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BETTY WHITE CHALLENGE A SUCCESS



DE BANKS REDUCING FEES



SANFORD UPSETS NO. 1 HOWARD

Photo from Newark History Museum (Facebook)

NEWARK HISTORY MUSEUM

Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DELAWARE ANIMAL GROUPS SEE SURGE OF BETTY WHITE CHALLENGE DONATIONS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

On what would have been Betty White's 100th birthday, animal lovers from around the country donated tens of thousands of dollars to three of Delaware's largest animal rescue and shelter groups.

After White died on Dec. 31, fans began encouraging people to donate to rescue and shelter agencies in honor of the actress's long-time support for animal welfare causes. White was an avowed animal lover. She was an advocate and major donor to Guide Dogs for the Blind, a board member for the Los Angeles Zoo, and a recipient of American Humane's highest honor, the National Humanitarian Medal and the Legacy Award.

The #BettyWhiteChallenge quickly went viral. Donations began to pour into animal rescue and shelter groups around the country—and those in Delaware were no exception.

Faithful Friends Animal Society in Wilmington originally set a goal of \$5,000, but by 10 a.m. on the day the fundraising effort began, the group saw so much support that they quickly realized they'd have to raise their goal to \$10,000. By the end of the challenge, Faithful Friends raised more than \$31,000—and because the group had an ongoing fundraising match challenge, total donations will actually amount to more than \$62,000.

"We had over 1,000 donors contribute to our Betty White challenge, including some anonymous donors who chose to donate using the pseudonym Betty White," said Kayla Mullen, marketing manager at Faithful Friends. "We had donors from 19 different states, as far west as California and as far north as Massachusetts." The group received donations ranging from \$5 to \$1,000, with the average donation being about \$25.

Faithful Friends now plans to reduce adoption fees at its shelters to just \$50 for all cats who have been with them for longer than six months and all dogs that weigh more than 40 pounds. That drive will last until Saturday, Jan. 22.

According to Linda Torelli, chief marketing officer at Brandywine Valley SPCA, that group raised \$78,141 online and is still receiving checks in the mail. "Betty White was such a pioneer," Torelli said. "She was talking about animal rescue long before anyone else was and at the time, there was obviously no social media. Now here we are—she's still advocating even when she's not around with us. Social media is carrying her legacy forward. It's incredible."

She said the donations will go toward general operations and medical care for animals. "We see a lot of animals come in with significant medical or behavioral needs because when you're open intake, you're taking all the lost and stray dogs," Torelli said. "That's where we're going to be applying the money."

Brandywine Valley SPCA, on average, admits 51 dogs and cats per day across all of their facilities.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



BY BETSY PRICE

When artist Percy Ricks approached the Delaware Art Museum about doing a 1971 show featuring works of African American artists, the museum wasn't interested. Essentially, it told the teacher and activist, the museum was for whites and if he wanted to do a show of Black art, he should find another place. He did. And the show at the Wilmington Armory was a huge hit.

Much has changed since then, and museums are now actively trying to acquire works of minority and female artists to fill in walls and histories previously dominated by white male artists.

The museum's current show, "Afro-American Images 1971: The Vision of Percy Ricks," takes a look at some of the art in the 1971 exhibit, and the show's role in raising the awareness of quality of Black art.

TEN THINGS NOT TO MISS IN DELAWARE ART MUSEUM EXHIBIT

It's drawn a fair amount of acclaim, including being featured in a Forbes magazine article, and the museum doesn't shy away from acknowledging its own role in denying women and artist of color their place in art.

"The century-old Delaware Art Museum, like many American cultural organizations, has a history of exclusion and institutional racism," starts the foreword to the catalog for "The Vision of Percy Ricks."

Ricks, who died in 2008, was the first Black art teacher in Wilmington public schools. He came with a pedigree: a bachelor's degree in education at Howard University and then graduate art degrees at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia and Columbia University's Teachers College in New York City. He was also involved with the cutting edge of Black art, watching groups organize in big cities and corresponding with those doing it.

While paying homage to Ricks' determination to mount the show and draw the spotlight to Black art, the exhibit also looks at local and regional art. It's divided, as the original show was, into sections that look at the "elders," some of whom taught Ricks; Philadelphia artists; Washington, D.C., artists; and New York City artists.

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PLANNING COUNCIL: IF I-95 IS CAPPED, WHAT SHOULD GO THERE?



BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A regional planning agency is gathering public input on what to do if land is created over part of Interstate 95 in Wilmington during the Restore the Corridor project. The Wilmington Area Planning Council is running an [online survey](#) that ends Jan. 21. It follows two hearings on capping acreage between the Delaware Avenue and Sixth Street bridges.

Capping involves constructing a roof over the subterranean roadway and using the newly created space for nice things. No [price tag](#) has yet been put on capping or the chosen amenities, which might not happen.

