museum spent a huge chunk of the 20-teens asking members and visitors what they’d like to see. Fundraising for the reinvention began in 2017, and the museum now has raised \$7.4 million toward its goal.

A \$9.8 million renovation of the Delaware Museum of Natural History will see the entire inside gutted and replaced. The renovated entrance to the Delaware Museum of Natural History will be turned into an undersea scene, with fish named for donors.

The 20,000-square-foot of exhibit space has been gutted by Bancroft Construction. New walls have been installed. They’re now stark white, just beginning to be ready for exhibit installation.

Fiddly bits poke out here and there, include pipes for a new sprinkler system or supports for a 400-pound elephant head or a whale whose skull came from one that died on a Delaware beach.

The pieces of the former exhibits have been moved to the 2,500-square-foot exhibit hall, which is not being renovated, Martin said. Pieces of the taxidermy now are being checked by curators, who are freezing each piece to kill mold, mildew and any bugs, so they won’t be brought into exhibit. It’s standard operating procedure for most museums.

The second floor, which houses the museum’s collections, also will not be renovated. Among other things, it holds 36,000 clutches of eggs, the third largest such collection in North America. The outside of the building will remain yellow and only new signage will change on its 18 acres.

However, changes inside will be apparent as soon as patrons step through the front door. The glass-walled entrance to the museum, located on Kennett Pike across from Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, will be transformed in to an underwater scene.

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HAGLEY DAMAGE MAY HIT \$2 MILLION, AND IT HAS NO FLOOD INSURANCE



BY BETSY PRICE

Damage to the lower property at Hagley Museum and Library—a seminal piece of Delaware industrial history where DuPont manufactured gunpowder—may hit \$2 million, according to CEO Jill MacKenzie.

Water overflowing the Brandywine River Sept. 2 after the remnants of Hurricane Ida came through scoured the property, knocked down walls and flooded all the buildings along the mill race down to Breck’s Mill.

Some of the worst damage came, though, after eight feet of water filled the basement of the Visitors Center, which held the control units for many of the property’s systems such as electrical, a sewer pump, and heating and air conditioning.

“We’ve had a little bit of water get in but never at that level,” MacKenzie said. “There was 180,000 gallons of water down there that we had to pump out, and then get all of the stuff that was down there, which again was

not collections, but it was our store inventory, and a lot of our educational supplies.”

Hagley does not have flood insurance because it cost so much, MacKenzie said.

Museum officials have filled out Federal Emergency Management Agency forms and are working with it and the Delaware Emergency Management Agency to have the flooded areas of Delaware declared a Presidential Disaster Area. That will allow money, grants and other aid to come Hagley’s way.

The waters also flooded the U.S. Post Office at Breck’s Mill and came up to the top of the steps on the second floor, where Somerville Manning Gallery is. The gallery has been forced to postpone its 40th anniversary show, according to a phone message at the gallery. MacKenzie said it has moved out of Breck’s Mill for the time being.

Efforts were not successful Tuesday afternoon to reach

gallery owner Vickie Manning.

“We hope to welcome them back as soon as we can, but clearly she had to take the steps she had to, to be able to open that show,” MacKenzie said.

Hagley’s own new permanent exhibit, “Nation of Inventors,” was supposed to open Monday in the Visitors Center. It had a media preview in August.

“We were able to move all of the artifacts out of that building very quickly so everything was safeguarded and protected,” MacKenzie said. “They’re all back in their storage. We feel that our emergency response here at Hagley worked at 100%. Our folks did what they needed to do.”

“Nation of Inventors” now is tentatively expected to open in spring 2022. It’s possible it could have opened earlier, MacKenzie said, but that would have put it into the dead of winter, which isn’t known for encouraging high visitor interest.

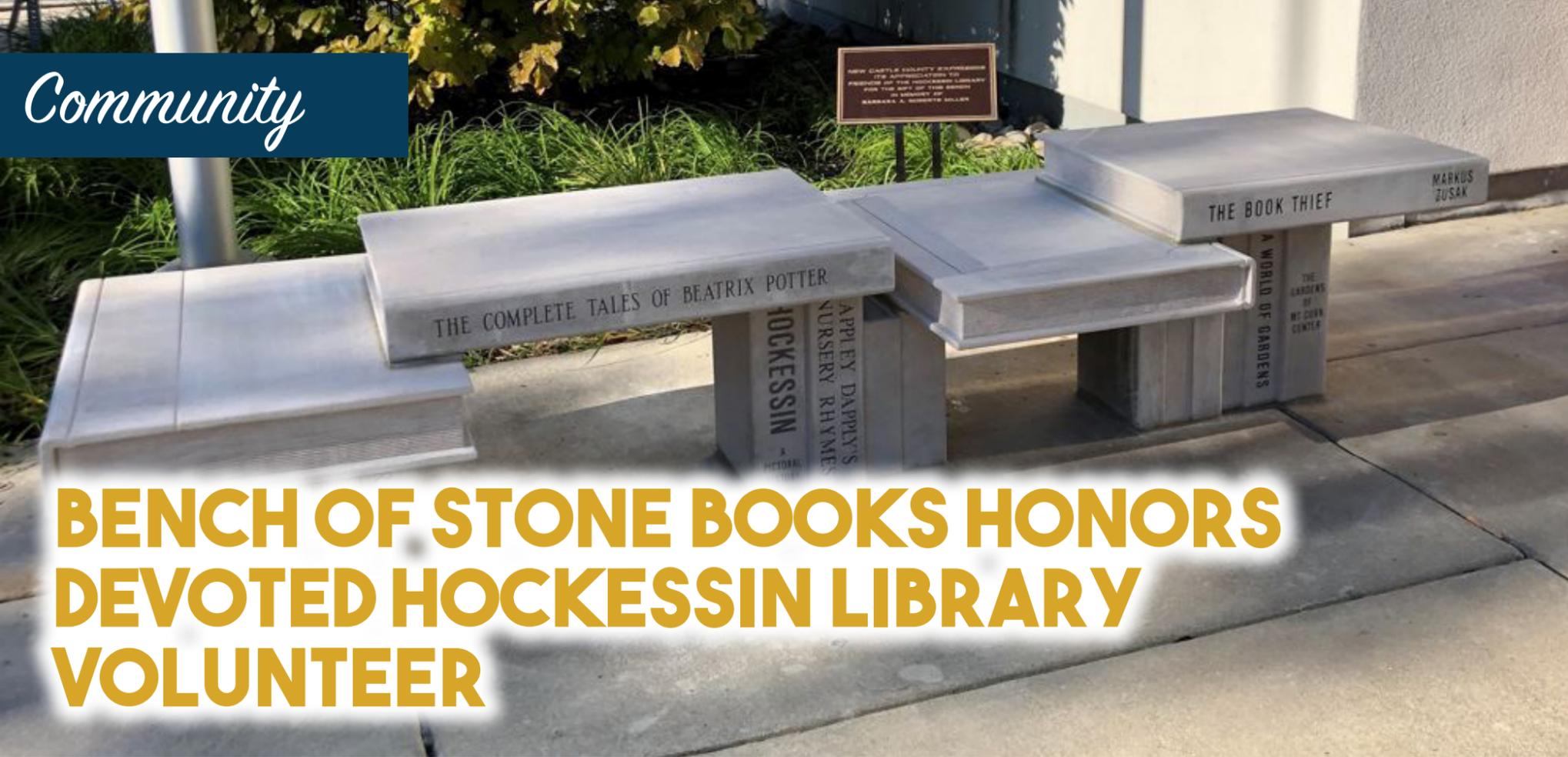
“We have not set any deadlines at this point because we don’t want to,” MacKenzie said. “We don’t want to set an unrealistic deadline that we then feel that we have to meet.”

The former du Pont estate reopened to the public in a limited way last week, with reduced prices for a tour of upper property buildings, including the family home Eleutherian Mills, the garden and an exhibit of patent invention models in the library.

MacKenzie said Hagley officials aren’t yet sure exactly how much damages are going to cost.

They are estimating they will need several hundred thousand dollars worth of mortar work alone to repair and replace walls.

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BENCH OF STONE BOOKS HONORS DEVOTED HOCKESSIN LIBRARY VOLUNTEER

BY BETSY PRICE

A new limestone bench mimicking stacks of books at Hockessin Library was created as a memorial to a long-time volunteer and board member.

The bench honors Barbara A. Roberts Miller, who died in March 2018 after a short illness. The titles of the books on the bench were all favorite of hers and include children’s books, popular literature, the history of Hockessin and gardening.

The Board of the Friends of the Library began casting around in 2018 for a project to honor her Miller, said board member Crystal Langstaff.

“We decided that a fabulous permanent bench right at the main entrance would be a lovely, lovely way to memorialize her,” Langstaff said. The bench also was to

be a nod to how much she loved reading and being outdoors.

An existing bench was old and rusting. When the board debated what material the memorial bench should be made out of, Langstaff suggested stone. She felt like it would be long-lasting and a nod to the enduring and ancient importance of libraries.

Langstaff, who has an art and architecture background, began researching sculptors and found Cary Shafer of Fort Wayne, Indiana. She liked what she saw online. Shafer remembers her calling on a snowy winter day. He was intrigued and agreed.

“I have a long career making site-specific sculpture, a lot of useful, usable pieces,” Shafer said.

Because of COVID, Shafer wasn’t able to visit Hockessin, so he studied photos of the building and property that Langstaff sent him.

“As a sculptor, I’m very interested in the shape and forms of things and also where they live,” Shafer said. “The sculpture was going to be right there in front of the library, so it was important for me to look at the library itself. And I especially liked the cantilevered section out over the space I wanted to design something that picked up that cantilevered shape and also mimicked the architectural style of the building.

“But I also wanted it to be books, and I didn’t want to make it look like any other book bench you’d ever seen.”

He creates his models first on a computer, using measurements from the site on which it will sit. Once Shafer got the design down, he carved it over a period of months, exactly like you might think he would: With a hammer and chisel.

“It’s just what you’d imagine,” he said. “There’s, you know, a crazy old dude with the wild hair and dust on his face and he’s banging away at the rock and it’s making a lot of noise.”

It’s the same way he helped carve stone for four years at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. while training with Italian master-carver Vincent Palumbo.

He had been in his 20s living in New York City when his father asked him to come home and help run the family store in the Midwest. Shafer agreed to try it for a year. He hated it. One day he went out back, put a chunk of limestone on the ground, and out of boredom began beating on it with a hammer and screwdriver.

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MT. CUBA STUDIES BEST WAY TO GROW A FOREST



BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Three thousand native trees and shrubs have been planted this fall as part of Mt. Cuba Center’s massive study on the best ways to bring back the region’s forests.

The project began in 2015 and is planned to run for 100 years, “but we are already noticing things,” said Nathan Shampine, Mt. Cuba’s natural lands manager. “The densest plantings are filling in the quickest, are much more diverse and a requiring a lot less maintenance,” he said. “But the tradeoff is that they were more expensive and labor-intensive” to do.

Mt. Cuba is testing six reforestation methods:

1. Sparsely planted trees, at 10-foot intervals.
2. Sparsely planted trees and shrubs, at 10-foot intervals.
3. Densely planted trees, at 5-foot intervals.
4. Densely planted trees and shrubs, at 5-foot intervals.

5. Natural succession, with Mother Nature allowed to run its course.
6. Control, with sparsely planted trees and a different maintenance schedule.

To keep meadow voles out, plots 1-4 are being mowed for three to five years after planting, while the control plot will be mowed for 10 to 15 years. To keep out deer, all plots have 10-foot fences.

