

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

Photo link: Longwood Gardens

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YEAR END REVIEW

Vol. 3, Issue 52



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Photo link: Delaware Children's Museum



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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January

WILMINGTON RESIDENTS SIGN PETITION IN SUPPORT OF POLICE CHIEF

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A **petition** expressing support for the Wilmington Police Department has gathered more than 600 signatures after the Wilmington City Council on Thursday passed a “vote of no confidence” in Chief Robert Tracy.

The vote happened after a nearly three-hour-long Public Safety Committee meeting Tuesday during which Tracy and others defended the department’s practices amidst claims that it lacks diversity and suffers from low morale.

“Chief Tracy has been extremely resistant to any ideas to increase diversity and transparency and ideas as far as police reform,” said Council President Trippi Congo during Thursday’s meeting. “I want to make sure that people don’t think that I’m blaming the chief or the police department for the crime in our city. Nothing can be further from the truth.”

Congo said the problem is “much bigger” than the chief or the department, but that Tracy should be more

proactive in developing and implementing a plan to combat crime, increase diversity and promote morale within the department’s ranks.

The resolution passed 6 to 4 with councilmembers Linda Gray, Shané Darby, Zanthia Oliver, Michelle Harlee, Yolanda McCoy and Congo voting “yes” and Nathan Field, Maria Cabrera, James Spadola and Loretta Walsh voting “no.” Councilman Chris Johnson voted “present.” The resolution expresses a lack of confidence in Tracy’s leadership and recommends a third-party audit of the department.

When city resident and business owner Joanie Husband heard of the resolution’s passage, she felt that she had to do something to show Tracy and his department that the views expressed by the Council don’t represent those of the majority of the city’s residents.

“I really believe that our city was so lucky to get a person like Chief Tracy to come into our community,” Husband said. “After all that he has done—to hear people saying in a public venue those negative things about him and the department—it just seemed like a very unfair attack.”

As a business owner in the city, Husband said she tends to avoid politics. She’s not a very political person to begin with and in business, she said, it’s better to not go in one direction or the other. “But with that being said, when it comes to being moral and doing the right thing—that does fire me up,” she said.

The petition is directed to the Wilmington City Council and says: “At the City Council meeting on January 20th, we witnessed a stunning blow to government integrity and a slap in the face to the Wilmington community. The resolution brought about by the City Council calling for a vote of no confidence in Police Chief Robert Tracy and the entire Wilmington Police Department is disingenuous and not a reflection of how the community feels about the WPD.”

A petition in support of Chief Robert Tracy and the Wilmington Police Department has gathered more than 600 signatures.

The petition cites Tracy’s efforts to “stem the shooting and violence that plague our city,” and argues that instead of attacking the police department, the Council’s efforts should be focused on “the judicial system that has allowed career criminals to be released to terrorize our community.”

Husband and the petition’s 600-plus signers aren’t the only ones who feel strongly about Tracy’s leadership.

Following the Council’s vote, Mayor Mike Purzycki said, “This is a very sad day for our city.”

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RESTAURANTS WRESTLE WITH PRICING TO COVER INDUSTRY COST HIKES

BY PAM GEORGE

Since Valentine’s Day was on a Monday, many restaurants had four nights of solid reservations. The business was welcome, considering that most experienced a disastrous January due to mask mandates, bitterly cold weather and ailing staff.

But a boost in reservations is not enough to sustain an industry hit hard by the pandemic, staffing shortages, supply chain issues and soaring overhead prices. To put it simply: Restaurants are hurting.

Actual sales in 2022 are projected to remain below 2019 levels in all major segments, from quick-serve eateries to full-service restaurants, according to the [National Restaurant Association’s](#) “The State of the Restaurant Industry 2022.”

Nationwide, more than 90% of operators say food costs are higher than before COVID-19; eight in 10 report that labor costs are up. Both will continue to rise in 2022.

“We’ve seen huge price increases,” said Scott Stein, who with chef Antimo DiMeo owns [Bardea Food & Drink](#) in downtown Wilmington. “Everyone we order from is having shortages, and we are paying a premium—everything we order is handpicked.”

This week, Bardea added a 5% surcharge to checks to help cover rising costs. The popular eatery, featured on the “Today Show,” is not the only restaurant getting creative to make ends meet. The next 12 months will be a “fragile” time for the industry, said Carrie Leishman, president and CEO of the [Delaware Restaurant Association](#). “You’re going to see a lot of different models out there,” she said.

A WORLDWIDE ISSUE

Price increases and supply chain issues affect most sectors, but unlike many industries, restaurants had a slim profit margin before COVID. On a good day, it was

between 3% and 5%.

When restaurants were closed or limited to takeout, the Paycheck Protection Program kept [Piccolina Toscana](#) in Trolley Square and [Brandywine Prime](#) in Chadds Ford afloat, said owner Dan Butler.

“I was thrilled with it,” he said.

But after the economy reopened, employees were slow to return to the hospitality industry, and that’s led to wage increases.

At [Snuff Mill Restaurant, Butchery & Wine Bar](#) in Brandywine Hundred, employees who work at least 33 hours get health insurance, a gym membership and a monthly dinner out. And that’s just to start.

“We have to be very competitive against people like Amazon,” said Bill Irvin, an owner.

Similarly, Bardea gives full-time employees two weeks of paid vacation each year, healthcare benefits and a 401K.

The quick-service sector also has been impacted. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, most fast-food chains raised wages by up to 10%.

The supply chain is another significant thorn in restaurants’ sides. Paying 50 cents extra per pound of beef puts a severe dent on the bottom line, said Irvin.

“It comes right out of our pocket; we’re absorbing those costs,” he said.

Increasingly, that is getting harder to do. As the supermarket shopper in your household will tell you, everything is going up. According to the BLS data, pork jumped 14.1%, while beef prices rose by 20.1%.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

February

BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE, WASHINGTON WAS IN WILMINGTON

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A Wilmington history buff has uncovered many of the roads and paths General George Washington marched Continental Army troops along en route to Chadds Ford, PA, for the 1777 Battle of Brandywine. Retired Army officer and University of Delaware graduate Bill Knightly plans to share his findings.

The George Washington Society of Delaware will hold a champagne luncheon at the Ed Oliver Golf Club on Sunday, Feb. 20, at 12:30 p.m. with Knightly as the featured guest.

“I’ve always had an interest in history and Delaware just has a fantastic history that not many people know about,” Knightly said. “I’m trying to uncover that history and make it interesting for people to learn about.”

In August 1777, 15,000 British troops came ashore near present-day Elkton, MD, with their eyes set on capturing Philadelphia. In order to stop that, Washington

positioned 20,000 Continental Army troops between then-Head of Elk and Philadelphia, near Wilmington—but he was outflanked.

After a clash at Cooch’s Bridge south of Newark, the British troops traveled north and Washington ordered his troops to deploy against the British at Chadds Ford. The resulting conflict became known as the Battle of Brandywine.

“For historians, it’s more sexy to focus on the Battle at Brandywine and nobody focuses on how Washington got there,” he said. “There’s two reasons. Reason one is, that’s just not their major focus. They want to focus on the battle. And number two is that Washington didn’t write any orders to get there. It was done so quickly, all the orders were verbal orders and so there’s not a lot of written documentation.”

The question of the Continental Army’s route to



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Chadds Ford sent Knightly on a five-year quest for answers—one that involved canoe trips along the Brandywine River, walks along its banks and long hours in the Hagley research library.