Construction of I-95 in the 1960s “effectively created a wall” between the West Side and downtown, razing several hundred homes, “primarily impacting communities of color,” [according](#) to the council.

“To address this historic inequity created by I-95, Wilmington is now joining an ever-growing number of cities that are exploring ways to reconnect neighborhoods and provide new public spaces by creating caps over urban highways. These new lands are being used to create green spaces, plazas and cultural amenities that can reconnect neighborhoods and encourage residents to walk and bike more in the adjacent communities.”

The survey asks participants to describe themselves and their relationship to the area, and it has three open-ended questions:

- Do you have any other ideas for amenities or improvements in this area?
- What do you envision when you think of the future of this area?
- What is your favorite place in Wilmington, or elsewhere, that would be a good example of what this area could become?

Survey participants are also asked to rank lots of specific ideas, in several categories:

- Health and fitness: space for fitness class, exercise stations, running loops, bike skills, contemplative space, spaces to sunbathe, skateboard, dog play, sports court, multi-use lawn.
- Community programs: Night program space, picnic space, cafe, historic information, arts and sculpture, murals, playground, interactive water feature, performance venue, small group gathering, market space, concessions, multifunction space.
- Community needs: retail space, rental pavilion, public restroom, winter activities, covered event

venue, night event venue, interactive light feature, event lights.

- Nature and environmental items: trees, pollinator gardens, community gardens, stormwater management, shade, nature-based activities and education, bird habitat.
- Mobility amenities, on need: way-finding signs, pedestrian-only zones, transit stop, bike share, bike parking, protected bike lane, traffic calming, car share, on-street parking, ride-share pickup point, shared-use path.
- Mobility amenities, on importance: wider sidewalks, handicap accessibility improvements, improved sidewalks, scooter share.



DIVISION OF THE ARTS ANNOUNCES 2022 FELLOWSHIP WINNERS



BY BETSY PRICE

A former Delaware poet laureate is among the winners of this year's Delaware Division of the Arts fellowship winners. JoAnn Balingit, who was poet laureate from 2008-2015, won a \$6,000 established professional award that she will use to help with research on a nonfiction memoir that will consist of essays about her family.

"It's nice to be recognized for my work in a second genre, but also it's really, really nice to just be in this cohort with some other writers that I've worked with," Balingit said. You can find links to some of them, which have been published in online journals, on her [website](#).

Balingit was one of 25 Delaware artists from all over the state recognized by the division for the high quality of their artwork. Winners were chose from 132 Delaware choreographers; composers; musicians; writers; and folk, media, and visual artists whose work was reviewed by out-of-state arts professionals.

Awards are given in three categories, including \$10,000 for the Masters Award, \$6,000 for Established Professional Awards and \$3,000 for Emerging Professional Awards.

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

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

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

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Beebe Healthcare: 302-291-4380

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

 **HEALTHY DELAWARE**




Photo by Christina Monillo from Pexels

Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





CANNABIS EDIBLES TO DEBUT IN DELAWARE IN WEEKS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A Delaware-based medical marijuana company that has opened a state-of-the-art cannabis edible kitchen in Wilmington expects to bring a new line of **THC**-infused consumables to market in the coming weeks.

First State Compassion was Delaware's first licensed medical marijuana distribution center and operates the state's largest cannabis growing facility. The company has a 47,000-square-foot facility in Wilmington with 19 marijuana cultivation rooms, an extraction lab and a dispensary. The facility opened in June 2015 and a second dispensary in Lewes opened in 2017.

With its newest facility—the highly secure edible kitchen—First State will begin offering consumable

cannabis products including Betty's Eddies™ fruit-chews, Bubby's Baked™ cookie bites and "Vibations" cannabis-infused drink mix.

Haley Schell, First State's regional director of retail and marketing, said the company became interested in manufacturing edible products because many medical marijuana patients get better relief by ingesting cannabis. Some are turned off by smoking or need to take their medication when smoking isn't practical, so ingestibles offer a different consumption method, she said.

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M&T, WSFS, PNC REDUCING, EASING OVERDRAFT FEES

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware’s three biggest banks are changing their rules on overdraft fees. M&T Bank this month is joining a nationwide movement to reduce or eliminate overdraft fees. WSFS Bank in December eased its overdraft rules. PNC Bank last year expanded its app to give customers a new way to avoid overdraft fees.

Overdrafts are a huge issue numerically, with PNC citing [studies](#) that estimate overdrafts cost U.S. consumers \$17 billion a year. PNC said its new Low Cash Mode system helps customers avoid \$125 million to \$150 million in overdraft fees annually.

Overdrafts are also a huge issue politically, with federal banking regulators increasing pressure and advocates pointing out the fees disproportionately affect lower-income consumers.

M&T Bank

“We are eliminating the savings and money market overdraft transfer fee of \$12.50 and the extended over-

draft fee of \$38.50,” M&T said in an email to customers. “We are reducing the insufficient funds and overdraft fees from \$38.50 to \$36.00 for each occurrence.” The changes are effective Jan. 20.