The plantings include 28 species of native trees and shrubs, such oak, maple, hickory, dogwood, viburnum and sumac.

This fall, 60 volunteers worked for two weeks on three acres of plantings. The denser plots (Nos. 3 and 4) are doing the best so far, Shampine said, and Mt. Cuba’s experts “think the benefits of lower maintenance over the long term” will make up for higher upfront costs.

In the denser plots, the plants are twice as close as the sparser plots, but the geometry of the spacing means that there are three times as many plants, he said.

Forests are touted as an important way to sequester carbon and combat climate change, and forests of native plants—Mt. Cuba’s focus—support native wildlife as well.

The project, a partnership with West Chester University and University of Delaware, will by 2024 include 12,000 trees and shrubs on 12 acres.

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Community

BY BETSY PRICE

A Kennett Square bibliophile, upset that the **Hockessin BookShelf** was closing, now owns the store. Already among the independent book store's clients and fierce fans, Jen Blab has spent a good chunk of her life managing book stores or working in libraries, so the idea of buying one wasn't far-fetched.

She was shocked in October when Rebecca Dowling announced she was closing the store to move to California. "I was devastated. I was like, 'No, it can't close,'" Blab said. "I turned to my husband and said, 'Can we maybe do something about that?' And he's like, 'Well, maybe.'"

After talking it over and doing some research, they signed the sale papers the day before Thanksgiving.

"It's just an important thing to have here, and we made it work," she said. "I think that independent bookstores are making a comeback. There's one in Kennett now. There are plenty of people who don't want to shop Amazon for

KENNETT BOOK LOVER BUYS HOCKESSIN BOOKSHELF TO KEEP STORE OPEN

books. I think we have a very loyal customer base here at the store."

She cites Harvard University professor Ryan Raffaelli as saying the independent bookstore is alive and well. "Indies are on the rebound," she quoted him as saying. "The American Booksellers Association reported sales among its members grew an average of 5% year-over-year in 2018."

Blab has been meeting customers as Dowling helps her transition into the job. "There's just such an outpouring of support," she said. "They want to keep the store open."

Blab has been a lifelong reader. Her father was in the Air Force and the family moved every other year or so.

"I just took solace in books. I read a lot because I was alone a lot. I was an only child," she said. "I have for as long as I can remember been a reader."

She prefers contemporary fiction and counts Louise Erdrich, Ann Patchett and Wallace Steiner among her favorite authors.

She earned a degree in English from Auburn University, a school she and her best friend chose when her father was stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, even though they moved a couple of times afterwards.

"My friend went to West Point," she said. "I followed the plan."

Blab went on to manage a Bookland in Birmingham, Alabama, and later become a librarian at the Medical

Library at Duke University, where she left as head of the acquisitions department.

After time out to raise her son and daughter, she returned to work three years ago at the Kennett Library.

She plans to change little about the BookShelf, located at 7179 Lancaster Pike, which opened in 2002.

Like Delaware, she said in her press release, "The BookShelf, with 826 square feet of inventory space, is a small wonder. We stock a little bit of everything with a large selection of fiction, mystery, romance, and children's books. We also carry book-themed gift items like puzzles, games, and mugs."

Blab plans to continue the store's many partnerships, including its book clubs, events with authors, community events such as its summer storytime for children at Woodside Creamery and Cookbook Club with Delaware Nature Society at Ashland Nature Center, and collaborations with teachers and schools. She also will continue the store's used book policy, which allows readers to trade in books toward credit on others.

Once she gets her feet on the ground, Blab hopes to find others to partner with, too. "One thing I'm doing is bringing in greeting cards because I love to write letters and I have an addiction to buying cards," she said. "So I want to have those in the store."

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'MISS JOANNE!' READING TUTOR, BUDDY FORGE STRONG RELATIONSHIP

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

On a warm, breezy day in late August, Wilmington resident JoAnne Stout waited patiently outside of the Delaware Children’s Museum on the Riverfront. Full of excitement and a bit nervous, she stood underneath a tree to avoid the glare of the sun as she scanned the parking lot across the street.

She watched as a car pulled into the row of parking spots closest to her. Out jumped a family, not unlike the thousands of others that frequent the museum each

year. “Ms. JoAnne!” she instantly heard echo across the parking lot—the voice all too familiar.

It was that of 5-year-old Aiden Bell, with whom Stout had been virtually reading, talking and playing with throughout the pandemic as a Read Aloud Delaware volunteer.

The trip to the museum would be the first time the two had met in person. Aiden’s dad pushed a stroller carrying his youngest son as Aiden and his cousin grabbed the handles, looked both ways and crossed the street toward a teary-eyed Stout. The two already had developed what felt like a lasting friendship.

Read Aloud Delaware is a nonprofit organization that sends volunteers into preschools around the state where they engage in one-on-one reading sessions with children.

With so many people worried about learning lags because of school interruptions caused by COVID, Read Aloud is one of many state groups continuing to promote literacy and comprehension.

When the pandemic forced the closure of many child-care centers and prevented visitors from coming in, Read Aloud was faced with a question: how can we continue to fulfill our mission without being present with students? The answer: a new service that allows volunteers to read with students virtually, via video chat and screen sharing.

Every Sunday, Stout spends about an hour with Aiden talking, reading books and playing games.

The pair uses Caribu, an innovative app and marketplace that allows users to connect through a video call to read books, draw and learn together in real-time no matter where they are.

The platform has allowed Stout and Aiden to develop a strong connection, “so much so that sometimes we’d be on Caribu for an hour and his mom would pop in the screen and say, ‘Have you all gotten to read a book yet or anything’ because she could just hear us talking and talking,” Stout said.

Aiden is a bit shyer about expressing his feelings about Stout. “She makes me feel happy,” he says.

Aiden’s mom, Schanal Chin, said she’s grateful that her son has been able to forge such a valuable relationship with Stout. Chin is a teacher with the Delaware Children and Families First Head Start program.

“He loves it,” Chin said. “He loves her and he looks forward to reading with her.”

Stout said she’s learned as much from Aiden as he has from her, she said.

He teaches her all about dinosaurs and marine animals, and he even got her hooked on a Netflix show called “Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous.”

She would binge-watch the show and then discuss what she learned with Aiden during their Sunday calls.

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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.

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Photo by Fauxels for Pexels



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY KAREN JAMES

Where's the beef?

And the milk, the bread and the fruit?

Shoppers who frequent Acme in Lantana Square may be wondering where to find the items they're seeking as the 57,000+ square foot store undergoes a "reorganization," with products being moved from the familiar spaces they have been in for nearly five years. The reorg has been a popular topic on the Hockessin Gossip Girl site on Facebook.

Dana Ward, public affairs manager for the Mid-Atlantic region of Acme, said the remodel is being done to "make room for new products and offerings. Periodically, we have to rearrange the store to make that happen."

But shoppers are questioning the timing of the shuffle and why it's being done during a pandemic as well as during the first month of the ban on plastic bags.

"To me, it doesn't make sense they're doing it right now," said Tita Cherrier of Greenville. "You have COVID

COVID, PLASTIC BAG BAN, AND NOW YOU'RE REMODELING MY GROCERY STORE?

restrictions, while also trying to move your way around what they are doing."

Cherrier said it's inconvenient to spend more time in the store looking for items, particularly with the threat of COVID.

Alli Benham agrees. "It's a poor time to have to wander around when it's ideal to get in and get out as quickly as you can," sad Benham, of Newark. "I imagine it will be a good arrangement when it's all said and done, but it is a messy process to navigate around."

But it seems plans—and funding—for the remodel were already in place long before the pandemic hit, according to Ward. "Capital funding, architectural drawings, local permits, equipment planning and ordering take many months, Ward noted. "This year is unprecedented, but it doesn't take away from the fact that the funds are there."

She said the stores have to take advantage of any funding when they receive it. "Every year, there's only so many projects allowed, so if you don't get them done in that timeframe, they don't get done at all," she said.

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URSULINE ACADEMY

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DELAWARE LIVE
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“ We saw a boost in website referrals from Delaware LIVE during our admission season. ”

- URSULINE ACADEMY



BY AMY WHITE

If working out is a hassle, you're surrounding yourself with the wrong people.

Need proof? Swing by Newark's Alpha Training on a Saturday at 7 a.m. and step into the fitness world uniquely curated by dream team Amirah Postell and Andre Price.

Sure, the battling ropes can be defeating that early in the morning, but when a live DJ is pumping dope beats through the gym and Price is bellowing, "LET'S GO!" resistance is futile—you will slam those ropes and move

FOR ABOVE SEVEN, DESIGNING WORKOUT GEAR IS TINY PART OF BUSINESS PLAN

that body-ody-ody-ody-ody-ody-ody-ody to Megan Thee Stallion like your life depends on it.

While members of this drop-in, stations-based class might take the occasional dance break when moving from one exercise to the next—it's a little bit sexy, a lotta bit sweaty—make no mistake: This is legit full-body HIIT training, backed by Price's master's in Health Science and his NCAA-coaching certification and Postell's vibrant energy and passion for fitness.

And it's not just your life the duo wants to touch—it's a million of them.

"It's a big goal, but when we look at the grand picture of what this thing is and where we're going, the goal is one million lives touched," says Price.

Price, with life-and-business partner Postell, co-own and operate Above Seven Fitness, a one-stop shop that offers group fitness, individual training, their own branded apparel and, the part that stole Postell's heart, a charitable foundation dedicated to providing resources for student-athletes from one-parent households in Delaware (and beyond, if their dreams come true).

"When Dre told me about that part of his mission, that was it for me," Postell says. "As much as we both love the training and the clients, this foundation is his baby for real, but he hates to take credit. So I have to speak on my man: This foundation means everything to him."

The foundation is an extension of Price's own upbringing as a high-caliber athlete who would go on to play collegiate football.

Born in California, he was raised by a single mom with limited resources. At one point, the family almost lost their home. Being "young and dumb," and attending school an hour away, Price often found himself hanging out after practice for hours.

"I was getting involved in things I shouldn't have," he says. "It took me having to dodge my first bullet to realize I needed to do better, and not just for me. Ever since, I've been on the path of giving back—there are plenty of student-athletes out here with just one parent holding it down who need help."

That help can include everything from off-season training to tutoring to transportation. While COVID threw some kinks into the mission, Postell and Price are hoping to accept their first class of student athletes in the fall of 2021.

"If we put support into these households, maybe a mom doesn't have to work two to three jobs; or an athlete stays ahead in school," Postell says. "We want this thing to be bigger than us."

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TALK OF RAISING MINIMUM WAGE WORRIES RESTAURANTS STILL REELING FROM COVID-19



BY BETSY PRICE

Restaurateurs are listening with great alarm to state and national talk about raising minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Carl Georigi, CEO of the Platinum Dining Group, says that raising minimum wage from \$9.25 an hour to \$11 by next year—the first hike a state bill proposes on the way to \$15 by 2026—would cost his six New Castle County restaurants millions.

Ryan German, who owns Caffe Gelato in Newark, says he fears it will keep high school and college age workers from getting jobs in the industry, partly because they generally are starting first jobs with no skills.

Scott Kammerer, president of Sodel Concepts, which owns 12 restaurants in Sussex County, and is chairman of the board of the Delaware Restaurant Association, says a higher minimum wage would force mom and pop restaurants to hire fewer people, shorten operating hours or even go out of business. Larger ones could be forced to consider reducing benefits.