“I’ve also got some maps,” he said. “There’s a guy named Jacob Broom—if you’re familiar with Wilmington you’ll recall there’s a Broom Street—and Jacob Broom was a surveyor in the late 1700s.”

“When Washington brought the Continental Army to Wilmington, he needed a map and Jacob Broom made him a map in August of 1777,” he continued. “I found a copy of that map at the Hagley research library hidden in the files—I just stumbled across it. I had been looking for it and I had no idea where to look to find it and lo and behold, it’s the last file I look at and it’s got Washington’s actual notes on the map.”

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PIKE CREEK CHURCH'S DRIVE-THRU ASH ANOINTING RETURNS

“Most of them were talking about how they were unable to get to their church at the times they offered it, but it was still important to them to try and get them,” Turner said.

Their Facebook page shows photos of a police officer and U.S. postal worker who dropped by to get them. It also shows photos of families, including a baby in a carrier with an cross of ash on her forehead.

The practice is a reminder that we all die and should prepare for that death by reconciling with God, Turner said. Those are major themes of the 40 days of Lent, a period of reflection and prayer to prepare the faithful for the joy of Jesus’s resurrection on Easter.

Last year, as the winter COVID-19 surge was waning, the church decided to switch to an evening Shrove Tuesday pancake and ash giveaway to avoid human contact. Shrove Tuesday was typically a three-day period in which believers celebrated and used up things like sugar and lard to clear their pantries for the seriousness of Lenten reflection. Many churches still celebrate that with pancake dinners.

Each Skyline visitor was given two individually wrapped frozen pancakes and a small container of ashes, with instructions on how to apply the ashes.

BY BETSY PRICE

Police do it. Postal workers do. Even punkinheads in pumpkin seats do it. In the five years that Skyline United Methodist Church has offered a drive-thru ash anointing service, hundreds of people have motored through the church lot from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to be marked with ashes at the start of Lent.

The drive-thru returns today (Wednesday).

“It started as an outreach effort to serve the community,” said the Rev. Ruthann Turner, pastor of the church. Many working people have a hard time making it to an Ash Wednesday church service, she said. The drive-thru started before she became pastor two years ago. When she did, she asked the team to track who came through. Of the 150 who did that day, about one-third were church members. The rest were people from the area, many of them Catholic, Turner said.

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COVID-19 doesn't just crash holiday get-togethers — it cancels them. So whatever you're celebrating this season, make sure you've gotten your bivalent booster and follow these other steps to stay safe and leave COVID out in the cold.

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Get tested before and after gatherings.
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April



BY BETSY PRICE

A lot of smiling faces are waiting to see people return to the reimagined Delaware Museum of Nature and Science next month. Some of them have a lot of really big teeth. And it's impossible to tell whether those dinosaurs in the museum's new Ellice & Rosa McDonald Foundation PaleoZone are happy to see patrons, or simply delighted to see lunch arriving on its own two legs.

Those toothy grins are part of the former Museum of Natural History's \$10.8 million evolution from 1972 specimen-oriented exhibits of, say, rows of shells, into a space that tries to tell the stories of the time and location, emphasizing the connection

TAKE A FIRST PEEK AT NEW MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

between man, nature and science. Exhibits will highlight the paleozoic era, a rainforest, the African savannah, Arctic tundra, the ocean and Delaware ecosystems, from the piedmont in the north to the salt marshes of the south.

After being closed for 17 months, the museum will hold a grand opening weekend Friday, May 20, to Sunday, May 22, for invited guests and then open Monday, May 23, to the general public.

A walk-through this week showed a lot of exhibits with major pieces up but plenty of construction and final touches going on.

"This has actually been a multi-year long project," said Jennifer Accord, director of communications. "The Strategic Plan was created in 2014. I learned the new name at my interview in 2015. We started with a kind of baby master design plan in 2016. So this has been going on for quite a while. Every single one of the images and all of the text our scientists were very involved in creating and gathering. So it really has been achieved."

The entrance will retain the original Delaware Museum of National History name carved into the doorway as a nod to its beginning. Visitors will walk into a more open space with an atrium that's home to a specimen-studded tree of life mural highlighting the connections of man and the natural world.

One specimen is a snake, which Accord herself transferred from an old container into this jar. With all hands on deck, "somebody had to do it," she said. "I will tell absolutely everybody I did that. I'm very proud."

Across from the mural will be a new display space that include rotating exhibits from local groups such as the Delaware Mineralogical Society and the University of Delaware.

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BY BETSY PRICE

For four days this week, Grace United Methodist Church in Wilmington will be alive with the sounds of the first conference ever designed to shine a light on the contributions and accomplishments of Black musicians and composers.

“Bent, but not Broken,” will feature panels, lectures and choir performances from Thursday, April 27, through Saturday, April 30. Already, attendees are asking when next year’s conference will be.

Arreon A. Harley-Emerson, organizer of the conference and director of music and operations at the Choir School of Delaware, says he feels comfortable saying that the program is the first of its kind to look at Black music across time and genres in that light. For proof, he cites The National Association of Negro Musicians, formed in 1919, to teach Blacks to take on music ministries in churches. That organization also is devoted to the conservation, encouragement and advocacy for all genres of the music of African-Americans and tracks events involving it. It has no records of a

CONFERENCE HAILING BLACK MUSICIANS, COMPOSERS TAKING PLACE IN WILMINGTON

conference such as “Bent, but not Broken,” Harley-Emerson said.

The conference—originally scheduled for spring 2021 but moved because of COVID-19—has its roots in an invitation from Harley-Emerson to conductor and composer Jason Max Ferdinand of Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL, to guest direct a Choir School performance.

It’s a Small World connection: Harley-Emerson grew up in Baltimore, MD, and met Ferdinand when Harley-Emerson was a boy attending Morgan State University events and Ferdinand was a graduate student there. Now they cross paths in many ways and organizations.

When Harley-Emerson, who is now earning his Ph.D. from Temple University and active in many national groups, told others about the invitation, they said they wanted to come and bring their choirs. All that interest turned into the conference.

Ferdinand will conduct the Choir School singers Friday, April 29, after Harley-Emerson’s 7:30 p.m. keynote speech.

“Representation matters,” Harley-Emerson said. “It matters in education and it also matters in the arts. This is exactly the kind of conference that I wish I had when I was a kid when I did not see myself represented on the podium.”

Choir school Development Officer Karen Kegelman pointed to its singers’ performance of “The Ballad of the Brown King” at Winterthur Museum at Christmas. It was only the third time the cantata composed by Margaret Bonds with lyrics by Langston Hughes had been performed in public, she said, even though the piece received critical acclaim when it debuted in December 1954.

“It’s so beautiful,” Kegelman said. “I was like, wow, if this is just one example of the music that’s out there that we haven’t heard, we really need to hear more of it.”

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PADUA STUDENTS GET HANDS-ON STEM EXPERIENCE AT UD, CHEMOURS LABS

The company's 312,000-square-foot hub on the Star Campus features more than 130 labs specializing in fluoroproducts, chemical solutions and titanium technologies. The facility is home to 330 of the company's researchers and scientists, consolidating most of the company's U.S. innovation efforts.