“Please disregard prior information about overdraft charges you may have recently received with your savings/money market and/or checking account statements,” the bank’s announcement continued. “We apologize for any confusion this may have caused. We recommend reviewing your individual terms and conditions to see what fees apply to your account(s).”

Repeated efforts were unsuccessful to reach M&T for comment about the announcement.

WSFS Bank

WSFS recently issued a policy update that covers three scenarios:

- “In the event your account is overdrawn (or close to overdrawn), any purchases you make that are \$10 or less will not result in an overdraft fee.
- “You will no longer be charged an overdraft fee if a purchase exceeding \$10 does not overdraw your account by \$50 or more. This negative \$50 overdraft balance is an increase from the previous negative overdraft balance of \$5.
- “You will only be charged for a maximum of three \$35 overdraft fees per day (down from the previous cap of six per day).”

PNC Bank

Low Cash Mode is the branding for the change in PNC’s app. One feature covers ACH payments, meaning bank-to-bank transfers processed through the Automated Clearing House Network. It “gives customers ‘payment control,’ including the power to prioritize by determining whether certain debits (checks and ACH transactions) are processed that otherwise might result in overdrafts, rather than the common industry practice of the bank making the decision. Real-time intelligent alerts let customers know when their balance is low and—if it is negative—Low Cash Mode provides at least 24 hours of ‘extra time,’ and often more, to prevent or address overdrafts before fees are charged.”

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Upper School | October 3
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Photo by Jonathan Borba for Pexels



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

3 COURSES FOR \$30: NEWARK RESTAURANT WEEK RETURNS

BY PAM GEORGE

Development in downtown Newark has turned the college town into a dining destination, and you can witness that firsthand during the 2022 Newark Restaurant Week, which runs Jan. 20-26. Participating establishments will offer three-course dinners for \$30. The event has been a much-loved winter promotion since 2006 when former Newark Mayor Vance Funk created it.

When the Downtown Newark Partnership disbanded in 2018 and the newly formed Newark Partnership did not have the event on the calendar, Sasha Aber, owner of [Home Grown Cafe](#), stepped up to organize it.

To make the week memorable, restaurants will feature dishes that aren't on their regular menus. "The chefs are going to go all out for this," Aber said.

[Klondike Kate's Restaurant & Saloon](#), for instance, will dish up chorizo meatballs Fra Diavolo over spaghetti. "We love restaurant week because it gives our chef and kitchen a chance to get creative," said owner Gianmarco Martuscelli.

But the innovative cuisine must also be affordable. In the past, there were varying prices depending on the restaurant size, concept and time of day.

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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BLACK LEADERS, ACTIVISTS SPLIT ON DARIUS BROWN ETHICS INQUIRY

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Black Wilmington pastors and activists are divided over whether a state senator cleared of offensive touching and disorderly conduct charges should still face a Senate Ethics Committee inquiry. Several, including New Castle County Councilman Jea Street, Delaware NAACP president Richard “Mouse” Smith and the Rev. Dr. Christopher T. Curry, pastor of Ezion Fair Baptist Church, say the investigation into State Sen. Darius Brown should be called off immediately and his **committee positions** should be restored.

Others, including local Black activists Dion Wilson and Don Farrell, say the investigation should go on and that the inquiry into Brown’s alleged misdeeds is not a “public lynching” as Curry said in a **Jan. 9** press conference.

Brown was **found not guilty** on Jan. 6 on misdemeanor charges of offensive touching and disorderly conduct. He stood accused of hitting a woman then throwing a martini glass at her during an argument at Taverna Rustic Italian Restaurant in May of 2021. Following his acquittal, Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola said it remains clear that “Sen. Brown has been involved in multiple confrontations in public spaces over the last year, regardless of whether that behavior rose to the level of criminal conduct.”

“As elected representatives of the people we serve, I believe we owe it to Delawareans to hold ourselves to a higher level of accountability and conduct,” Sokola said. “In the coming weeks, the **Senate Rules and Ethics Committee** will fully review all of the allegations leveled against Sen. Brown, and I will have no further comment on the matter until that time.” To that, Councilman Jea Street, D-District 10, said, “Sen. Sokola, cease and desist. Call the dogs off.”

“You have no business after 35 years with an ethics commission that has no rules and regulations, no written procedures to take this on, and subject him to that while he needs to be doing his due diligence as our senator.” If the Ethics Committee investigation continues, Street said he would have no choice but to ask federal prosecutors to “investigate these investigators” for defamation and malicious prosecution.

Efforts to reach Brown for comment were unsuccessful and Sokola declined to comment as he indicated he would in his earlier statement.