The timing couldn't be worse to ask restaurants to raise minimum wage, Georigi says.

“You're asking an industry that has been decimated and lost over \$1 billion in revenue to now navigate through increased minimum wage at a time when we are our most vulnerable,” Georigi says, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic. “It's a huge concern, to say the least.”

A proposed bill to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour has been floating among Delaware legislators for nearly two months. It's not a new idea and has been shot down before.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton, would raise minimum wage in increments to \$15 by 2026. It would start with a hike from Delaware's current minimum wage of \$9.25 to \$11 on Jan. 1, 2022. An extra dollar would be added each January until 2026.

Raising minimum wage has long been a plank in Democratic election platforms nationwide, including President Joe Biden's. They believe it will help raise people out of poverty and economic straits.

Biden announced last week that he would seek a federal minimum wage hike “to at least \$15 an hour” as part of a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus aid package. On Friday, his office said he was signing an executive order to start the process to require federal contractors to pay all employees at least \$15.

Walsh, who is head of the Senate Labor Committee, said it was “too early to really know what would happen at the federal level” when asked how Biden's moves would affect his bill.

The bill draft that was circulated last year included a clause specifying that if a federal minimum wage was established that's higher than Delaware's, the First State's minimum wage immediately would be raised to match that.

Biden's move to set a rate that contractors must pay is not the same as raising federal minimum wage, which would require legislation, said Anthony Delcollo, a former state representative who is now the Delaware Senate Republican attorney. The new rule would be just another requirement, such as the ones that prohibit discrimination.

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JOY FROM RESTAURANTS, CUSTOMERS GREET FIRST DAY OF NO MASKS, FULL CAPACITY

BY BETSY PRICE

Lunch was off to a booming start at Limestone Barbecue and Bourbon May 21, the first day that Gov. John Carney told restaurants they could drop capacity limits and told vaccinated Delawareans they generally can stop wearing masks.

“We’ve only been open since 11 a.m., and we’ve actually had a very strong day so far,” said Nick Wallace, pit boss and manager.

He said about six groups had come in before 1 p.m. and told him they couldn’t wait to come out and get back to a little bit of normalcy as the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be ebbing in the face of vaccinations.

“We had a few guests that literally haven’t gone to restaurants and sat down since the beginning just because they were waiting for this day,” Wallace said.



He’s just as excited as his customers are, and that sense of jubilation was playing out up and down the First State.

“Nice to sea your faces again!” read the marquee of Big Fish Grill in Rehoboth Beach, a picture of which showed a row of grinning workers whose smiles can finally be seen.

The excitement shows in little and big ways.

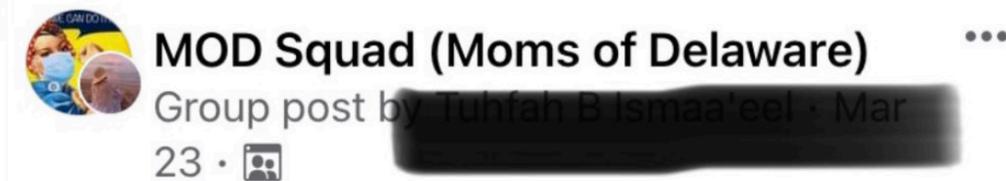
Carl Georigi, CEO of Platinum Dining, which owns Capers & Lemons, Red Fire, Taverna, Eclipse Bistro and El Camino restaurants, pointed out that several of his female managers are wearing lipstick today.

Two of them took a selfie and posted it on Facebook saying, “Haven’t worn lipstick in a year and three months.”

Carrie Leishman, CEO of the Delaware Restaurant Association, said she was at a meeting at the Starboard in Dewey Beach. A sign telling people they had to wear masks was still on display because someone forgot to take it down.

“When they did, the entire outside dining area erupted in jubilation,” she said.

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Sign has gone up for the Trader Joe's in Christina fashion center 🤗🤗 I'm so excited!!



TRADER JOE'S FOLLOWERS LOSES THEIR MINDS OVER CHRISTIANA STORE OPENING

BY AMY WHITE

If you headed to the grand opening of the new Trader Joe's in the Christiana Fashion Center April 30, we hope you kept an eye out for the mamas.

We're not being sexists, but there's a distinct subset of Delaware shoppers coming for that cheese aisle, hunny, and you best believe they mean business.

If you're in the Moms of Delaware Facebook page, you already know the new 14,000-square-foot store, which opened in part of the Saks Off 5th space April 30 at 7:55 a.m., has been an endless topic of conversation for the past five weeks.

Some moms declared, "OMG this is the best day of my life!!" Others celebrated officially breaking up with the arduous 202 commute required to get to the only other store in the state—Don't text us, don't call us, we'll get our Kung Pao Chicken Mochi Balls in Christiana, thanks.

One brilliant mother lamented the Delaware laws that won't permit the sale of Trader Joe's wines. A poor misguided soul suggested that the Aldi brand of Everything but the Bagel sesame seasoning was on par with Trader Joe's, and no one has heard from her since.

And in anticipation of the new store, another mom—possibly this writer—has vowed to make peace with Trader Joe's deeply flawed decision to discontinue the Cinnamon Apple Snack Sticks.

But for all the cracks about cults, fiends, floral shirts and ridiculous flavor creations (we were serious about those Kung Pao Chicken Mochi Balls), this place is a mom-magnet for good reason: a robust organic selection, unique finds, fantastic produce, snacks on snacks, and, at about a quarter of the size of a traditional super market, a space so intimate you have no choice but to walk ever so close to the deliciously dangerous Chocolate Chip Pain Au Lait.

"I really enjoy the atmosphere and the quality of the food and products," says homemaker Kelly Hess of Bear. "The atmosphere is nice and clean, and the people who work there are so friendly."

Of course, getting to the 202 location with littles in tow isn't ideal.

"With Trader Joe's I have to really have the time to go up there," says Hess, who has gone about 10 times during the pandemic. "But it's worth it to me because I really appreciate the quality. The produce is always fresh and seasonal. I know my family is getting wholesome ingredients."

Hess is no dummy.

"The shopping carts are smaller to force you to go more often, which I guess is a good business concept," she says with a dose of side-eye.

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NEW BEAR DRIVE IN WILL BE BUILT WITH CARGO CONTAINERS

BY BETSY PRICE

A twin-screen Bear Drive-In is expected to open this month behind the Lowe's in Bear.

Bob Weir, who is the technical director at the Playhouse on Rodney Square and has a side business doing drive-in movies with inflatable screens, plans to use cargo containers to create his facility in a 5-acre field on Christiana-Bear Road.

Containers will be stacked to create a screen facing Christiana Bear, also known as Route 7, and another facing the direction of Route 1. The projection booth and concession stand also will be made of cargo containers.

"We're making it completely portable," Weir said Monday night.

He broke the news of the new drive-in on his Facebook page last week.

"It is official! The permits have been approved and we are moving forward! I am proud to announce that I will be opening a fully functional twin Drive-In movie theatre!" he said.

Weir said he meant the post to alert his friends that he's completed the county permit process.

But friends convinced him to make the post public and by Monday, it had 4,300 shares, which surprised Weir.

The theater site now boasts an electric sign that says "Open soon" in the middle of a grassy field.

The life-long theater and movie buff is hoping everything will fall into place for the first shows by the end of July, maybe sooner. He plans to stay open through October.

The Bear Drive-In is expected to show mostly first-run movies with a few "throw-back" classics.

Patrons will drive into the field, which will be cut to remain grassy, and listen to the shows through their radios. Tickets will be \$15 per person and will include a large popcorn and a soda, partly to keep the concession stand going. There will be discounts for children and seniors.

Weir said he expects most people to bring in pizzas, hamburgers and other dinner food, so the concession stand will sell popcorn, soda and packaged snacks rather than making food there.

The containers will start arriving this week, Weir said. "We have to put an actual screen surface on the side of the cargo containers, and I don't know how long that's going to take me," he said. It's also the biggest challenge of the facility because of the high cost of lumber right now and "because of how stinking hot it is." He hopes it will only take about two weeks to finish.

The Historic Movie Theaters of Delaware Facebook page praised the news of a new theater. "This is not only amazing news, it also is historic on two fronts," the Facebook site said. "When it opens, the Bear Drive-Inn will be the first Delaware movie theater to be located in Bear, and the first two-screen drive-in in the state's history." Later, the writer issued a clarification, saying someone said that the Delmar Drive-In might have had two screens at one point, but the writer couldn't immediately confirm it.

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Harry's Savoy Grill
and Kid Shelleen's

BY BETSY PRICE

Jeff Hammer, who runs five Delaware beach restaurants, has been running a help-wanted ad in Bethany Beach for more than a month.

He's had two applicants in that time.

Hammer and other restaurateurs say they've seen no rise in applications since the state in July required people receiving unemployment to prove they were looking for

RESTAURANTS CUT HOURS AS STRUGGLE WITH HIRING CONTINUES

jobs or after the extra federal COVID-19 payments ended on Labor Day.

Coupled with that is the loss of seasonal help—largely high school and college students and teachers—as they returned to classes and preseason practices for sports teams, bands, cheerleading and more.

“The next six months are going to be really telling,” said Dogfish Head Hospitality GM Ryan Schwamberger. “I think we lost a lot of people out of our industry that, when we were forced to shut down for so long, found jobs and career paths in other industries and may never come back, or have no desire to come back to hospitality.”

He's hoping the next six months will bring in a new group of workers.

“Really hoping for it,” he said.

Diners returned this summer, often exceeding pre-pandemic levels, restaurant owners and managers say.

They say they've raised wages substantially, but still have trouble hiring, particularly for front-of-house jobs such as serving staff, bussers, bartenders and hosts, which makes handling the crowds difficult.

“I started out 14-year-old hostesses this summer anywhere from \$14 to \$16 an hour,” Hammer said. “Our busboys and food runners start out anywhere from \$9 to \$11 an hour, plus tips.”

Those wage rates trigger raises in longer term employees, including kitchen staff, Hammer said.

People who have been working there for a few years and are making \$18 an hour see newbies coming in at \$16 and want a raise, he said.

To cope with the manpower shortage, the restaurants are turning to one of the few options they have: Cutting hours and closing for a day or two. Cutting hours helps ease scheduling and overtime problems, and closing for a day or two gives everyone the same day off,

“How many restaurants have you gone to that were closed during the week in the middle of the summer?” Hammer asks. “There were places in Ocean City that didn't open up for lunch at all. A lot of restaurants in Rehoboth Beach were closed for the day. In Bethany Beach on a Tuesday night, there were seven restaurants closed because they couldn't open seven days a week.”

Dogfish Head announced last week that it has reduced hours at both the Dogfish Head Brewpub, which is open seven days, and Dogfish Head's Chesapeake & Maine, which is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays for the foreseeable future.

Hammer said he's going to have to close for a day each week at his five beach restaurants—Fins Ale House in Lewes and Bethany Beach, Fins Fish House and Claws Seafood House in Rehoboth Beach and Big Oyster Brewery in Lewes.

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SOMERVILLE MANNING FORCED TO MOVE ANNIVERSARY SHOW BECAUSE OF FLOODING

BY BETSY PRICE

When Somerville Manning Gallery sent out invitations to a “surprise exhibition” for its 40th anniversary show, owner Vickie Manning was hoping to create a little drama to stir patron interest.

“Be careful what you ask for, right,” said Rebecca Moore, the gallery’s director, on Sept. 16.