Through Discover Learning, freshmen and sophomores at Padua are assigned to create toy prototypes, which junior and seniors are assigned a task. The toys include simple machines. The students design and build them and then are asked to present their results to industry representatives, professors, judges and alumni. Presentations are given in December, with reps from the toy company Melissa & Doug in attendance.

"The students get really excited about the class, especially on the build days," Szurkowski said. "There's so many advanced tools in UD's labs, and they're like kids in a candy store."

Maggie Morris, a student in the class, said that working at a college lab helps students who want real-world engineering experience. "My favorite part of the class is the build day at UD," she said, "We were able to use tools that we do not have in the classroom and receive help from professional engineers."

Szurkowski had been teaching a similar year-long engineering class using a Boston Museum of Science curriculum. What she really wanted, though, was a semester-long class so more students could participate. With the help of Buckley, the Discover Learning class was created. Since then, Szurkowski said enrollment in engineering classes has gone up and after taking the hands-on class, many of her students register for additional classes in the field.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

The engineering students of Padua Academy are making their ideas come to life through the engineering facilities and a 3D design lab at the University of Delaware.

Two years ago, the all-girls school in Wilmington partnered with Chemours Discovery Hub at the University of Delaware STAR Campus in an effort to connect Padua's students with industry experts. The young women are part of a Padua class called Discover Learning. It was created by Cheryl Szurkowski and Dr. Jenny Buckley, a UD associate professor in mechanical engineering, in 2020 to give the Padua students a better understanding of what engineering processes entail by providing real-life construction of products.

Chemours is a chemistry company based in Wilmington that spun off from the Dupont Co. It has said it plans to invest \$50 million in STEM education and to fill 50% of all its STEM positions globally with women.

April



POLICE K-9S AMAZE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Department. Most K-9s that run through the unit are either a German shepherd or Belgian malinois. The department gets the dogs when they are between one and two years old and the K-9s typically work until they are seven to nine.

The pups go through a six-month training process. The first month or so is exclusively dedicated to the officer bonding with the dog and forming a relationship. “You’re just playing and building that rapport,” said Cockerham.

Then comes obedience training. The dogs have been trained in Europe, and officers must learn and practice speaking commands in another language. Cockerham said this part of training is surprisingly tiring because officers are essentially playing tug of war with a 70- to 100-pound dog all day while studying commands in a foreign language.

The next stage of training is tracking and scent discrimination. The dogs have a much more developed sense of smell than humans. The K-9s are trained to be able to identify drugs, weapons and explosives. Conine asked the crowd to raise their hands if they thought the dogs were trained to attack. All the children’s hands shot up. Conine said that that’s a misconception. The job of K-9s actually is tracking guns, explosives and drugs, he said.

Sometimes the dogs are used to chase or subdue a suspected criminal who has any of those. The dogs have a big advantage over officers using guns or tasers, Conine said. The animals can be called back, he pointed out. Once an officer fires a gun or taser, the firing can’t be undone, he said. But dogs can be commanded to retreat and pull back if a criminal is cooperative and surrenders.

To show the kids how that happens, Cockerham wrapped a dog’s protective vest around her arm like a sleeve and stood about 100 feet away from Conine and EXO. Conine shouted a Czech command, and EXO sprang from a sitting position into an all-out sprint to Cockerham, where he clamped his jaws around her arm.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

Children at Highlands Elementary School made some furry friends on April 14. Wilmington police officers Andrew Conine and Hailey Cockerham brought their two K-9 partners, EXO and Baylis, to the school to demonstrate to a group of 30 kindergarteners, third-graders and fourth-graders how the animals help. The children were thrilled with every move the dogs made as the officers went through a checklist of commands for the dogs.

EXO, a German shepherd, and Baylis, a Belgian malinois-shepherd mix, jumped over fences, pursued a target, and, most importantly, sat long enough to be petted by each child.

When Conine asked the students where they thought the dogs came from, one student shouted “from the pet shop.” The dogs both came from Europe—EXO is spoken to in Czech by Conine while Cockerham speaks to Baylis in French.

A broker called **Tarheel Canine** picks out the dogs from overseas and brings them to North Carolina, where they are selected and picked up by the Wilmington Police



BY BETSY PRICE

Fancy a beer or a glass of wine with buddies? The Mercury's got you.

Craving a cup of tea, perhaps a blend named for area sites? The Mercury's got you.

Seeking a light lunch or dinner that's vegetarian, but you'd never know it was? The Mercury's got you.

Looking for a nice patio to dine or drink in the sun? The Mercury Cafe and Teahouse in Historic New Castle has got you covered.

The dining scene newcomer, which opened in December but has been closed for the last week because of COVID-19, expects to reopen Thursday, in time for the return of A Day in Old New Castle on Saturday.

Already a local haunt in its warren-like 1682 building across from the old New Castle County Courthouse Museum, The Mercury is run by husband and husband Aaron Vederman and Dwayne Foster.

THE MERCURY FAST BECOMING COMMUNITY HUB IN OLD NEW CASTLE

Foster long has made a career in the hospitality industry, starting when he was 15. Vederman, a neuropsychologist by day, has immersed himself in the world of tea after becoming fascinated by it in grad school. The pair met in 2007 in Detroit, MI, and as the relationship bloomed, so did their desire to reshape their lives.

"I've always wanted to open my own bar and restaurant," Foster said. "Aaron was like, 'Wouldn't it be cool if we could open a place that did a bar and with tea, and we could have two bars together?'"

After moving to Portland, OR, and living there nine years, Vederman began to feel the pull to come home to Delaware, where his parents and other family members live. On a visit home in 2019, he and Foster drove through Historic New Castle while they were killing a little time on the way to the Philadelphia International Airport.

"We were just sort of exploring, knowing that we were probably going to leave Portland at some point," Vederman said. Foster had never seen old New Castle. On the drive, they spotted the building at 206 Delaware St. for sale. It had been a cafe.

"It just ticked all the boxes," Vederman said. "The ability to move closer to my family. The ability to open up a bar-restaurant and live above it. A really cool, historic town. So we just sort of began the process."

By April 2020, they moved in. The living quarters didn't have a kitchen and they focused first on making the living space workable, installing a kitchen on the floor above the cafe.

As the COVID-19 lockdown continued to rage, Foster worked a little here and there as a server or a bartender and Vederman did some virtual work.

That left Foster with a lot of free time, and he decided to take on the build out of the cafe himself, with the help of Vederman, family and friends. They hired plumbers or electricians for infrastructure work, but did the remodeling themselves.

"We had time, and it saved us a bunch of money in the end," Foster said. "We didn't have to take loans or take on investors or partners or anything like that. So we just took our time."

That meant the Mercury opened later than they meant for it to, but when it did open Dec. 11, more people were getting out, even with the rise in Omicron cases. People found it almost immediately and as the weather has warmed, the number of customers has risen, too. Visitors will find the patio, teahouse and tiny bar area buzzing.

Many guests recognize each other or start conversations across the room. When Vederman talks to customers seated at tables as he works, diners listen and ask questions. Locals often chime in when tourists ask questions, and those can spark long conversations.

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ODYSSEY TEACHER WINS NATIONAL CHARTER AWARD FOR COMBATING HUNGER

“It’s been very challenging teaching during COVID,” Tracy told Delaware LIVE News. “To be recognized, particularly at a national level, definitely helps uplift my spirits and makes me feel appreciated.”

Tracy said the award is more a reflection of her students’ efforts than her own. “As educators, everything we do is not for any sort of recognition,” she said. “It’s all for serving our students.”