The ethics inquiry into Brown will be the Senate’s first since 1986 when then-Senate Minority Whip John Arnold, a Republican, attempted to push through a redistricting bill that would have allowed him to live outside his original district. The Ethics Committee found that Arnold had violated the state constitution and he resigned from office.

Smith said Brown “has been ridiculed by the ugly face of the Delaware politicians.” “Everybody else gets a break,” Smith said. “But Black folks get thrown underneath the bus. We have never got a fair shake in this state. This state is like a plantation—a 21st-century plantation.”

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DEMS WON'T NEED GOP VOTES TO PASS RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA BILL

and revise the original proposal. “We heard the input from members and advocates and spent the legislative break working on compromises wherever possible, striving to build the best possible law,” Osienski said. He noted that other states, including nearby New Jersey, Virginia and New York, have successfully enacted policies relating to recreational cannabis.

Under the bill, the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement would absorb marijuana enforcement and create a separate, administrative Office of Marijuana Control Commissioner within the Department of Safety and Homeland Security. The legislation would allow for up to 30 retail licenses to be issued within 16 months of the bill’s effective date. It would also establish a competitive licensing process that prioritizes applicants who commit to paying a living wage, providing employer-paid health insurance, providing a defined benefit pension plan, providing sick and paid leave to workers, hiring more full-time workers, focusing on diversity of workforce and other factors.

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A new bill to legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana in Delaware is likely to make its way before the General Assembly this year. House Bill 305—also known as the Delaware Marijuana Control Act—builds on last year’s House Bill 150, which was released from committee but never heard on the House floor.

The Marijuana Control Act, sponsored by Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Brookside, would establish a framework to regulate and tax marijuana in the same manner as alcohol. Currently, recreational marijuana use is permitted in 18 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would allow adults over the age of 21 to legally possess up to one ounce of marijuana for personal use, though it would not permit people to grow their own marijuana.

If passed, marijuana would be taxed at 15%. Nearly half of that—7% of the revenue—would go toward a “Justice Reinvestment Fund,” designed to benefit communities historically most affected by the disproportionate prosecution of marijuana-related crimes.

According to a press release announcing the new bill’s filing, Osienski has been meeting with stakeholders throughout the past several months to address questions

Changes from the previous bill

The new measure varies from last year’s House Bill 150 in several key manners:

- It incorporates six amendments filed with the original bill.
- It adds the requirement of a comprehensive business plan to the competitive scoring criteria for licenses.
- It directs 7% of the marijuana tax revenue to the Justice Reinvestment Fund.
- It removes expungement provisions, as they were rendered duplicative by the enactment of Senate Bills 111 and 112 last year.

The proposed Justice Reinvestment Fund would be administered by the Department of Justice and would be used to facilitate grants, contracts, services or initiatives that focus on the following:

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BILL AIMS TO FINE DRIVERS WHO DRIVE SNOW- AND ICE-COVERED CARS



BY BETSY PRICE

A bill that aims to fine drivers who operate a vehicle without first clearing it of snow and ice—and penalize them further if that snow or ice falls off and causes damage to another vehicle—passed the Delaware Senate Thursday.

The bill, which has been in the works since 2014, had passed the Senate’s transportation committee in March but didn’t come up on the Senate floor before the session recessed in June.

Senate Bill 64 would require drivers of vehicles to remove accumulated ice and snow before driving the vehicle on any roads with a speed limit of 26 mph or higher. An amendment approved with the bill removed the requirement for any roads with speed limits of 25 mph or lower.

Sponsor Sen. Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, said that rule is geared largely toward bigger, higher-speed roads where snow and ice can fly off and hit cars or people

and cause damage or injury. The speed limit change was designed to allow people to drive through neighborhoods, he said.

“I would like people to take this seriously and clean off the ice or snow from their vehicles before moving,” he said. “But in the event that they don’t, I would much rather enforcement of it happen prior to people getting on I-95 or Route 1.”

SB64 would impose penalties of not less than \$25 and not more than \$75 for each violation of a car that is caught driving with accumulations of ice or snow. The bill also allows police to pull vehicles over for that alone. Each day a car is driven without ice and snow being removed would trigger a separate violation, but a driver could not receive more than one ticket within a 24-hour period.

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HOUSE COMMITTEE OKS BILL TO LET MEDICAL MARIJUANA USERS OWN GUNS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Under a proposed law unanimously released from the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee Tuesday, Delawareans who are prescribed medical marijuana could own firearms without fear of being prosecuted by the state. It is currently illegal under federal law for medical marijuana patients to purchase or own firearms. That wouldn't change under [House Bill 276](#), although the state would not be able to prosecute a medical marijuana patient for possessing a firearm.

“Essentially what this bill says is that if you are a medical marijuana patient, you do not have to give up your Second Amendment rights,” said one of the bill’s sponsors, Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Clayton, during the meeting.