Mother Nature handed them plenty of drama when the Brandywine River flooded its banks Sept. 2 as storms from the former Hurricane Ida swept through. The water washed away the gallery’s sculpture garden and rose to the top of the second-floor steps of its Breck’s Mill home.

The art inside the gallery was untouched, and most of the art outside can be saved. The building—owned by Hagley Museum & Library—has been deemed sound by structural engineers.

But it has no electricity and is unlikely to for the foreseeable future, making it difficult to host a public art show and necessitating a scramble by Manning and Moore. “The turmoil from the last two weeks has been surreal,” Manning said.

They’ve settled temporarily in the former Hardcastle Gallery, 10 minutes away in Centerville. That space was

filled during the week with contractors rushing to complete projects so the show can be mounted.

Manning is pleased the anniversary exhibition will open Wednesday, Sept. 22, only a few days beyond its original date. “We purposely did not do a catalog to keep it all a surprise, which was the intention even before the flood,” Manning said. “Now with the addition of the flood, we have a real surprise.”

Manning had asked artists or owners to submit a piece of work that had never been shown in public before. It didn’t have to be new, but she asked that it never have been shown widely.

The artist names will be familiar to regional art lovers: Jamie Wyeth, Andrew Wyeth, Mary Page Evans, Robert Jackson and more. The works will include a rarely seen N.C. Wyeth piece, Manning said.

Jamie Wyeth is delighted the anniversary show will go on. “I am so pleased to learn due to Vickie Manning’s indomitable spirit the gallery is going ahead with their planned 40th anniversary exhibition,” Wyeth said in an email. “I am excited that one of my just completed works will be a part of the exhibition. Onward and upward, Vickie.”

The Somerville Manning situation brought back stressful, but ultimately triumphant, memories for Jackson. “Us artists work a long time on these paintings in the hopes that people get to appreciate and enjoy them,” said Robert Jackson. “When some disaster occurs, it is wonderful when a gallery steps up and believes ‘the show must go on!’”

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DEL. UTILITY WORKERS FIGHT LABELING AS FEDERAL CONTRACTORS, VACCINE MANDATE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Local utility workers are talking to their unions and elected officials about how to change their designation as federal contractors who must be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Jan. 4, 2022.

The workers say they aren't necessarily opposed to vaccinations, but they are opposed to being designated as federal contractors when most rarely work on federal projects.

"Our fight is not with Delmarva Power or the Exelon Corp.," said lineman Jamin Smith. "Our fight is with the federal government."

Delmarva Power is a subsidiary of Pepco Holdings, which is owned by Exelon.

The issue arose after President Joe Biden on Sept. 9 signed an executive order that requires any company

that holds federal contracts or performs work on any federal property to mandate vaccines for their employees.

Under the mandate, there is no option for weekly COVID-19 testing and medical and religious exemptions are limited.

Separately, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration has implemented a policy—also set to take effect on Jan. 4—requiring all companies with 100 employees or more to require vaccinations or weekly COVID testing. Exelon and its subsidiaries, such as Delmarva Power, will be required to abide by that mandate too.

That policy is expected to cover 84 million workers, roughly 31 million of whom are unvaccinated.

Nearly 100 members of International Brotherhood of

Electrical Workers Local 1238 gathered Tuesday evening in Newport to discuss the effects the mandates would have on their employment.

Efforts were unsuccessful Wednesday to obtain a comment from the IBEW national organization.

Attendees at the Tuesday night meeting were seemingly universally opposed to the federal contractor mandate. Many conveyed feelings that the government is attempting to twist the arms of regular Americans who want to make informed decisions about whether or not to get vaccinated.

Some expressed confusion that they would even be considered federal contractors, arguing that such a distinction had never been made before and that very little of their work involves the federal government.

In an email to employees submitted anonymously to Delaware LIVE News/Town Square LIVE, Exelon—the parent company to Delmarva Power, which employs most of the members of IBEW Local 1238—said it expects the mandate to cover most of its employees and contractors, though it is still reviewing the policy's implications.

Exelon and its subsidiaries supply electricity and gas to federal properties.

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NEW STRETCHPLEX PROGRAM TO OFFER INDIVIDUALIZED STRETCHING, MASSAGE



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

One Hockessin business has developed a new, unique wellness service aimed at helping people feel more flexible, have less pain and move easier.

Dubbed “StretchPlex,” Performance Physical Therapy developed the program to promote “wellness that you can feel,” said Steve Rapposelli, co-founder and CEO of Performance Physical Therapy.

Through a wide range of offerings, including therapeutic and healing massages, individualized stretching programs, personal training, compression boots and percussion guns, Rapposelli hopes to improve his patients’ quality of life by boosting their physical strength and flexibility.

StretchPlex is available through a membership program that allows customers to choose services a la carte, in bundles, or via a subscription service, which Rapposelli said delivers the best value.

Prices range from \$20 for 15 minutes of assisted stretching, called Stretch-N-Go, to \$99 for the Gold Membership, which includes 20% off of unlimited wellness services, one 30-minute compression session a month, one 30-minute Stretch-N-Go session a month and one 30-minute massage session a month.

Customers can also purchase training packages ranging from \$40 to \$680.

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DELAWARE MEN CREATE PILL BOTTLE CAP THAT USES THUMBPRINT TO OPEN

FortisKap, the brainchild of two Delaware men who created the concept as college sophomores, is designed to keep medicines safe, track usage data, and prevent abuse both by the person for whom the pills are prescribed and by people who should not be taking the drugs.

Alexander Colton and Joseph W. White came up with the idea while students at The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Colton, a Delaware native who attended Salesianum School, had watched family and friends sink into addiction. He also worked at First State Pharmacy while in high school and saw the issues that drug stores deal with.

“After the prescription medication left the pharmacy, nobody had any understanding of what was going on with it,” Colton said. “It was gone from the whole medical world.”

White’s family lives in Winchester, Virginia, about 20 minutes from West Virginia, which has been hard hit by the opioid epidemic. During his senior year in high school, a nearby town had 20 overdoses in 24 hours.

The two men were sitting talking about the epidemic one day when they came up with the idea of having a lock on a prescription medication device that used a biometric signature, such as a fingerprint.

“We just really wanted to make a difference and prevent that from happening to any other families,” White said.

The two men now split their time between Delaware and Richmond, Virginia, where research, development and design is happening. They expect their caps to hit the market in Delaware and Virginia in June 2022, barring any supply chain or other issues.

If events unfold as they hope, insurance companies will cover the cost of the caps and pharmacy companies will distribute them. Many companies already have expressed interest.

“The long-term vision here is to have the cap covered under health insurance through the Primary Care Act,” White said. “Any consumer is only going to pay for the data-driven insights that they received from it through their health insurance. The cap itself will be covered by health insurance so that they can be provided to the patients who need this type of oversight.”

The design and capabilities of FortisKap have evolved since their first idea, which would have allowed a person to simply open the bottle. “Since then, we’ve better understood our market,” Colton said.

He likes to compare the evolution to a parent marking the level of alcohol in bottles in an effort to deter any kids or other relatives from drinking it.

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BY BETSY PRICE

Your bottle of prescribed pills may soon come with a cap that requires your thumbprint to open. The cap also will be able to scan the inside of the bottle to see how many pills remain and will be equipped to recognize any openings or removals that are unusual.

Photo by Jonathan Borba for Pexels



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

Twenty years ago, if you were drinking a beer in Delaware, it was likely one of the classics: Budweiser, Miller or Coors. That's not necessarily the case anymore.

Today, it's likely to be a local craft beer from one of Delaware's 32 breweries, and that craft brew is likely to have been picked up not at the brewery, but at a local liquor store.

Liquor stores have capitalized on the craft beer craze—not only because that's what so many customers want, but also because local liquor stores want to support local breweries.

"In our industry, that's the hot new thing," says Jeff Kreston of Kreston Wine & Spirits in Middletown. "The biggest upside to craft beer is the local aspect."

WIN-WIN: HOTTEST TREND AT DELAWARE LIQUOR STORES IS LOCAL CRAFT BREWS

Kreston said that local beers are among the best sellers in his store. Aside from being in high demand, Kreston said he likes to offer his customers local brands because he wants to support Delaware's small businesses.

"We're a family-run business like most of the craft breweries in the state," Kreston said. "So why wouldn't we give them support and love? We want to see them succeed just as much as we want to see ourselves succeed."

Kreston said some of his team members even visit state breweries to check out their newest offerings.

"First State Brewing Co. in Middletown, for example. I have a guy who will go there to grab a drink and a sandwich just to keep an eye on them, and then when they have something new go-to distribution, we're already familiar with it and we're ready to rock and roll."

With so many local offerings available, customers are always coming in looking for new beers to try, said Jason Lydon, ambassador of good beer at State Line Liquors in Elkton, Maryland, just west of the Delaware state line.

"People come in all the time asking, 'What's the best?' but there's no such thing," Lydon said. "We'll often tell people if there was a best we wouldn't have all these other beers."

With over 3,000 beers in its inventory, State Line Liquors has something for everybody.

"We love to support local," Lydon said. "It's awesome when you can support local and it's also delicious beer."

Throughout the past 20 years, many beer enthusiasts have become brewers. Inevitably, the quality of beer offerings has improved as more options have become available. "Right now, there's so much good beer that it's ridiculous. The bar has really been raised on what constitutes good beer," Lydon said.

Macro-beers—the ones that come from the nation's largest breweries—are consistent wherever you go.

Local beers, on the other hand, allow travelers to get a taste of their destination and residents to get a taste of home.

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MILFORD'S BENVENUTO INVITES MIXOLOGISTS TO COMPETE IN THE THIRSTY GAMES

BY PAM GEORGE

Milford's **Benvenuto** is not your average Italian restaurant. Yes, the family-owned eatery embraces the cuisine and ambiance of Tuscany. But it also delivers the unexpected. "We change what we do all the time," said owner Lisa Johnson.

In winter, for instance, guests can attend wine dinners featuring high-end Italian wines from different regions. But come summer, the restaurant switches to cocktail events with refreshing tropical themes.

The activities help Benvenuto stand apart.

"We are not just a restaurant," Johnson maintained. "We want to be a destination. We have people who drive two or three hours to dine. They get something here that they can't find anywhere else on Delmarva."

To be extraordinary means starting at the top, she continued. For proof, Benvenuto is hosting master mixologist **Brian Van Flandern**, from June 28 to July 2, for a series of events, including The Thirsty Games, an "Iron Chef"-style throwdown focused on cocktails.

On Thursday, July 1, the competition—a playful riff

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on "The Hunger Games"—will occur at Sunset Cove, the Milford event venue that Johnson and husband Walter "Poncho" Johnson also own.

Van Flandern, who is organizing the challenge, is president of Creative Cocktail Consultants, which designs profitable luxury cocktail programs and trains staff in hotels, restaurants and resorts.

The author of five books has appeared on the TV shows "Bar Rescue," "The Barefoot Contessa," "Foodography," "Property Brothers Forever" and "The Early Show." No wonder the Food Network calls him "America's Top Mixologist."

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SNUFF MILL RESTAURANT TO OPEN IN INDEPENDENCE MALL IN JULY

BY PAM GEORGE

Most Brandywine Valley residents have traveled on Snuff Mill Road, a wooded route that winds from Route 52 in Chateau Country to the Red Clay Creek in Yorklyn.

Here you'll find the 19th-century ruins of Garrett Snuff Mill, which once produced powdered tobacco for inhalation. The familiar name is about to take on a new meaning.