A native of Orange County, CA, Tracy began her career teaching history, but now focuses on STEM and social studies. She teaches six classes, including AP Human Geography, Human Geography and Civics, and a dual-enrollment U.S. history course in partnership with Delaware Technical Community College.

Tracy also runs the food studies career pathway, where she teaches students about food through the lens of culture, environment, power and history. The program also provides students an opportunity to work in Odyssey’s Hydroponic Learning Lab.

“Ms. Tracy is a changemaker because she single-handedly brought the hydroponics learning lab to Odyssey and helped develop an entire career pathway,” said Noelle Jackson, a senior in Tracy’s food studies pathway. “She’s a self-starter and really believes in lifelong learning and focuses on the journey of learning.”

When Tracy isn’t gardening, cooking and spending time with her family, she’s getting her students out and about in the community.

During the pandemic, Tracy and her students identified a need in the community that their garden could help address: hunger. Since the pandemic began, the garden has produced more than 5,000 pounds of fresh vegetables for donation.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

Melissa Tracy’s passion for service and dedication to ensuring success for younger generations is part of the reason she was one of 10 charter school teachers in America to win the 2022 Changemaker Award.

The award, presented by the **National Alliance for Public Charter Schools**, is given to individuals who positively influence their charter school, bring innovation and creativity to solve problems, and consistently lift voices around them.

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE

NO MEALS WHEELS DELAWARE

May



MEET DELAWARE'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR, BRANDYWINE'S JAHSHA TABRON

Tabron graduated with a degree in elementary and special education from Delaware State University in 2000 and a master's degree in school leadership and instruction from Wilmington University in 2004. She's taught at Brandywine High for all 22 years of her career thus far.

Being chosen as Delaware's Teacher of the Year by the Department of Education in October has raised her profile, even in the halls of Brandywine High.

"My mom was on Facebook and she screamed, 'Is this your teacher?' She was even more excited than me," said Emmi Quercetti, a student of Tabron. "I thought it was amazing that I was getting taught by someone who is the best teacher in our state. That's pretty awesome."

Anthony Drummond, another Tabron student, said that the award brought her closer to a lot of her students, specifically those who might not have been as outgoing in class, like himself. "I didn't really talk to anyone at the beginning of the year, and I barely even remembered her name," he said. "I had English with her the day she won and I congratulated her, and after that is when I really got to know Ms. Tabron."

Drummond said his favorite thing about her is "she keeps it absolutely straightforward with her students."

"She won't lie to you if you need help, and if you have bad grades, she'll tell you exactly what you need to do to improve them," he said. "She's not a mean teacher at all, and she's one of the teachers that makes us feel empowered because she is so direct and holds us to high standards."

Quercetti also loves her no-nonsense teaching style. "If you're acting like a clown, she'll tell you straight up to cut it out," she said. "I love how when I have questions, she asks me questions to create a dialogue to help me reach an answer, rather than just telling us the answer."

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

Jahsha Tabron's passion for English and literature exploded after reading Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" in her 11th grade honors English class in the Bronx. Thirty years later, Tabron—who is Delaware's Teacher of the Year for 2022—leads her own English class at Brandywine High School.

Tabron, whose lively and passionate attitude explodes off the screen in a Zoom call, has a dual certification. She primarily teaches special education students, hoping to create an environment of inclusivity, comfort and authenticity, she said. Her classroom trademark is honesty without belittling, and she says one of her favorite things she's noticed in her 22 years in the classroom is students stepping up to take leadership roles.

"I remember my 11th grade English teacher, Carmen Mason, introduced us to literature," said Tabron, who teaches ninth grade English. "I remember reading those two plays and thinking to myself, 'This is amazing,' and I think that's what sparked my love for English."

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO EAT AT BARDEA STEAK

BY PAM GEORGE

We fully intended to get a steak. After all, that's what carnivores normally do when visiting a steakhouse. But once we entered **Bardea Steak's** sleek space, we succumbed to the allure of the unexpected. And there's much that's surprising about the new Market Street restaurant in the heart of downtown Wilmington.

The steakhouse quietly opened this week with nary a phone number on the website. (Tip: use **Open Table**.) We snagged a 6:45 p.m. reservation on a Tuesday and a parking spot near the newcomer's sister restaurant, **Bardea Food & Drink**. We strolled by alfresco diners tucking into the Italian cuisine, and made our way to Bardea Steak.

Seasoned restaurateur Scott Stein and chef Antimo DiMeo separated their two businesses with a cosmopolitan courtyard divided into conversation sections with coffee table fire pits, plantings and fairy lights. In the future, guests dining outside can enjoy selections from each restaurant; the point-of-sale system will send the information to the respective kitchens.

But let's talk about the inside of Bardea Steak. The owners have made do while awaiting furniture shipments, but the attention to detail still shines. Votive candles softly pulse under translucent domes, the gleaming cutlery is arranged on a rest, and

napkins are folded into triangular packages. A statue of a bull, created by a Philadelphia artist, calmly gazes at the mixture of booths and tables.

The energy is an integral part of the ambiance, from the rolling sound of the flames in the open kitchen to the light laughter at the bar to the tableside preparations that turn strangers at neighboring tables into friends. "What was that?" "What did you have?" "How was it?"

Veteran server Chris Unruh—wearing a crisp white shirt, knotted tie and mustard-colored apron—is the "meat sommelier." He's on hand to explain the steak side of the menu, which includes a page with information on the breeds and another on the cuts—but no prices. (He can supply that as well.) The approach provides diners with an education—Meat 101—which is either appreciated or annoying, depending on your interest level. Some people just want to see the cut and the price tag.

But Bardea Steak isn't that type of steakhouse. Instead, the **James Beard semifinalists** are creating an experience that includes finding the breed and cut that will please your individual palate and pocketbook.

So, why didn't we order a steak? Simply put, the rest of the menu was too tempting to bypass. Few steakhouses extend red meat options to kangaroo, elk, bison, ostrich and beef heart (empanada). These meats aren't on the menu for the fun factor. DiMeo demonstrates that there is more to the animal kingdom than mass-produced cattle. (All the meat comes from small farms.) He's also showing his guests that all parts of an animal have merit and using them smartly defines sustainability.

Known best for Italian cuisine, the **James Beard-nominated** chef lets his imagination travel the globe at Bardea Steak. For example, we ordered plantain tamale with oxtail barbacoa delivered in a small white steamer with red and green salsa. Once the tidy packets hit the plate, the steamer is whisked away. It was not the only show that night—or ethnically inspired cuisine.

Yakiniku features unseasoned squares of Wagyu cooked tableside on a hibachi decorated with Japanese characters. Seasonings include salt—use with caution—and harrisa ssamjang, a spicy Korean barbecue sauce.

Every presentation is beyond pretty. For instance, tender sweet dates en nogada (with walnuts) are studded with pomegranate seeds and served with crispy chicken skin "chips."

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BY BETSY PRICE

A surprise \$900,000 donation from philanthropist **MacKenzie Scott** will double the annual budget of the **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware**.

The organization, which pairs at-risk children with adult mentors, is still discussing how to use the donation, which the organization did not apply for or know about until the staff got a call, said Anya Lindsey-Jenkins, executive director.

The organization now has 1,100 children paired with mentors and would like to dramatically expand that, especially in Sussex County, Lindsey-Jenkins said. Even before the donation, 125 children were waiting for matches.