Federal law prohibits unauthorized users of any controlled substance, including marijuana, from possessing, shipping, transporting, or receiving firearms or ammunition. It is also unlawful to sell a firearm or ammunition to any person if the seller knows or has

reasonable cause to believe that the purchaser is an unlawful user of marijuana.

“This bill makes it clear that the state will not prosecute you,” Spiegelman said. “It is not a crime in this state to possess medical marijuana and a firearm at the same time.” He argued that the issue is one of fairness and noted that medical marijuana remains the only medication that, when prescribed, requires a patient to abandon their right to bear arms.

Six members of the public spoke during the meeting—five of whom indicated support for the measure. Gun-related bills routinely draw dozens of speakers.

Ryan Bunting, vice-chair of the New Castle Libertarian Party, said the proposed measure is long overdue.

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BUSINESS GROUP: CARNEY MUST APPOINT JUDGE OF COLOR TO REPLACE SLIGHTS

BY BETSY PRICE

With Delaware Chancery Court’s Joseph R. Slight III retiring, a pro-business group is mounting a campaign to have a person of color appointed to the panel of now all-white judges.

Vice Chancellor Slight’s retirement came to light when the court began telling lawyers that their cases would be reassigned because of it, according to an article on www.Law360.com. Slight confirmed his retirement to Law360, but referred questions to the courts.

“Vice Chancellor Slight has been a tremendous asset to our court and, indeed, our State; he will be sorely missed,” said a statement from the office of Chancellor Kathaleen St. J. McCormick. “The Vice Chancellor has done us the courtesy of announcing his retirement well in advance of his anticipated end date, which he has not yet selected, so that we can ensure an orderly transition.

Per the usual process, the timeline for posting his position and selecting and confirming his replacement will be established by Judicial Nominating Commission, the office of the Governor, and the State Senate.”

Citizens for a Pro-Business Delaware on Thursday announced it will launch a \$250,000 advocacy campaign for Gov. John Carney to appoint a person of color to the court. “The days of an all-white Chancery Court are over,” said Chris Coffey, the campaign manager for the pro-business group. “It’s time for Gov. Carney to appoint a person of color immediately.”

The Chancery Court has not always been all-white. Judge Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, who is Black, served on the court for four years before moving to the Delaware Supreme Court in 2019.

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MEDICAL AID IN DYING BILL NARROWLY ADVANCES TO HOUSE FLOOR

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A bill to allow mentally competent adult patients with terminal illnesses to request a prescription for life-ending medications was narrowly released from the House Health and Human Development Committee Tuesday.

The practice is often referred to by supporters as “right to die” or “death with dignity” and by opponents as “physician-assisted suicide.” “Medical aid in dying” is a neutral term to describe the practice.

House Bill 140’s sponsor, Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, said that at the bill’s core, it aims to do one thing: provide “one additional end of life option for mentally capable adults with a terminal disease with a wall of protections to ensure that it is only available for mentally capable adults with a terminal disease.”

Opponents argued during a press conference Tuesday and during the committee meeting’s public comment portion Wednesday that aid in dying legislation violates the Hippocratic oath to do no harm, devalues the sanctity of life and deprioritizes investment in life-sustaining treatment for terminal patients. Some referred to the practice as euthanasia.

Medical aid in dying is legal in 10 states and one territory, including Oregon, Washington, Montana, Vermont, California, Colorado, Hawaii, New Jersey, Maine, New Mexico and the District of Columbia.

Terri Hancharick, chairperson for the State Council for Persons with Disabilities, said during the press conference that end-of-life options should focus on supporting people where they are, rather than giving them the option of dying.

“Give them the option of living. Give them the option of support. Help them to live their best lives,” Hancharick said. “Instead of institutionalizing death for the disability community, Delaware legislators should focus on ensuring that everyone has the care and resources that they need.”

But Dr. Christopher Riddle, professor of philosophy and director of the Applied Ethics Institute at Utica College, argued that supporting a terminal patient’s right to live and offering them the option to end their suffering are not mutually exclusive.

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





A PERFECT STORM FOR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS: NO SUBS, BUS WOES, COVID

BY BETSY PRICE

By 5:30 a.m. on school days, Jeffery Gibeault is already up and wrestling with how to man his classrooms.

The principal of Southern Elementary School in New Castle has had to cover as many as 25 classes in one recent day because teachers were out coping with COVID-19 in some way. Wednesday was a good day. He only had to find people to cover seven classes.

Gibeault said he's afraid he'll jinx himself if he says that makes him hopeful, even coming one day after a state announcement that new cases seemed to have plateaued and were maybe starting to drop a bit.

"You know, I was feeling that way around Thanksgiving," he said. "Two weeks later, we really started to see the beginning of the surge...But, yeah, we're starting to recover and catch our breath a little bit. I hope we keep this direction for a while but to be a realist, I think this is just the lull in the many storms that are probably to come."