Snuff Mill Restaurant is scheduled to open by mid-July in Independence Mall on Concord Pike.

Seasoned restaurateur Bill Irvin, executive chef Robert Lhulier and Joanne and David Govatos have partnered to create the 28-seat restaurant, which will also have a wine bar and a butchery. Customers come in for a meal or to purchase cuts of beef, pork, lamb and poultry, along with charcuterie and cheeses.

The owners were inspired by the rural sensibility that a mill evokes.

“We want you to feel like you're in the country somewhere, and we've set up a table for you,” explained Lhulier, who has worked for University & Whist Club, Domaine Hudson and Harry's Savoy Grill. He was the opening chef at Deep Blue Bar and Grill, now Tonic Seafood & Steak.

The concept is “laser-focused,” said Irvin, who has owned or been associated with 16 Baltimore restaurants. In addition, he was a food-and-beverage director with the Ruth's Chris Steak House and president of Phillips' Seafood Restaurants.

“A typical restaurant menu might have 30 items on it—if not more,” Irvin said. “We're going to focus on high-quality ingredients.”

The menu will showcase pasture-raised meat and produce from purveyors and farms within a 250-mile radius. The circle includes agriculturally rich Lancaster,

which has some of the best cattle in the area, Irvin maintained. In a time of shortages, going local has an advantage. It is the large processing operations that are experiencing staffing shortages and backlogs, not the small ones, Irvin noted.

The partners aren't concerned that two restaurants failed in the same location. It is the former home of Chef's Haven Café and, before that, De La Coeur Café et Boulangerie.)

In 2015, Govatos opened Swigg, a boutique wine and spirits shop, at the same address. Two wine stores had failed in that space. However, Swigg was so successful that Govatos moved to a larger location across the parking lot. “David started a revolution here in Delaware, and we're going to continue his ability to find small farm wineries and creating magical cocktails,” Irvin said.

Govatos became involved in the new project after Irvin entered his shop and expressed a desire to open a restaurant with a butchery and wine bar.

“It really piqued my interest,” the wine expert recalled. “I said I'd like to be a part of that. I wanted to touch the customer in a restaurant setting—I'm always preaching this farm-to-glass philosophy.”

Govatos and Lhulier had long collaborated on Lhulier's multicourse popup dinners, part of his Robert Lhulier Cuisine business. They'd brainstormed about opening a hospitality business.

Irvin also knew Lhulier. “Chef Ro-Bear is amazing,” Irvin said, using the chef's nickname. “He's cooked some amazing things.”

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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

AFTER LOUD RALLY, SILENT PROTESTORS STAND IN VIEW DURING VIRTUAL HEARING



State Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, attends a virtual committee meeting Tuesday with protestors behind him.

BY BETSY PRICE

About 150 people gathered on the Dover Green Tuesday to protest Legislative Hall still being closed, with government meetings taking place virtually.

But the piece de resistance of the event was protestors standing in the background with signs saying things like “Let us in,” “Put on Pants Get to work” and “We work every day,” while Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, participated in a virtual Senate meeting.

Lawson travels to Leg Hall for the virtual meetings, but he usually sits on the Senate floor.

On Tuesday, he set up outside on the lawn, under the tent. After the Patriots of Delaware rally where Abraxas Hudson of Lewes and Patriots co-founder Glenn Watson

spoke, the crowd lined up in the sun behind Lawson.

“I thought the rally was well done,” Lawson said later. The conservative Patriots of Delaware group was founded in 2020.

Hudson said he knows the Delaware House of Representatives plans to go back into Legislative Hall April 29. There will be some face-to-face meetings, but the session will be virtual.

“They’re going back and they’re still going to be Zooming from their offices,” Hudson said. “We still feel like we’re being left out. That’s really the point of what we did.

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

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 **HEALTHY DELAWARE**





BY BETSY PRICE

A social media post by the Delaware General Assembly’s Democratic chief of staff that equated flying a Blue Lives Matter flag with white supremacy has drawn ire from Republicans, dismay from police and discussions with his party leadership.

Jesse Chadderdon, who also is a former executive director of the Delaware Democratic Party, on Tuesday tweeted, “If you don’t think folks deploy the #BlueLivesMatter flag as symbol of white supremacy, ask yourself why one might choose to deploy it on the one-year anniversary of #GeorgeFloyd’s murder. #BlackLivesMatter.” It was later taken down.

Floyd was the Black man who died last May after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Floyd’s well-documented death set off nationwide demonstrations and riots and led to a national conversation about social and racial justice that continues to reverberate across the country.

Delaware’s Young Republicans quickly issued their own social media post: “Jesse Chadderdon, chief of staff

DEM POST EQUATING BLUE LIVES MATTER WITH WHITE SUPREMACY SETS OFF CONTROVERSY

for Democrats in the State Senate, equates support of #BlueLivesMatter to white supremacy. This comes less than one month after the murder of Delaware law enforcement officer Keith Heacock.”

The post asked readers to contact leaders of the Delaware State Senate and ask for Chadderdon to be fired.

On Wednesday, Senate Democratic Caucus leader President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, and Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, D-Wilmington, issued a statement saying that Chadderdon chose his words poorly and created confusion about how Democrats feel.

“Neither the members of our caucus, nor Mr. Chadderdon, believes that supporting law enforcement equates to white supremacy,” the statement said.

It also said, “We have addressed the post with Mr. Chadderdon internally and explained our personal disappointment in his choice of words. We apologize for the pain and confusion his post has caused.”

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 **DELAWARE TECH**

PURZYCKI HINTS CAESAR RODNEY STATUE WILL RETURN TO SQUARE



BY BETSY PRICE

As Wilmington officials celebrated the continued refurbishment of Rodney Square, Mayor Mike Purzycki said future changes may include the return of the statue of Declaration of Independence signer Caesar Rodney.

“One of these days we might find a statue back here,” Purzycki said at the end of his remarks Wednesday. “Don’t ask! We’re going to get everybody together and think about how we’re going to do this. Whatever we do here, it’s going to be because we build a consensus around that decision. Hopefully, we’ll be able to have some real productive talks about that.”

The mayor’s comments came as the the city and members of the Rodney Square Conservancy marked about the addition of a new splash pad fountain, as well as the return of the sunny weather Farmer’s Market, Food Truck Wednesdays and outdoor dining tables and tents along Market Street.

The fountains are part of a \$4 million in renovations and sprucing up of the square named for Rodney, who is said to have traveled back to Philadelphia in 1776, even though he was sick and in pain, so he could vote for and sign the Declaration of Independence.

The statue of Rodney astride a galloping horse and a statue of Christopher Columbus were removed from their pedestal in June 2020 after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis led to an explosion of demonstrations, riots and national discussion over race and social justice. Statues of Confederal and Colonial figures were targeted by protesters who said they represented racism and slavery.

Rodney was a slave owner, and a number of other things in the state are named for him, including a Dover school system.

Purzycki ordered the removal of the statues with no fanfare, and issued a statement saying they were going into storage until there could be a discussion about their public display.

The mayor said he noticed when he was campaigning for mayor five years ago how tired and neglected the city’s center square looked. Then, it was bustling bus riders and one side was always covered in buses and bus passengers because it was a hub.

He said he thought then that the condition of the square didn’t say much about how the city thought about itself, and he committed himself at that time to making sure it was beautifully restored, along with other city parks and community centers.

Purzycki said the city, conservancy and private contributors plan to spend another \$5 million-plus to finish Rodney Square, which has included new plantings around the property.

“It’s so good to see something happen and you can put your arms around it and say, ‘This is what we did,’” Purzycki said on beautiful early summer day.

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BY BETSY PRICE

Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware is spending more than \$550,000 on a television advertising campaign in which the Rev. Al Sharpton criticizes the lack of diversity on Delaware courts.

The organization, said to be founded by employees of a company whose owners were angry over their treatment in Delaware’s Chancery Court, comes after organizers of Delaware’s Bench and Bar Judicial Diversity Project declined to meet with Sharpton, who lives in New York, and Pastor Blaine Haskett of Newark.

The new ad campaign, which features only Sharpton, will run over three weeks, and a press release said more will follow from the business organization, founded in 2016.

PRO-BUSINESS DELAWARE LAUNCHES \$550,000 AD URGING DIVERSITY ON COURTS

In the ad, Sharpton says, “We’ve been fighting for years—in the streets, in our communities—to put Black people on Delaware’s courts. But the Chancery Court is still all white. When I talked to President Biden, he told me he would put court diversity front and center on the national stage—and he has. But in Biden’s home state of Delaware, leaders talk about diversity, while nothing actually changes...”

“Because in Delaware, who you know still matters more than what you bring to the table. So I’m bringing my message to you, the people: no more talking, we need action. We need diverse courts now.”

Efforts were unsuccessful Monday morning to reach court officials for comment.

The court diversity project was launched early this year as part of government and community reaction to the national conversation on systemic racism and injustice that followed the death of George Floyd. One aspect of that was the low numbers of minorities working in court systems that send large numbers of minorities to prisons.

Delaware Supreme Court Justice Tamika R. Montgomery-Reeves, who is Black and who had been a member of the Chancery Court before being elevated this year to the State Supreme Court, is leading the diversity project with Chief Justice Collins J. Seitz, Jr. She cited the business group’s and Sharpton’s and

Hackett’s connection to Transperfect Global as the reason for declining a meeting.

TransPerfect Global, a New York company that provides translations internationally, came before the Delaware Chancery Court when its owners got into an argument.

The Chancery Court ordered Transperfect to be sold, which it was to owner Phil Shawe. Transperfect continues to battle fees charged to it in the proceeding, and the Shawe family and Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware has spend hundreds of thousands of dollars working against Gov. John Carney’s election and being critical of Delaware courts.

Most recently, Transperfect has objected to the Chancery Court upholding the bulk of \$3.9 million in fees that Custodian Robert Pincus’ and Skadden Arps’ charged during the court battle. Those fees must be paid by TransPerfect.

If rulings made by the Chancery Court are appealed, they go to the Delaware Supreme Court.

The Shawe family and Pro-Business group have worked against Carney’s election and been critical of the Chancery Court specifically and Delaware courts in general.

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SHANÉ DARBY'S 'BLUE KLUX KLAN' POST DRAWS FIRE FROM MAYOR, POLICE, COUNCIL



BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

A graphic depicting rows of uniformed police officers wearing pointed white hoods that was posted by Wilmington City Council member Shané Darby came up twice during Thursday night’s council meeting.

Darby originally posted the graphic on Aug. 17, and, according to comments from a videotape of the council meeting, reposted it Thursday, along with more comments about police. Later in the day, she took it down.

The caption above the graphic reads, “The Blue Klux Klan” and “Based on a true story.”

Darby said earlier this week the post was meant to convey the history of policing in America, one she said is embedded in anti-Blackness.

“The history of policing in our country is embedded in anti-Blackness, it’s embedded in the oppression of Black people,” Darby said. “So when police were established, it transferred from it being KKK members to police officers so the mentality of how they operate is similar to the KKK. A lot of members of the KKK are part of the police department.”

Darby said that policing practices are “embedded in the same anti-Blackness and the same oppression of all Black people and Brown people that this country is founded on, and still embraces today.”