BIG BROTHERS, SISTERS SNAGS \$900,000 MACKENZIE SCOTT DONATION

Big Brothers and Big Sisters' annual budget usually is a little under \$1 million. The Delaware group's donation was part of the \$122 million that Scott gave the national organization. The Delaware group was one of only 38 of the 232 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies to receive a gift.

An author who divorced Amazon founder **Jeff Bezos**, Scott is worth \$36.2 billion, according to **Forbes**. She is considered one of the five richest women in the world. With many other billionaires, she pledged to give away a lot of her money in her lifetime.

Among her donations is \$20 million to **Delaware State University**, \$10 million to the **YMCA of Delaware** and \$3.5 million to the **Sussex County Habitat for Humanity**.

Lindsey-Jenkins said the organization was told that Scott's foundation had researched them and their impact before making the donation, which is unrestricted.

"It's definitely a testimony to the work we're doing in the community and the need for mentoring in Dela-

ware," she said. "It is up to us to determine what we think the community needs and how we decide how we want to serve it using those funds."

The donation was also the largest to the national and the Delaware organization since its founding in 1964.

Right now, Big Brothers finds children through schools, their families and other organizations. Adults—from the age of 18 to 70—all volunteer. All volunteers are rigorously vetted, Lindsey-Jenkins said. Both the families and the volunteers, who are not paid in any way, go through training about what to expect.

The nonprofit also creates events for the "littles" and "bigs" to attend together and bond over. A recent trip to an Eagles game for sports-loving pairs proved popular, she said.

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What does a vibrant preschool-12 learning community look like?

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June



BING'S BAKE & BREW AIMS TO RAISE ITS PROFILE IN NEWARK

BY BETSY PRICE

With University of Delaware students largely gone for the summer, **Bing's Bake & Brew** in Newark is focusing on wooing local residents with its coffee-based drinks and fresh pastries.

Some of its popular monthly specials are perfectly chilled for summer's heat. Its June special, for example, is a cold Red Velvet White Mocha topped with whipped cream, succeeding May's Birthday Cake Freeze and the wildly popular French Toast Latte.

Guests can pair their drinks with a bagel, croissant, muffin, Danish—or just dive straight into the new Lemon Raspberry Strip, a confection made right down the road at **Bing's Bakery**—out of layers of lemon and raspberry mousse on top of sponge cake. The idea of pairing Bing's baked goods with coffee seemed natural to the family running the bakery.

"I'm just a coffee fan personally," said manager Vinny Guzzi. "It just kind of gets me going in the morning and it's just a part of my routine. I also think it's a community thing that helps bring people together, just the start-up coffee."

The son of Bing's owners Carla and Tom Guzzi, Vinny had been a baker there when he developed an allergy to raw flour, which is hard to avoid in a bakery. He worked out front before moving to manage the coffee shop.

One of the coffee shop's selling points, the Guzzis say, is that Bing's Bake & Brew uses a coffee you can't get anywhere else in Delaware. They spent a lot of time researching which beans they wanted to use.

Two brands were neck to neck when they settled on **CrimsonCup** out of Ohio.

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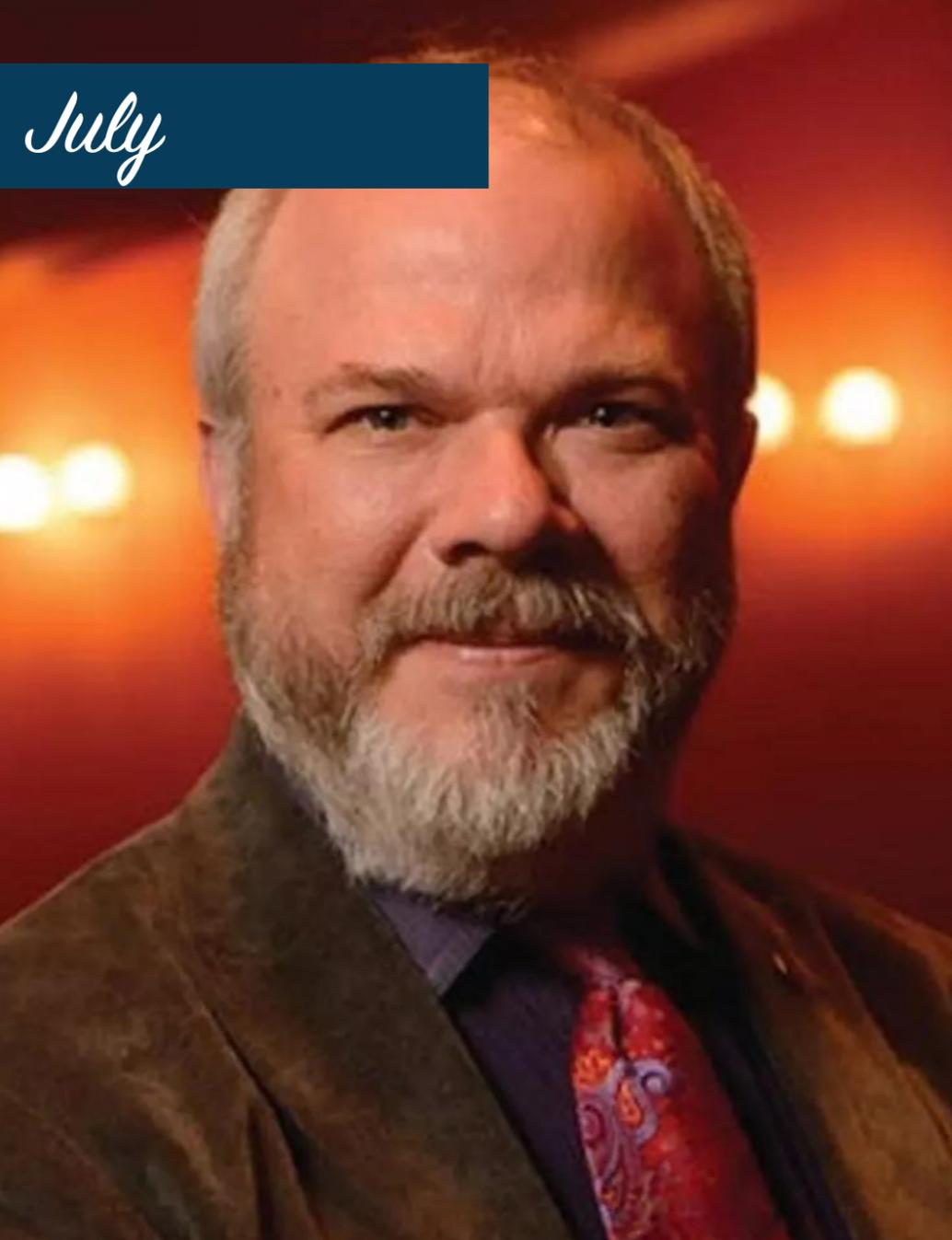
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BY BETSY PRICE

The executive director of **The Grand Opera House** will retire in September after 16 years of steering the fortunes of Wilmington's premier performing arts institution. Mark Fields started with The Grand in 2006 as a marketing consultant, was appointed managing director in December of that year and then swapped jobs with the-then executive director in December 2014.

MARK FIELDS TO RETIRE FROM THE GRAND AFTER 16 YEARS

"It does seem like the right time, both professionally and personally," Fields said. "The Grand is in a really good position now, having emerged from the pandemic and with the success that we've had in fundraising. We're in a really good place so I feel comfortable making room for somebody else and new ideas and new energy.