Finding someone to handle classes during the winter surge of COVID-19 has proven to be a challenge for schools up and down the state. Teachers are having to stay out mostly because of COVID. They may have

COVID themselves, have been exposed to COVID or have symptoms and need to be tested before they can return. Sometimes, their own children have COVID, have been exposed and are quarantined, or their child care provider is closed because of the spread of the virus there.

Substitutes are almost nonexistent and nobody is sure why. Some point to a reluctance to come into schools, given that they're known to be cauldrons of illnesses such as colds, flu and stomach bugs in the best of times, and perhaps serious illness now with the coronavirus continuing to circulate.

Schools are turning to paraprofessionals, administrators, tutors, student teachers and central office workers such as instructional coaches to lead classes.

Teachers upstate and down have been vocal about needing help and telling stories about classes that are doubled up or put in auditoriums to watch movies because there's no one available. Some are missing lunch and planning schedules while they're dealing with children who are coming into schools without mandated masks, and sometimes coming in late because bus systems are dealing with the same issues.

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“

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- URSULINE ACADEMY



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1,500 DELAWARE BORROWERS TO GET LOANS FORGIVEN, RESTITUTION IN NAVIENT SETTLEMENT

BY BETSY PRICE

More than 1,500 state residents who borrowed money from student loan provider Navient will get a part of Delaware's \$5.34 million share of a settlement in a suit charging the company used unfair, deceptive and predatory practices. Of those, 145 Delaware borrowers will get nearly \$4.8 million in private loan debt cancellation. Others will get restitution payments.

Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced Thursday that most of Delaware's share will go to the people who borrowed money.

The company was charged with practices that included making borrowers agree that their loans could not be included in bankruptcy proceedings, refusing to allow borrowers to switch to loan forms like income-based payment schedules, adding interest and fees to loans when it should not have, failing to point customers to loan-forgiveness programs and charging more for loans for schools with low graduation rates.

"Addressing the student loan crisis is one of my biggest consumer protection priorities," Jennings said in a press release. "We have to recognize that even when the playing field is level, student borrowers are fighting an uphill battle. Between rising tuition and a generation of teenagers who were told that a four-year degree was vital to their success, student debt has become a crisis.

"With Day One debt burdens sometimes eclipsing six figures, it's no surprise that thousands of people struggle to make ends meet. At a minimum, loan servicers should be expected to follow the law."

Delaware's share of the \$1.895 billion multistate settlement came after the Delaware Department of Justice helped investigate Navient's alleged misrepresentations regarding the right of private student loans to be included in bankruptcy proceedings, the press release said.

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Health

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

NEW COVID-19 CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS SEEM TO PLATEAU IN DELAWARE

STATE OF DELAWARE
DATA UPDATE

2,514.9
New Cases
7-day Average

28.8%
Positive Tests
7-day Average

683 with **71** critical
Hospitalizations

2,424
Lives Lost

Data as of: January 17, 2022 - 6:00pm

BY BETSY PRICE

New COVID-19 cases in Delaware seem to have plateaued and maybe even dropped a bit, Gov. John Carney said during a Tuesday press conference. In recent weeks, new cases often were in the upper 2,000s or into the 3,000s. As of Monday, the state was seeing 2,514.9 new cases per day over a seven-day average, a drop from most days last week. The percent of positive tests also has dropped slightly to 28.8% of the total tested, down from 30.1 and higher last week. The state also has 683 hospitalized with 71 in critical condition. Last Friday, the number of hospitalized was 729.

“The hospitalization number (is) down from 759 on Jan. 12,” Carney said. “That’s positive news. We don’t want to prejudge anything for the long term with just a couple days data points. Coincidentally, it’s the same day, Jan. 12, as our peak last year, which was Jan. 12. We’ll see whether that holds true. but we’re hopeful. Obviously we’ve also seen a leveling off in new positive cases and, importantly, a slight reduction in the percent positive.”

“We are pleased to see that our case and hospital rates are not increasing as at the same rates that we had been seen in the previous few weeks,” said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of the Division of Public Health. “However, our case rates and our hospital rates remain extremely high. And so, this is definitely not the time to let our guard down with Omicron and also there is more we need to do in preparation for future variants.”

Rattay said that random genetic testing of some positive cases showed that the Omicron variant is responsible for 93% of the positive cases. She also encouraged booster shots saying they prevent infection, serious illness and hospitalization. Only 30% of the Delawareans who were eligible for them had gotten them, she said. Of those who are fully vaccinated and end up in the hospital, 91.4% have not had booster shots, she said.

Booster shots help by increasing immunity. Moderna says that its booster shots increase antibodies against COVID 37 times and Pfizer said theirs increase antibodies 25 times. Some national studies say the protection of a booster shot falls rapidly in the months after receiving it.

Rattay pointed to Israeli studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association that said people who are fully vaccinated with two Moderna or Pfizer shots, or one Johnson & Johnson have a 90% to 95% protection against serious illness or death, while those with boosters have closer to 99% to 100% protection against it.