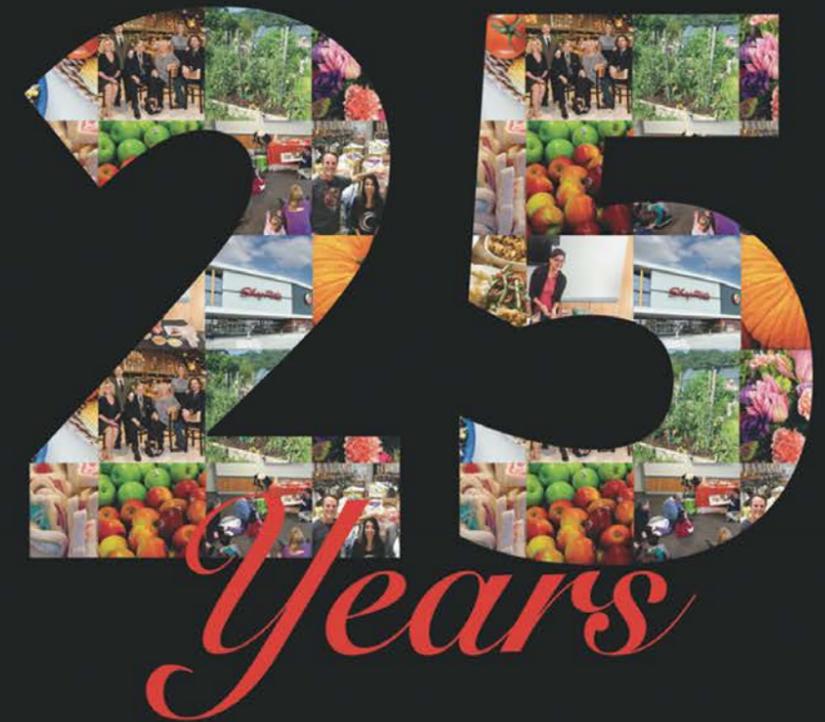
Darby said she didn’t know of any specific members of the Wilmington Police Department who were members of the KKK but said the system as a whole was anti-Black.

“Police departments are not there to prevent crime but to solve crime and they’re trying to do crime-prevention but they’re destroying communities, because they’re not trying to prevent crime but to solve crime, and to react to crime,” Darby said.

Asked whether the Wilmington Police Department, which Darby oversees as a city councilwoman, is a racist organization, Darby said, “Yeah, it’s a system that is racist, that is embedded in racist ideology, so it can’t escape it. The very founding of policing is anti-Black.”

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STATE TO CHANGE WAY NONPROFITS SEEK COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT CASH



BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

The Delaware Office of the Controller General is developing a standardized application for non-profits to request state grants from the 2023 Bond Bill's Community Redevelopment Fund.

It will change the customary way those requests have been made.

Now, those seeking one-time money for construction or renovation send requests to state senators and representatives. Lawmakers then send endorsements of requests to the Bond Bill Committee and the Controller General's office.

A standardized process handled through the Controller General's office could be a win for those who favor more transparency in government.

The move could make the applications findable through a Freedom of Information Act request. They aren't now because they often come through legislator

emails, which are exempt from FOIA.

The plan for an application was included in the 2022 Bond Bill, now in effect. In epilogue section 32, it said any awards for fiscal year 2023 will include an application process approved by the co-chairs of the Bond Bill Committee.

Over the next few months, the Controller General's staff will be working with the Bond Bill committee co-chairs Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Bear, and vice-chair Rep. Debra Heffernan, D-Bellefonte, to develop the process.

Tens of millions of dollars are involved.

The FY 2022 redevelopment fund broke a record with more than \$70 million in non-profit allocations, in part propped up by federal COVID relief and a budget surplus of more than \$1 billion.

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PROPOSED VOTING MAPS DRAW IRE OF VOTERS, ADVOCACY GROUPS, GOP



BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

House Democratic leaders have held the second and final public hearing on [proposed redistricting maps](#).

Now, the clock is ticking toward the General Assembly's self-imposed Nov. 8 deadline to finalize the maps that will define Delaware's House and Senate districts for the next decade.

Despite the majority caucuses' efforts to assure Delawareans that the delayed process would be fair, open and transparent, some say it has been anything but.

Claire Snyder-Hall, director of open-government group [Common Cause of Delaware](#), thanked the Democratic leadership for holding one public hearing so that community members could testify for two minutes each but said the people of Delaware deserve more opportunities to have meaningful input into the process.

Snyder-Hall's testimony effectively summarized the concerns of the majority of the night's 12 speakers.

"Redistricting is a vitally important process because it will affect the ability of communities to have their voices heard in Dover for the next 10 years and that will, in turn, affect the decisions that are made about a wide range of policy issues that have material effects on people's lives," Snyder-Hall said during the hearing's public comment period. "The public has been given only three business days to evaluate the proposed House maps and less than a week total."

She said even as a paid staff member with an advocacy group, she's scrambled to get a clear understanding of the impacts the new district maps will have on communities.

"I can only imagine how challenging it would be for

everyday voters to get any sense of what the new lines mean," Snyder-Hall said.

House Republican Caucus spokesman Joe Fulgham said that Republicans are largely on board with the proposed maps, but that there was little opportunity for them to provide input.

"It was not an inclusive process," Fulgham said. "To the Speaker's credit, he did reach out to our members initially, early on, but not in the actual drafting of the maps."

He said Republican leaders were only able to review the maps about 24 hours prior to their public release.

Common Cause of Delaware's concerns

Snyder-Hall said there are a number of problems with the proposed maps, including city-splitting and edge incumbents.

City-splitting refers to municipalities that are divided amongst districts. She noted that Wilmington is split six times, Newark three times and Dover four times in the House maps. "Even the tiny town of Lewes is split in two," Snyder-Hall said.

Draft Senate maps indicate that, if adopted, Wilmington will be split once, Newark three times and Dover twice.

Edge incumbents refer to currently seated representatives who reside right on the very edge of their districts.

Snyder-Hall believes that proposed districts may have been drawn to protect incumbents, which would violate a clause of the Delaware Constitution that prohibits drawing maps to unduly favor a person.

"Redistricting processes should result in districts that ensure every Delawarian has equal opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice," she said. "Drawing districts for the purpose of including an incumbent's home address is in direct contravention of this principle."

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MAIL-IN BALLOTS, PAID LEAVE, POLICE REFORM TOP 2022 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

In five weeks, Delaware’s 151st General Assembly will kick off its 2022 legislative session with many Democratic legislators looking to advance progressive causes that have previously struggled to gain traction.

Democrats control both chambers of the General Assembly by wide margins. There are 26 Democrats in the House of Representatives, compared to just 15 Republicans. In the Senate, Democrats hold 14 seats while Republicans hold seven seats.

Some of the issues likely to come up during the next session, which begins Jan. 6, include cementing the permanent use of mail-in voting, recreational cannabis legalization, paid family and medical leave, police

review boards and changes to the law enforcement officers’ bill of rights.

Lawmakers are also expected to learn more about their role in removing or suspending indicted Auditor of Accounts Kathy McGuiness. One proposal that has earned support in the wake of the McGuiness arrest is a push to create a statewide inspector general’s office.

After a few years of contentious gun control bills, only one has been filed as of now and it’s sponsored by a Republican.

Technically, the General Assembly is only in recess at the moment. Each session lasts two years, with the current one spanning from 2020 to 2022.

Bills filed in 2021 may still be brought to a vote when the legislature reconvenes, but bills that are filed and do not receive a vote in 2022 will have to be refiled in the next General Assembly.

Meanwhile, legislative leaders announced Wednesday that committee hearings will be held in a hybrid format, with legislators attending in-person and members of the public having the opportunity to watch and provide comments online.

But in a press release announcing the move, House and Senate leaders stopped short of inviting members of the public to attend committee hearings in-person.

That, they said, “will depend on the public health guidance as of early January.”

Mail-In Voting

In June, Republicans in the General Assembly effectively stopped the passage of a bill that would have made **no-excuse absentee voting** in Delaware permanent. House Bill 75, sponsored by Rep. David Bentz, D-Christiana, would have allowed Delaware voters to request mail-in ballots during all future elections without providing an explanation.

But the bill, which seeks to amend the Delaware Constitution, failed to receive the required two-thirds majority needed in the House of Representatives.

Constitutional amendments are also required to be passed separately during two consecutive legislative sessions. Twelve Republicans voted in favor of the bill in 2019 during the 150th General Assembly. But in 2021, not one Republican voted in favor of the proposal.

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Photo by Tima Miroshnichenko for Pexels



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BUDGET CUTS LEAD UD'S THEATER HEAD TO RETIRE AFTER 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

BY BETSY PRICE

The longtime head of the University of Delaware's theatre department is retiring after his theater's budget was cut more than 50%.

Sanford "Sandy" Robbins, who has been working at UD for 32 years, will lead the theater program through one more school year, leaving Aug. 31, 2022.

A driving force behind his announcement was the administration's decision during the pandemic to cut his budget to \$2 million from closer to \$5 million, he said. That forced the lay off the majority of his 30-person theater staff, leaving only a handful of workers.

"You know I was thinking about retirement anyhow, but that kind of put the icing on the cake, so to speak," Robbins said.

Those laid off included administrators, the entire costume

shop, prop makers, lighting designers, set builders, front of office staff and more. Several staff members took early retirement rather than be laid off.

He had tried to help save jobs at the start of the pandemic by having costume, set and prop designers make face masks and face shields distributed to various groups. Ultimately, though, the University decided it couldn't keep people on the payroll who were not doing the job for which they were hired.

"Now there's no money to bring them back," Robbins said.

The cuts mean the theater, which usually has a season of six or seven shows, will only have two to three shows a year, until the budget can be restored.

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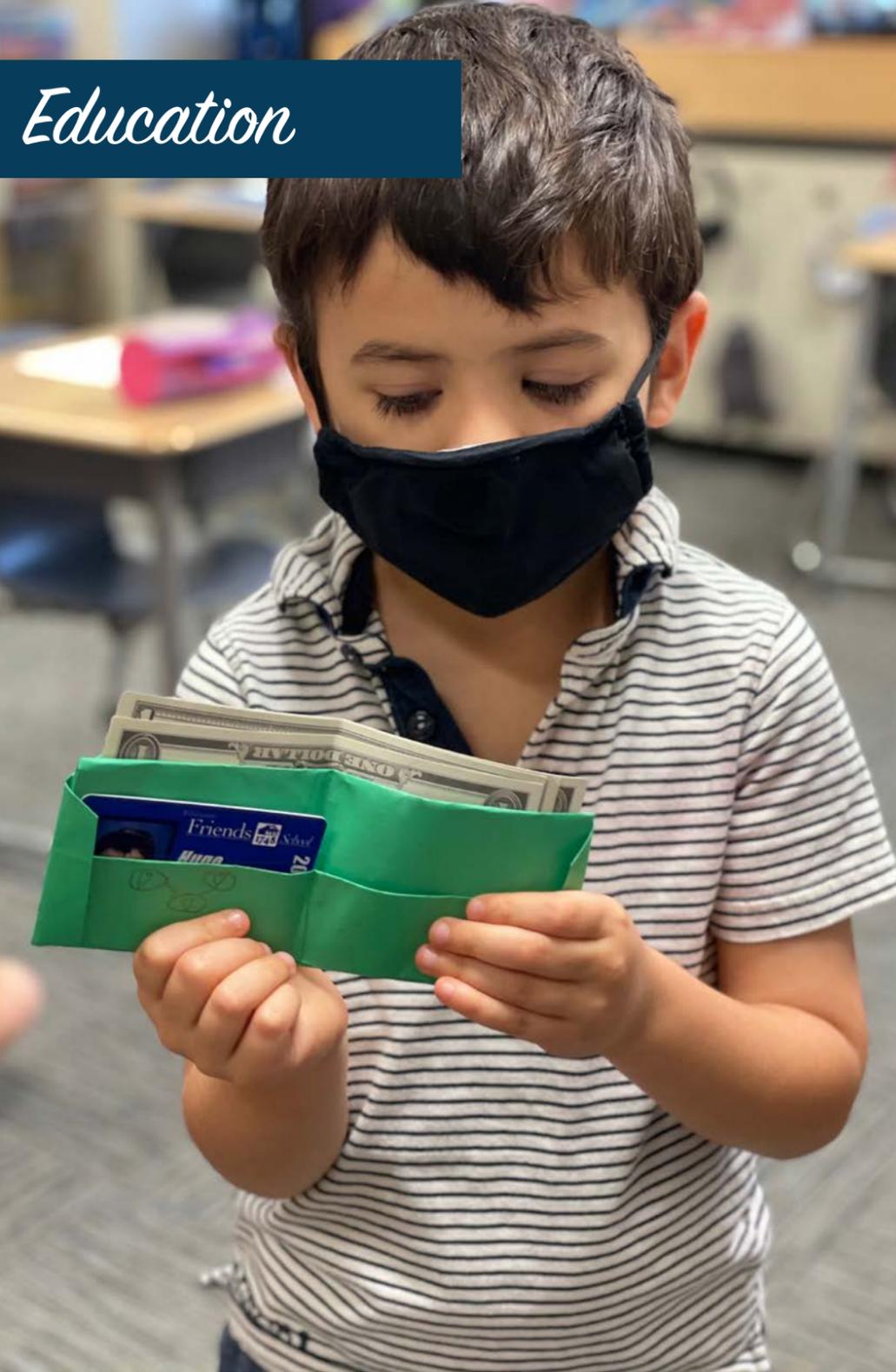
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FRIENDS' FIRST GRADERS CREATE CLASSROOM JOBS THEY APPLY FOR, GET PAID FOR