"From a personal point of view, my partner retired a year and a half ago and this creates an opportunity for us to enjoy retirement together. We have a lot of interests and a lot of things we want to do, and so it all seemed to come together."

FIELDS ADVOCATED FOR ARTS

While at The Grand, Fields, 62, has been a tireless spokesman for both public and private support of the arts as well as a constant cheerleader for downtown Wilmington.

"Mark Fields was certainly the right guy at the right time for The Grand," said Brian DiSabatino, chairman of The Grand's board of directors, in a press release. "During his entire tenure he showcased not only The Grand, but the relevancy of the arts in Delaware. Carrying us through the most difficult time in our history, he'll be able to look back fondly that he left The Grand as an amazing beacon of hope, joy and community."

Fields said his proudest accomplishment at The Grand was helping it get through the worst of the pandemic.

"That was just an amazing challenge to be a performing arts center that can't do performances," he said.

The Grand managed to keep the core staff together, but had to lay off 60% of the staff for about two years, with the promise that they would be called back as soon as possible.

"When we were in a position to hire everybody back, 85% of the people that we laid off came back," Fields said. "Some of them quit jobs, other jobs that they'd taken, to be able to come back here and I just think that speaks volumes about this organization and this group of people who work here, that it's all in service of a mission that we all believe in very deeply."

He and Wendy Ho Schnell plan to travel, Fields said. "We're actually going on a bike trip in the Netherlands this summer and have also planned a trip to California's national parks in October," he said. "I think we're going to New Orleans in November, so we're not wasting any time."

An enthusiastic apiarist known for keeping bees on the **roof** of The Grand, Fields has been training a bee-prentice who will take over the rooftop hives when he leaves. "I won't have a key to the building anymore," he pointed out. But he does have more hives in a nearby community garden.

Fields has no plans to work elsewhere. "I can't imagine another professional experience that will be able to compare to the time I have spent here at The Grand," he said in the release. "It seems right to go out on such a high note."

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TROLLEY SQUARE PROJECT TURNS UTILITY BOXES INTO ART

BY BETSY PRICE

Sungmin Bobbyak expected that painting a ladybug mural on a utility box near the Trolley Square fountain plaza would be a solitary experience. It wasn't.

Drivers honked and yelled compliments out of their windows as they drove by. People who were walking by stopped to talk, some thanking her profusely for creating the public artwork.

"I thought I would go there and I would pretty much be ignored. I'd just do my thing and leave," Bobbyak said. "It was so much more about community than I thought it would be."

That sense of community is exactly what organizers want to enhance. Her ladybug mural is one of 18 organized by Wilmington City Councilman **Nathan Field** and the **Delaware Avenue Community Association**.

The artwork on the utility boxes range from a pair of gold eyes staring at you out of an abstract painting by James Wyatt to a portrait of nearby Rockford Tower by Lelane Rossouw Bancroft to a Gogh Trolley Square incorporating bits of Vincent Van Gogh's Starry Night by Karen Yarnall.

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BLACK DOULAS AIM TO REDUCE ETHNIC BIRTH DISPARITIES

BY BETSY PRICE

Adrienne Dawson’s breathing was becoming erratic and panicky as her contractions increased while she labored last month with her first child at Christiana Care.

Doula Ariandra Clark leaned over and rested her hand calmly on Dawson’s chest, and they looked into each other’s eyes.

“Calm down,” Clark said kindly. If Dawson kept breathing like that, she would pass out, Clark told her.

Dawson relaxed a bit, began controlling her breathing better and a little while later welcomed her daughter, Brynn-Leigh.

It may not sound like much, the Dover mom said, but that brief touch illustrates the emotional and physical value of having a doula in the delivery room.

“That was a pretty special moment,” Dawson said.

WHAT A DOULA DOES

A doula works as a pregnancy and labor assistant of sorts, providing information as well as physical and emotional comfort before, during and after birth. Doulas don’t provide medical care of any kind or accompany patients to medical appointments. But Delaware hospitals and birthing centers welcome them as a member of the delivery team who is focused on the mom’s well-being.

That can be especially important to people of color, said Erica Allen, a doula whose nonprofit Do Care Doula Foundation Inc. is sponsoring a doula training

Aug. 20-21 for Black doulas. Classes will be taught by Birth Arts International with trainer Ashanti Rivera coming from Connecticut.

One reason Allen wants to focus on people of color is that Black mothers in Delaware are 52% more likely to birth a preterm baby, according to the March of Dimes.

“The training that we provide teaches our Doulas how to support birthing people/moms through pregnancy, childbirth and their immediate postpartum,” Allen said. “We go over nutrition, evidence-based research of medical conditions that may require lifestyle adjustments, birth plans, comfort techniques for labor, breastfeeding support and so much more.”

So far, her program has assisted in more than 30 Black births.

While some doulas can be paid up to \$1,000 to handle a birth, many of the moms don’t have to pay because the state and others have given grants to doula programs to increase the care for moms.

A friend recommended Clark to Dawson, who says she would “10 out of 10” recommend having a doula.

A WATER BIRTH FOR BABY NO. 3

So would Talaya Hayes of Dover.

In her first two pregnancies, she only wanted her husband in the room because she felt like so much chaos surrounds a birth. She realized, though, that her husband was having his own parental experiences and she wanted



him to be able to enjoy the moment without having to focus on her.

She thought the family couldn’t afford a doula, but was told by a friend on the Moms of Delaware, or MOD Squad, Facebook page that she might qualify for one of the grants.

Like Dawson, Hayes talked to several doulas before settling on the one she used, a practice encouraged by doulas to ensure a good relationship.

Hayes’ search was simplified somewhat because she was having her baby at The Birth Center in Newark, and they required doulas to be vaccinated. That limited the pool a bit.

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BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware Theater Company’s executive director Bud Martin will retire in 2023 and turn control of the spotlight over to Matt Silva, who has been managing director for four years. During Martin’s decade at the riverfront theater, he helped restore its luster, which was at a low point when he took over.

He poured a lot of his own money into the theater’s budget and leveraged show business connections to bring in crowd-pleasing shows that were working out the kinks in hopes of hitting the boards on Broadway. That also served to enhance the theater’s regional clout.

Martin directed at least one show a season and even took the stage himself as an actor for only the second time in 37 years to appear in 2018’s “Heisenberg.”

“I have been honored to lead DTC for 10 years, working with a talented staff to position the theater as one of

BUD MARTIN TO LEAVE DELAWARE THEATRE AFTER DECADE AT HELM

the preeminent regional theaters in this country,” Martin said in a press release. “I’m deeply grateful for the tremendous support I’ve had over the past 10 years from community leaders such as Jack and Carla Markell and Secretary of State Jeff Bullock, as well as from countless trusted board members.”

BUD MARTIN LEGACY

Among the productions Martin brought to town were “Because of Winn-Dixie,” based on Kate Camilla’s book; “Diner,” based on the popular movie; “A Sign of the Times,” based on Petula Clark songs; “Something Wicked This Way Comes,” based on the novel by Ray Bradbury; “**Maurice Hines is Tappin’ Thru Life**” as told by the dancer himself and “**Other World**,” a new piece showcasing diverse talent set against online gameplay.