Omicron can beat the vaccines partly because it keeps mutating and the antibodies don’t recognize it, she said.

“The current COVID vaccines target the spike protein on the COVID virus, and the Omicron variant has many mutations on the spike protein which helps it evade antibodies which are generated from both prior infection or the two-dose vaccination,” Rattay said. “So with Delta, the antibodies from the vaccine or from prior infection offered more protection against the infection. We’re seeing that’s less the case for people fully vaccinated or who’ve had prior infection as it relates to preventing Omicron infection.”

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INCREASING NUMBERS OF VACCINATED DELAWAREANS ARE GETTING COVID

BY BETSY PRICE

The numbers of people who are fully vaccinated and still contract COVID-19 and who end up in the hospital have both been rising in Delaware. Last week, about half of new cases were people who were fully vaccinated, and about 40% of new hospitalizations were people who had been vaccinated.

On Friday in its weekly COVID-19 wrap up report, the Delaware Division of Public Health said that of the 22,271 new COVID-19 cases reported from Jan. 3 to Jan. 9, 53% were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. On Aug. 20, the state said that of the 1,828 reported that week, 79% were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

On Friday, the state said that of the 405 people hospitalized during the week, 60 percent were unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. In August, when 106 people were hospitalized, 86% of those unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

The state defines fully vaccinated as completing the initial two-dose series of an mRNA vaccine (Moderna or Pfizer) or single-dose of Johnson & Johnson, said Jennifer Brestel, spokeswoman for the Division of Public Health. "You are still fully vaccinated after completing the initial series, and 'up to date' after completing recommended boosters/additional doses as eligible," she said.

Of those who are fully vaccinated and hospitalized, 92% have not had booster shots, said Dr. Rick Hong,

medical director of the Division of Public Health, in an email. In between Aug. 20 and Friday, the numbers for both new cases and hospitalizations involving the unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated generally stayed in the 70-plus range.

"We are seeing a higher percent of people hospitalized who are fully vaccinated," Hong said. "However, individuals who have received a booster appear to be well protected against hospitalization. This is consistent with what recent studies have demonstrated with Omicron, which is our predominant variant in Delaware now."

Asked whether the rising number of cases in people who are vaccinated reflects waning immunity in vaccines or boosters, Hong pointed to a Centers of Disease Control report that said while COVID-19 vaccines remain effective in preventing severe disease, their effectiveness at preventing infection wanes over time, specially in people ages 65 years and older.

Some national reports say that the booster shots can lose a lot of power after 10 to 12 weeks. "The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination, boosters and prevention efforts needed to protect against COVID-19," Hong said.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



STATE, FEMA TO OPEN COVID TESTING DRIVE-THRU IN DELAWARE CITY

BY BETSY PRICE

Update: The week's COVID-19 wrap-up numbers have been added to this article.

A drive-thru COVID-19 testing site will open Monday at the Delaware City Division of Motor Vehicles complex and will operate evenings and weekends, excepts for Wednesday nights, through Feb. 7.

The announcement Friday follows several weeks of record numbers of people seeking testing, leading to venues running out of tests and also having to close because their own employees either had COVID or had been exposed to it.

The highest demand has been highest in New Castle County. The state said that 23,000 tests were given the week prior to Thanksgiving, and 61,000 tests last week.

“The demand for testing is at an all-time high and our

resources are strained. Having this site will serve as a relief valve for our testing partners, particularly in New Castle County,” said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of the Division of Public Health. “We appreciate the assistance from our federal partners and the testing staff coming to provide Delawareans with another testing option for the next several weeks to help get us through this surge.”

As the state moved to start drive-thru testing at the Delaware City DMV, it also said in its Friday COVID-19 wrapup that cases, hospitalizations and deaths were continuing to rise week from week. Delaware recorded 4,771 new cases on Jan. 7, a new record. Since then, daily new case numbers have been lower.