BY BETSY PRICE

Sia Willie's first grade class at Wilmington Friends has nine students.

And 15 paid classroom jobs.

Those jobs were not assigned or created by Willie, but brainstormed last week by class members who created the jobs they thought the group needed. The students also created job descriptions and applications, and then evaluated the applications and decided who would be offered which job.

It's part of the class's final social studies unit of the year. The students talk about various aspects of a community, including workers and jobs before they start choosing them for the classroom.

"Every year we have jobs like line leader and door holder," Willie said. "They felt that there were some important jobs that we didn't have listed. So they listed jobs that were important to them."

Those jobs include the messenger, who takes notes from the teacher to another teacher; the plant waterer; the people waterer, for classmates who forget their water bottle and helping with snacks; the mail carrier/pizza

helper who takes envelopes from Willie to others and delivers slices during Friday's pizza day; the class photographer; the recess helper, who takes the ball bag out; the nurse's helper, who brings back bandages or escorts someone to the nurse; the book helper who delivers and puts up books; the lunch grace sayer; and the teacher's assistant.

The kids caught on to some aspects of the business world fairly quickly.

"We're learning about jobs and money and we're getting paid," Hugo Charriez said. "And also that's in the real world, so we're getting ready for the real world."

"I learned that having a job is a big responsibility, and people are depending on you to do your job," said Isadora Montejo.

Classroom job creation and pay for work has been a part of the Wilmington Friends first-grade curriculum for about three years, Willie said.

The applications include two questions: Why do you want the job and why do you think you'd be good at the job. Applicants for jobs are asked to sit in the hall "waiting room," complete with chair and magazines, while the class discusses the job and the applicant without Willie weighing in.

Willie said the children handle the conversations well, partly because they're already had lessons about good conversations.

That came up in January, when the class was talking about peacemakers. Willie said she would read a story and stop when there was a conflict in it. She'd asked the class how that problem could be solved and then tell the class she was not going to call on anyone. and they would have to take turns.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

DSU'S TONY ALLEN TAPPED TO HEAD WHITE HOUSE HBCU GROUP

BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

Among the issues that DSU President Tony Allen wants to help the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities tackle are historic inequities in physical infrastructure funding,

more federal research support, and more as well as easier access to financial support for students.

All of them are topics he will champion after being appointed by President Joe Biden as chair of the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The president's HBCU Initiative, established by the Carter Administration, is designed to help universities that have catered to the nation's minorities for more than a century provide a high-quality education for its students.

Biden and Allen have known each other for decades in Delaware, and Biden tapped Allen to run his inauguration in January.

In an interview Sept 10, Allen said the HBCU job has been under discussion for a while and will mean occasional trips to Washington, D.C. The chairmanship is not a paid position, but the organization does have a paid staff.

"When he asked me to take on the opportunity, I was honored to do it," he said. "That's where I thought I could provide the best counsel."

Allen says he feels lucky to be serving a president who's already increased the amount of money that the federal government has given to Black colleges and universities three times more than any of his predecessors through American Rescue Plan carve-outs, the HBCU Capital Debt Relief Program and more. Vice President Kamala Harris and other Biden advisors also are HBCU grads, he noted.

DSU's president plans to succeed in the chairmanship by building an active board of advisors and by involving other sitting HBCU presidents, as well as the organizations that support them. Those include the United Negro College Fund, Thurgood Marshall College Fund and National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.

In a letter Allen sent Friday to other presidents, he said they needed to "remain united in our intent, clear on our priorities, resolute in our call for equity, and unrelenting in the pursuit of excellence for our students and our communities."

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BY BETSY PRICE

When Gabby Guerke was ready to leave Odyssey Charter School for ninth grade in 2019, she wasn't sure what she wanted in a high school.

"My parents and I just felt like we needed to look everywhere," she said. "So that's what we did."

Like hundreds of other eighth graders each fall, Guerke entered Admission Season.

Just weeks after every fall semester opens in Delaware, young men and women in the eighth grade who are considering a private school are already focusing on the next year. They register for open houses, schedule shadow days to follow a current student, and circle dates on their calendars for admission tests that will determine scholarships and more.

Padua and Salesianum School started this year's round of open houses Sunday, Sept. 26. The Catholic Diocese of Wilmington schools agree to hold open houses on different weekends so more people can visit. But because

FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, IT'S ADMISSION SEASON

Padua is an all-girls high school and Salesianum is an all-boys one, they can share a day.

Not every school has an open house, but all of them encourage prospective students to spend time in the school with kids their age, a practice called shadowing. That gives visitors a look at the workload, how things really run and the relationships between teacher and class.

Padua expects to have 200 students at its open house Sunday, and a total of 600 people visiting in shifts of 18 families every 20 minutes, said Admissions Director Shana Rossi. Students and teachers will lead the groups on a tour.

Its shadow days started Monday, with 10 students visiting. The school will average eight visitors a day into December, Rossi said. To facilitate a good impression, the school tries to find out what some of the prospective student's interests are and pair her with someone with similar interests.

"It's not a manufactured day at all," said Lisa Clody, director of enrollment for Ursuline. "They get to come in and go to class. So if the science classes is doing an experiment, they get to experience that. And if it's a straight lecture, they do that."

A shadow day allows the visitor to see "if this is someplace that they can see themselves spending the next four years," Clody said.

Two years ago, Guerke quickly narrowed her choices to four of Delaware's private schools: Ursuline Academy, Padua Academy, Wilmington Friends and Archmere Academy, as well as Wilmington Charter, a public school.

Guerke said her decision was made harder by the fact that she wasn't sure what field she hopes to go into as an adult. Now a sophomore, she's still not sure.

"I love every subject there is and I was just really interested in everything," she said. "So I didn't really know what I was looking for."

Ursuline Academy welcomes families to an open house for prospective families.

Melissa Brown, director of admissions and financial aid at Wilmington Friends, says it's no secret that Delaware's private schools all have solid, sound academics programs.

"We all have really rich reputations in terms of being able to prepare students for their next step," she said. "What we talk about in our process is the fit and feel for each child and their family that comes through."

"What does it feel like for your students to walk through those doors every day? Will they find their people here? Will they be able to participate in school life at its fullest in and out of the academic classroom? And that's where it's a really valuable piece of the experience to spend some time on campus."

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BY BRIONNA N. STONEBRAKER

Independence School's breathtaking new outdoor learning area includes an amphitheater, interactive musical instruments, a tricycle track, a Wetlands, and a "messy activities" area.

The elegantly designed 57,000 square feet, divided into 14 areas, has been planned since the spring of 2018, with fundraising starting in 2019.

It follows a decade-plus trend of getting kids outdoors and away from tech—and arrives in time to deal with the spread-em-out philosophy of COVID-19.

Many private schools have outdoor classrooms of varying sizes, or use their grounds as outdoor classrooms. Increasingly, public schools are putting in walks through wooded areas and planting gardens so kids can grow fruits and vegetables and learn about how food is produced.

The Independence School's classroom landscape design reflects the various geographic regions of Delaware, along with the Piedmont and the Atlantic Coastal plain.

INDEPENDENCE SCHOOL'S WOWZER OF OUTDOOR CLASSROOM LINKS KIDS, NATURE

Independence teachers and students already love the new classroom. "There are so many spaces on this outdoor classroom we can have the students utilize, engage them, have them work as a team," said Jen Haynes, director of Extended Day care and a kindergarten aide. "We are hoping to be able to have the children watch something from start to finish."

She's already got plans. "I see the theater out there and I think how wonderful would it be to have the students create a play," she said. "Somebody steps up as leader and assigns roles. They might have to compromise right? Then they get to practice and maybe bring other groups to perform."

"So from start to finish they are creating something. They are getting to see it through to completion."

Kindergartener Lily Burns said Monday she is "super excited" to keep going outside to learn about nature.

Her class was one of the first to enjoy the new outdoor space, where they discovered a toad in the Wetlands area.

The outdoor classroom was officially opened Friday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Head of School Vicky Yatzus said the final costs are being determined and estimated it's in the "hundreds of thousands of dollars" range.

The project used money from its annual auction, along with support from Marmot Foundation, Crystal Trust

and McDonald Foundation., as well as donations from three alumni, Ameilia Julian Wyant '90, Kevin Heitzenroder '85 and Ashley Quill Funk '95 and her husband Vance.

The outdoor classroom was created through collaboration and faculty training with [Nature Explore](#) and was designed by [Jonathan Ceci Landscape Architects](#) of Baltimore. With a 90-acre campus, the school didn't have to worry about finding space for the project.

While the outdoor classroom offers teachers many options, the school's curriculum will not be changed to specifically utilize it, she said, but she expects teachers to adapt lessons to use the classroom's elements.

The school provided training for teachers about ways to include the natural elements of the earth in lessons to engage students. Some of that training focused on keeping kids safe outside. Gym classes, for example, could use the natural climbing elements such as logs and boulders, or riding vehicle paths.

The area also includes outdoor seating and tables, expanding the use for teachers and students, especially for messy art or science activities.

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Photo Yan Krukov for Pexels



Health

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

HUNDREDS GATHER TO PROTEST CHRISTIANACARE'S VACCINE MANDATE



BY BETSY PRICE

More than 350 people gathered at the Churchman's Road entrance to ChristianaCare's campus Aug. 6 to protest the health system's requirement that all employees must be vaccinated.

Members of the crowd stretched down the road on both sides of the entrance and stood in the median.

Many carried anti-vax signs such as "My body my choice," "I am informed. I do not consent" and "Say no to vaccine mandates." Dozens wore T-shirts that said "Essential to Expendable."