Those shows came with splashy names, too, including composer and writer Nell Benjamin, songwriter and composer Duncan Shiekh, filmmaker Barry Levinson, pop icon Sheryl Crow, writer Bruce Vilanch and dancer Maurice Hines.

Martin cast celebrity actors—Michael Learned, Peter Strauss, Donna Pescow, Harry Hamlin and Stephanie Powers among them—in some shows.

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DELAWARE SYMPHONY, MUSICIANS HAIL CONTRACT AS 'NEW CHAPTER'

BY BETSY PRICE

Strike up the band: **The Delaware Symphony** and its musicians union have reached a contract agreement that both sides are hailing as a milestone in their relationship.

The American Federation of Musicians Local 21—whose members perform with the **Delaware Symphony Orchestra**—have unanimously approved a three-year collective bargaining agreement renewal. It will be in effect until Aug. 31, 2025.

The symphony administration and the musicians have in recent decades sharply disagreed over pay, the number of performances and other rules governed by the contract, particularly after financial difficulties forced the organization to cancel its 2013-2014 season. The contract governs not only pay issues, but who can be

asked to play; the number of times musicians will be hired for events; work conditions, such as the temperature of outdoor performances and transportation to events held outside a concert hall; and more.

The new agreement includes regular pay increases for Delaware Symphony musicians as well as additional contracted services and expanded community outreach opportunities.

“The positive experience of these negotiations represents nothing less than a historic shift in the relationship between the musicians of the Orchestra, Local 21, and management,” said DSO Executive Director J.C. Barker.

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September



BY BETSY PRICE

A year ago, Carrie and Patrick Gray received a text out of the blue asking if they were interested in buying a home care business.

“Whaaaaaaaattttt,” they both thought.

“Say yes and let’s see what this is all about,” Patrick told Carrie.

That set off a year-long process that ended Sept. 30, when their deal to buy Griswold Home Care of New Castle County closed, a few days shy of that Oct. 3, 2021 email. They declined to reveal the price.

Now the couple will frequently be going to work together for the first time in their marriage, with Carrie as CEO handling the back office and Patrick as chief operations officer handling the day-to-day work. It will

NEW OWNERS OF GRISWOLD HOME CARE DIDN'T SEE THIS COMING

mean a few changes for the couple that’s been married for 16 years.

One evening recently after working together at Griswold’s Kirkwood Highway Office, Carrie turned to Patrick to ask, as she usually did, “How was your day?” and then quickly added, “Oh, wait. I know how your day was.”

The couple had known for a while that they wanted to buy a business. When the call came, Patrick immediately speculated that it was Griswold, because they had known owner Anne Eidschun for years through the Rotary Club and other civic groups.

Eidschun had retired from one job a decade ago when she decided she wasn’t ready to quit working and became interested in home health care. She was chosen by its retiring owner to take over.

“I think if you don’t have a passion for serving others, you’re not going to get into this business,” Patrick said. “And if you truly feel that, it doesn’t necessarily feel like a business or a chore when you have the ability to help the people what we serve on a daily basis.”

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BREW HAHA!'S NEW AVENUE NORTH SHOP TO OPEN MONDAY

BY BETSY PRICE

Brew HaHa! opened its latest coffee shop in Avenue North on Oct. 3, with decor designed to evoke a 1970s Upper West Side apartment in New York. The shop will be one of the new elements of Avenue North's \$300 million redevelopment of former Astra Zeneca property off U.S. 202 that aims to provide a work-play-live environment.

Developers Delle Donne & Associates wanted to focus on local brands and reached out to Brew HaHa! owner Alisa Morkides to see if she was interested.

"They didn't want a Starbucks or chain," she said. "And they basically made us an offer we couldn't refuse."

BREW HAHA!'S LOCAL FLAVOR

Brew HaHa!'s nearby Concord Pike location needed updating, and Morkides—who has been on quite the tear upgrading her locations, particularly in Greenville and Trolley Square—loved the idea of being part of the Avenue North project.

The new shop, at 1000 Renaissance Way across from Fairfax Shopping Center, will include a 4,000-square-foot interior, a 1,400-square-foot three-season patio with Space Age stylings and a conference room.

"We really want to focus on getting business people in," she said.

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She expects people who like to take a break from working in an office or at home by working in a coffee shop also may want a space to hold meetings.

Morkides likes the Avenue North space so much that she's moving the company's headquarters into the building.

Avenue North will serve Brew HaHa!'s trademark espresso coffees, and mimic Trolley Square's coffee, pastries and extended sandwiches menu. Greenville will remain her only full restaurant adding all-day

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WILL THIS REPUBLICAN IN SOLID BLUE DISTRICT WIN AGAIN?

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Delaware's 9th Representative District is one of New Castle County's last remaining Republican holdouts, and Democrat Terrell Williams, an attorney, hopes to flip the seat blue in Delaware's Nov. 8 general election.

Rep. **Kevin Hensley**, a Republican, has represented the district where Democrats outnumber Republicans by nearly two-to-one since 2015.

The **district** runs along the Delaware Bayshore from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal to just north of Woodland Beach, with Port Penn and Odessa in between. As of Sept. 2022, there are 9,625 registered Democrats

in the district, 5,756 registered Republicans and 5,098 who are unaffiliated or registered to a third party, according to the Department of Elections.

Hensley, a realtor who has overcome the Republican registration deficit in four elections, is confident he can do it again.

"I think that my message clearly resonates with Democrats and independents," Hensley said in an interview with Delaware LIVE News. "We typically earn about 32% of the Democratic vote and the majority of the independent vote, which is critical."

Hensley acknowledged that on paper, the task looks insurmountable, but his relationship with constituents is one that transcends party lines, he said.

While canvassing the neighborhoods in his district, Hensley said a great number of Democrats tell him, "Kevin, thank you for all you do in serving us—you're the only Republican I'll ever vote for."

"I'm very proud of that," Hensley said. "And I strive to continue to serve everybody in the community, no matter their political affiliation."

Williams, who is a public defender in Salem County, NJ, and a U.S. Army veteran, said Hensley's voting record doesn't align with that sentiment.

"I don't think his opponents in the past have spent a great deal of time focusing on Rep. Hensley's voting record," Williams said. "He's gotten away with pretending to be a nice guy and not really having to speak or defend his record."

"Well, he can't just hide behind the rumor of him being a nice guy. Kevin is going to have to actually talk and defend his legislative record."

That record, Williams said, is one of a politician who is wrong on abortion, wrong on gun control and wrong for his district's working class.

Hensley sees it differently. His primary focus in Dover has been improving the state's education system, he said. As a founding member of the MOT Charter School and former member of the Appoquinimink School District Board of Education, education is something he's been passionate about for his entire career.

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TATE MUSEUM EXHIBIT TO TRAVEL TO DELAWARE ART MUSEUM IN 2023

BY BETSY PRICE

An exhibit from the Tate Museum in London will travel to the Delaware Art Museum in October 2023. It's a major coup for the Wilmington institution, which will be the exhibit's only stop in the United States.

The Tate show "The Rossettis" will focus on the family of British Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and will feature several pieces from the Delaware museum's collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art.

The show will run in London at Tate Britain from April 6 to Sept. 24. It will then travel to Delaware, where it will end the Delaware Museum's Year of Pre-Raphaelites, which has just begun.

The Delaware museum's new Pre-Raphaelite curator Sophie Lynford told patrons Tuesday night that Tate curators told their Delaware counterparts that the Tate

show could not be mounted unless it could borrow the Delaware works.