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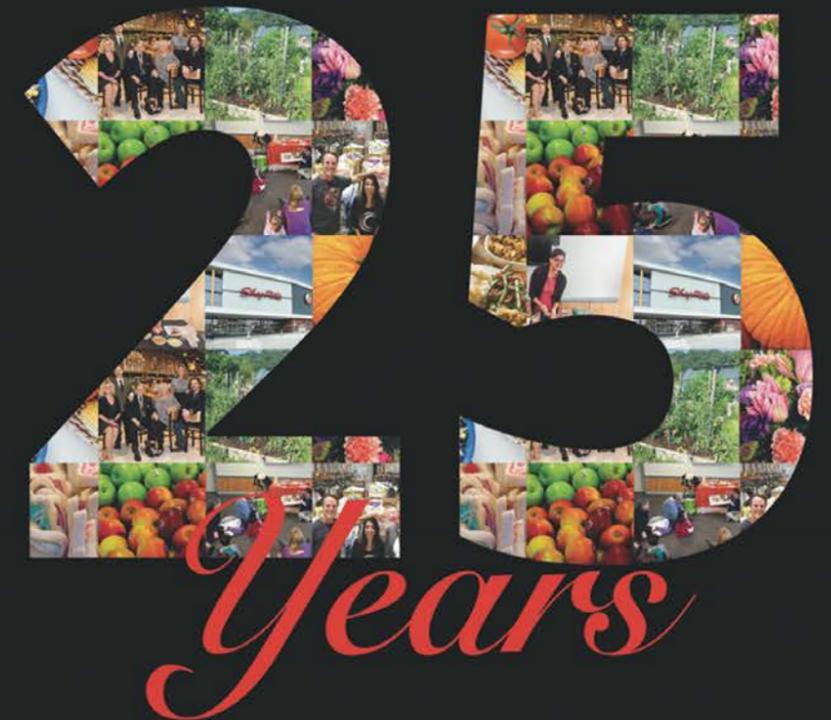


Photo by Nick Halliday



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



SANFORD UPSETS NO. 1 HOWARD WITH STELLAR DEFENSE

BY PATRICK GARYANTES

Sanford earned, perhaps, its first of many signature victories under new head coach Tyrone Perry on Tuesday evening when it defeated No. 1 Howard 37-29. The Warriors 'defended' their home court quite literally because of their defense, which was suffocating throughout the entire game.

The game was set up to be a defensive matchup, as both teams came into the game with a reputation for making offenses uneasy. However, top-ranked Howard's offense came into the game averaging just a shade under 69 points per game through its first nine to a record of 7-2. So, the balance had been there for the Wildcats, whose only two losses came to a nationally ranked Neumann-Goretti team in overtime, and most recently to Elizabeth High School in New Jersey.

No. 6 Sanford came into Tuesday's contest only allowing 47 points per game in its six games this season, earning a 5-1 record. The key in this one for Sanford was going to be slowing the pace down and limiting its turnovers to prevent Howard from getting easy baskets in transition.

Sanford jumped out to an early 14-6 lead midway through the second quarter, before Howard would hit a few outside shots to close the half on a 13-2 run holding a 19-16 lead at the break. It seemed as though Howard might have settled in, and perhaps was ready to take the

game over. However, foul trouble would start to catch the Wildcats at the toughest of times.

Sophomore guard Jameer DeShields would pick up his fourth personal foul with 5:30 left in the third quarter. At the time of the foul, he had eight of Howard's 24 points and was a nice complement to senior guard De'Mere Hollingsworth offensively, as the Wildcats would briefly extend the lead to 26-18 shortly after he exited. He would sit until about midway through the fourth quarter.

The lack of a second scorer would hurt Howard, as it would only score five points in the game's final 13:30.

Shortly after the fourth foul was picked up by DeShields, Sanford would finally hit from the perimeter, as Howard dropped into a 2-3 zone defense. Two three-pointers by Porter Kelly and one from Sean Forrest would erase an eight-point Howard lead and tie the score at 27 with 90 seconds left in the quarter. The Warriors would add a free throw to take a one-point lead into the final frame.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

DELAWARE LIVE SPORTS TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

CLICK FOR WEEK 5 BOYS & GIRLS H.S. BASKETBALL

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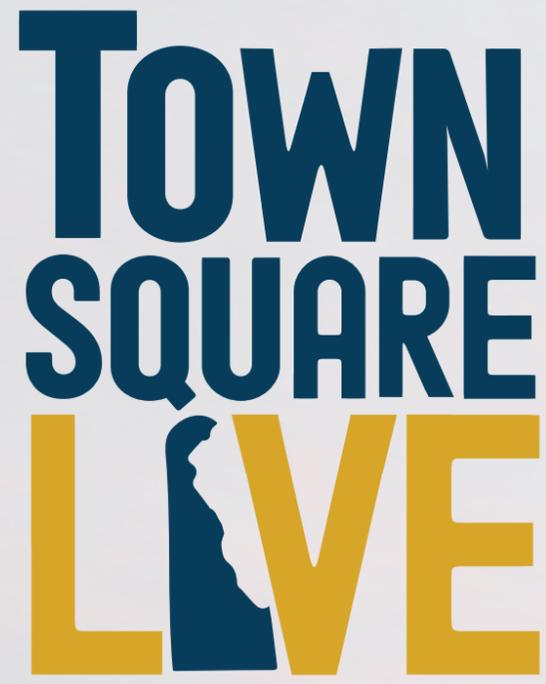


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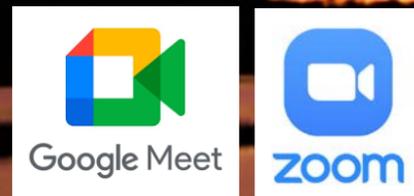


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