Some of those shirts were in support of Tori Malin, a ChristianaCare patient tech who told reporters she was fired Friday after word spread that she was organizing a protest rally about the vaccinations. She had already put

in a two-week notice, she said.

"That way, I kind of would have the power to take power back from Christiana and leave on my own terms instead of being terminated," she said. "For me this was the hill I was prepared to die on. I knew that this rally could cost me my job."

She said she was sent home Friday and told she would spend the rest of her two-week notice at home on paid time off. She said when she asked why, a manager told her they didn't know.

Malin does not believe an employer has the right to demand workers be vaccinated.

"It's not approved by the FDA, there's not enough clinical trials or testing data on the side effects and the

risks and adverse reactions," she said. "I made a choice for myself and for my family not to be."

She declined to say which patient unit she worked in.

A lone state trooper car parked a block away before the rally. As marchers moved into place shortly after 9 a.m. behind a man carrying an American flag, another trooper car joined it. On the campus, one ChristianaCare security car with lights flashing was parked in the median, with another nearby in an employee parking lot.

On the far end of campus, at the entrance near Chik-fil-A, the intersection was silent and largely deserted, except for two private security cars with lights flashing.

On Churchman's Road, the crowd was noisy, but well-behaved with members generally ebullient to be there and pleased with their co-protestors. Many seemed to know each other, and more than a few wore hospital scrubs.

The group occasionally broke into chants such as "no manDATES, no manDATES" and enthusiastically cheered and waved their signs when passing traffic beeped, which the crowd interpreted as support.

Those cars included a red ambulance driving out of ChristianaCare's campus.

The crowd parked at the shopping center across from Christiana Care and marched to the health system campus. The group would stay until noon, Malin said.

The protest was well publicized by conservative groups, including Patriots for Delaware.

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MISTAKES LOGGING VACCINE SHOTS MAY MEAN DELAWARE UNDERREPORTED NUMBERS

BY BETSY PRICE

One in three people who try to use the state's DeIVAX system to find proof of COVID-19 vaccination either can't find any records or find records are incomplete.

There are enough people who discover missing shots in the system the First State uses to track immunizations that Delaware may not be reporting the extent of those fully vaccinated, said James Talbott, director of the Delaware Health Immunization Program.

"I think you could say that we're underreporting a bit, but I don't think it's that much, where it's going to make a big difference," Talbott said.

DeIVAX, or the Delaware Immunization Information System and Registry, tracks all state immunizations, not just COVID-19. But it's repeatedly cited in state press releases describing the numbers of those vaccinated.

How many people are actually vaccinated is one of the issues now perplexing Tom Lagana, an electrical engineer living in North Wilmington, since he discovered shots were missing from both his and his wife's cards.

They had wanted to get in line to receive a third booster shot when Lagana realized he couldn't find his card. His wife suggested he try the DeIVAX system, which the state has been publicizing as a way to get a copy of a lost vaccine card.

At first, Lagana couldn't find his card in the system, so—as requested online—he sent an email to DeIVAX explaining the problem and telling them when he and

his wife were vaccinated. Somebody got back to him in a couple of hours and asked him to send a copy of the original vaccine card, which listed the shots for both him and his wife on the same page before he got his own card. Within two hours, he got an email back saying it had been fixed. He checked, and it had.

Lagana started calling family and friends to warn them to check. All six of the people he called either couldn't find their cards or the cards were incorrect.

Then Lagana posted on Next Door, a neighborhood social media platform, about what happened. About half of those who responded said their information was incorrect, too.

As the Next Door conversation veered into various political agendas, nurses got involved in the conversation and said people didn't need the information in the system and that most facilities giving shots only go by the vaccine card.

"Well, what if you've lost your card," Lagana asked.

Talbott said there are many reasons that information may not be found or easily found in the DeIVAX system. Sometimes, the information just wasn't sent to the system. Sometimes people got a first or second shot out of state, and systems there don't talk to DeIVAX.

People being vaccinated may use their nicknames instead of the name on a driver's license, making it hard to match, he said. A name could be misspelled by the

person recording the information. (In the beginning of mass vaccinations, that was often a volunteer).

The DeIVAX system requires an email or telephone number that can be used to send a code so someone can type it into a verification form before being allowed to access their own records. Many people don't have an email or a phone listed, which means they can't get to their records because they can't get the access code.

When numbers are listed, it sometimes is a home phone, which can't be used to send the code via text, he said. The best practice, Talbott said, is to use a cell phone number because that allows the state to text information.

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CHANCERY COURT WON'T FORCE CHRISTIANACARE TO GIVE IVERMECTIN

BY BETSY PRICE

A Delaware Chancery Court judge on Sept. 23 said she was going to deny a request to force ChristianaCare Health System to

immediately treat a COVID-19 patient with Ivermectin.

Mary Ellen DeMarco had asked the court for a preliminary injunction that would make ChristianaCare provide the drug, most commonly used in humans to treat parasitic infections, for her husband David as his situation worsened.

The hospital had refused, despite the couple obtaining a prescription for the drug from a downstate doctor.

The DeMarcos checked David out of ChristianaCare Sept. 18 under hospice care and gave him a dose of Ivermectin at home. However, his oxygen mask broke, his situation worsened and he was sent back to Wilmington Hospital and intubated so a ventilator could be used to support his breathing and oxygen levels.

At the end of a two-hour hearing on Sept. 23, Vice Chancellor Morgan T. Zurn said that the plaintiffs had failed to prove their case. While she said she would issue a formal opinion Sept. 24, she wanted the DeMarcos' lawyers to be able to prepare their appeal because time is of the essence.

Zurn said ChristianaCare did not have an enforceable duty to treat DeMarco with Ivermectin, and that DeMarco didn't have an enforceable right to be treated with it. She also said DeMarco has failed to prove that the health system refusing to give Mr. DeMarco Ivermectin would deprive him of an effective treatment or that he will be worse off without it.

A number of lawsuits have been filed around the country asking courts to force hospitals to treat patients with Ivermectin, a drug that's also used to deworm horses. Some cases have been successful and some have not. Many opposed to COVID-19 vaccines consider it a treatment that can help.

David DeMarco became sick enough to go to an urgent care in early September, where he was diagnosed with pneumonia that likely was COVID pneumonia, his wife testified Sept. 23. The urgent care gave him Levaquin, an antibiotic, and suggested he go to a hospital. He declined, but by Sept. 8 he felt so bad that he asked his wife to take him to the hospital.

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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

URSULINE'S SUE HEISS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT AFTER 40-YEAR CAREER

BY GLENN FRAZER

The 2021 Delaware High School volleyball season came to a close last week with St. Mark's crowned for the second consecutive year.

The tournament also closed the chapter on the coaching career of Susan Heiss at Ursuline Academy in Wilmington. Heiss guided Ursuline to 11 championships and 23 semifinal appearances, both state records. She announced her retirement from her 40-year run as coach and athletic director, a post she has held for approximately 30 years.

Heiss was named 2021 "Coach-of-the-Year" after leading the 14th seeded Raiders to an opening round win over Appoquinimink, then a straight set victory against third seed Red Lion, before falling in the quarterfinals to Wilmington Friends.

Sue Heiss graduated from Woodlawn High near Baltimore and continued her education at the University of Delaware while also playing volleyball for the Blue Hens and legendary coach Barbara Viera, a mentor that she would learn valuable knowledge about coaching the sport.

"I went to Delaware and I didn't play a lot, but I sat next to Barb Viera during the games. So, I learned how to coach from her, and what to watch for."

Coach Heiss coached at Delaware Technical and Community College and St. Elizabeth High School before taking the job at Ursuline in 1981. She was asked to coach track and field along with volleyball. She didn't know much about track and field, but that experience did lead to her meeting future husband Ralph Heiss.

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BLUE COATS DITCH CAESAR RODNEY LOGO IN FAVOR OF NONDESCRIPT HORSE

BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

The Delaware Blue Coats have removed founding father Caesar Rodney from their logo in favor of a distinctly apolitical horse wearing a varsity jacket.

The Blue Coats are an affiliate team of the Philadelphia 76ers in the National Basketball Association's G-League. They hold their games at Wilmington's Chase Fieldhouse.

The move comes one year after a statue of the Delaware legend was unceremoniously removed from Rodney Square, his namesake park in downtown Wilmington.

Rodney, then a delegate in the Continental Congress, is said to have ridden 80 miles on horseback while sick to Philadelphia in July 1776 to cast the tie-breaking vote for American independence. He would go on to serve as the president of Delaware.

Caesar Rodney had been at the center of the Blue Coats logo since 2018 when the then-Delaware 87ers rebranded under the new name and imagery. After nationwide unrest in the wake of the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis, the team agreed to consider alternative options.

Some argue that memorializing Rodney effectively glorifies a racist slaveholder. While he shouldn't be forgotten to history, some Delawareans believe he should be remembered for his sins rather than his accolades.

Others, meanwhile, say he should be considered in his

totality—but not on the jerseys of a predominantly Black basketball team.

The updated logo strikes a less controversial note—one that is unlikely to spark race-related discontent amongst players and fans.

A tan horse quite literally wears a blue coat in the revamped graphic, albeit a varsity jacket. His sleeve is emblazoned with the 76ers logo, an ode to their NBA affiliate and a Delaware patch rests on the horse's chest.

The horse is reflective of the team's mascot, debuted in 2019, named "Coaty."

While the horse appears to be captured mid-snarl in the logo with fiercely clenched eyes and fists, it's hard to be intimidated or upset by the image. The cartoon horse, some might say, looks pretty cute for a serious, professional basketball team.

Alex Yoh, the Blue Coats' senior director of marketing and communications, could not be reached for comment.

The team subtly introduced the new logo into its promotional materials and website without holding a press conference or releasing any statement. The team had been playing since 2020 with a simplified logo, simply comprised of the words "Blue Coats" without any associated graphic.

The team's Twitter page shows that the updated logo was emblazoned on the Chase Fieldhouse court in mid-September, right around the time that the team's

2021-22 schedule was released.

The NBA G-League schedule will feature a new format this season, including a regional Showcase Cup, regular season, and postseason.

The Blue Coats open the Showcase Cup on the team's home court on Saturday, Nov. 6 at 7 p.m. against the Long Island Nets.

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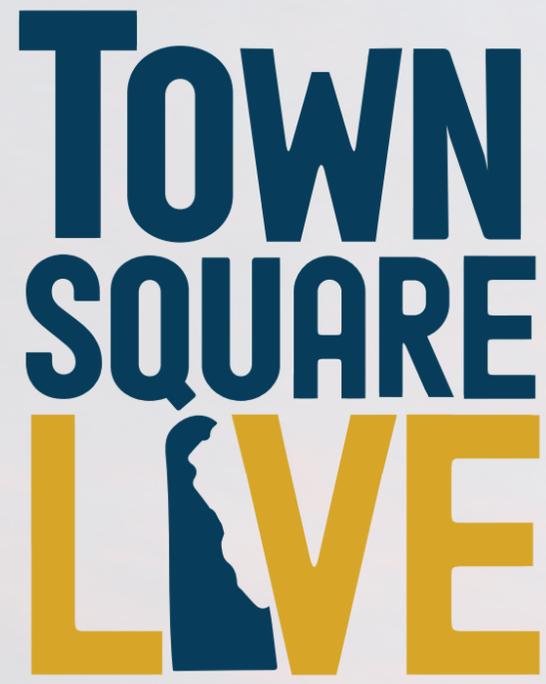


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