DELAWARE ART MUSEUM TRIUMPH

Being able to host the Tate show is a crowning moment for the Delaware Art Museum, which not so long ago had essentially been blackballed by the museum world for selling art works to clear debts. For a few years, it was not able to borrow artwork and no one asked to borrow its works.

Then prominent museums began doing the same thing a few years later, and suddenly the Delaware museum looked like a forward-thinking institution wisely making sure it was around to serve the Delaware community for another century.

DelArt officials expect the Tate show to generate a lot

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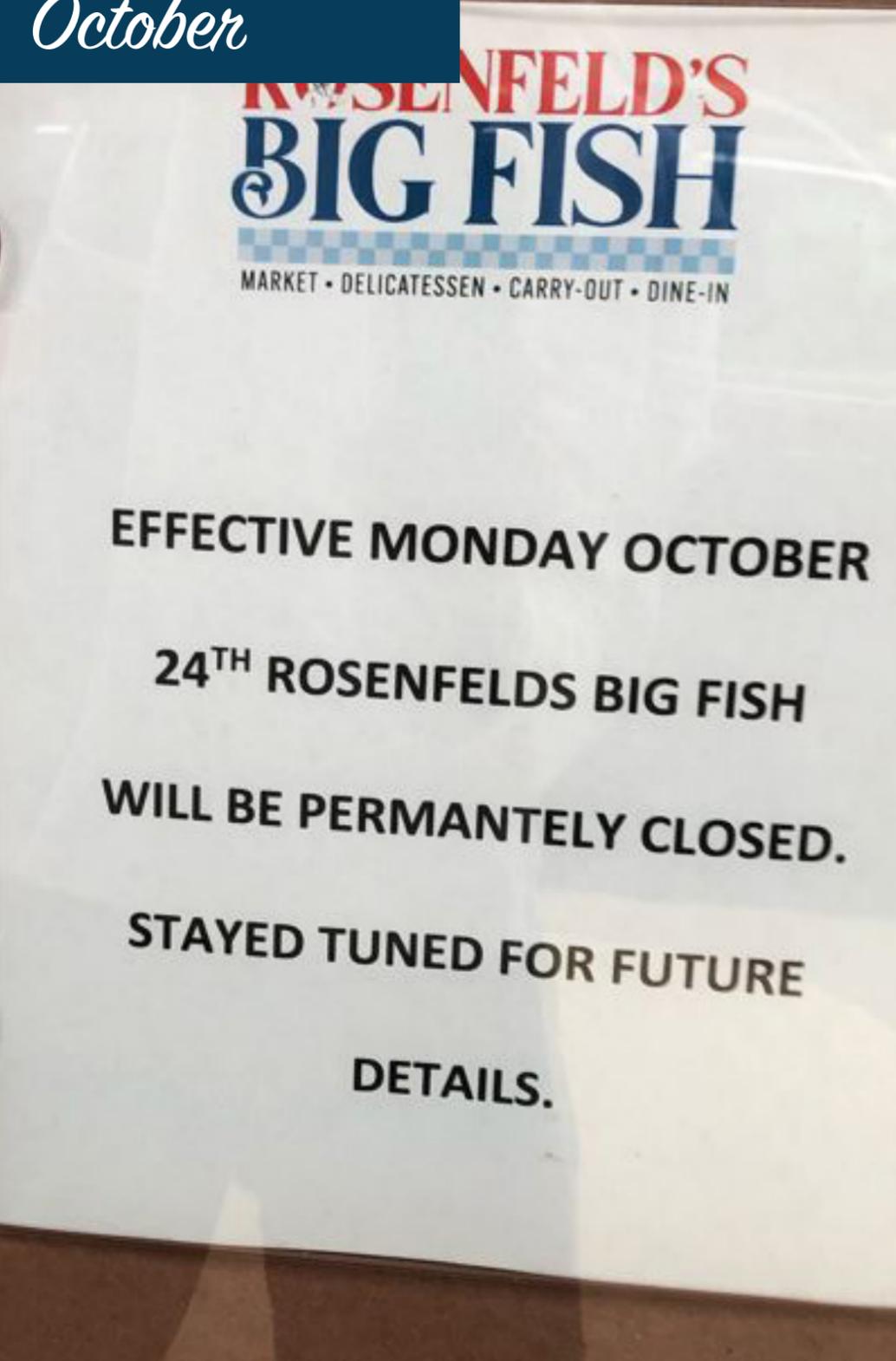
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of excitement in the region and beyond. Lynford said the museum is already getting inquiries from as far as California about when the Tate show will be in Delaware so they can make travel arrangements. Complete details will be announced soon, a museum official said.

The Delaware museum's Pre-Raphaelite collection is one of its three core collections. Said to be the largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite art outside of Britain, the museum's collection started with works collected by Wilmington mill owner Samuel Bancroft and donated to the museum in 1935.

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ROSENFELD'S BIG FISH CLOSES IN BRANDYWINE HUNDRED

BY PAM GEORGE

North Wilmington residents craving matzoh ball soup, fresh mahi or a Reuben sandwich were disappointed today. Rosenfeld’s Big Fish on Marsh Road has closed. A sign on the restaurant door in the Plaza III shopping center noted that the closing was effective as of Oct. 24, after only being open six months.

Neither Warren Rosenfeld, who founded the **Rosenfeld’s Jewish Deli** concept in Ocean City, MD, nor Eric Sugrue, managing partner of **Big Fish Restaurant Group**, would comment on the closure.

The restaurant-market hybrid, which opened on May 12, was not the first joint concept between the two restaurateurs, and the Rosenfeld’s Big Fish in **South Bethany Beach** is doing well.

No doubt that is largely because area residents and visitors are familiar with the two brands. What’s more, the store is near Sea Colony, a colossal condo community without a large grocery store nearby.

The New Castle County closing could have been a double whammy for Rosenfeld, who all weekend waxed nostalgic as the Ocean City site also prepared to close. The landlord planned to demolish the building.



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All that changed when the landlord saw the outpouring of interest from Ocean City customers.

According to Rosenfeld’s Facebook post, the landlord was “so moved by the outpouring of emotion and well wishes from you, our customers, that he contacted me on Friday to see if there was some way to keep us in business in OC. The bottom line is that he has put off demolition of the building until at least October of 2024, and he has reached an agreement with us to pay for a large portion of the needed repairs to the building and equipment.”

Rosenfeld’s has developed a cult-like following of fans who crave the chicken noodle soup and sandwiches so tall you need two hands to hold them.

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October

HISTORY FAVORS RAMONE, NUMBERS FAVOR BURNS IN PIKE CREEK RACE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A suburban New Castle County race for state House is turning into one of most hotly-contested battles of this year’s general election.

Incumbent Republican Rep. **Mike Ramone**, who has been in office since 2009, faces Democrat Dr. **Frank Burns** for the South Pike Creek seat—one of the last held by Republicans in the state’s northernmost county.

Before entering politics, Ramone founded and operated several local businesses, including the Delaware Swim and Fitness Centers, the Delaware Swim Team, Aquatic Management Systems and Ramone’s Landscaping.

Burns is a doctor of biochemistry who owns **BioPrimate**, a company that specializes in microbial community and microbiome research.

Although Ramone is a Republican, the district he represents is not. Of the 19,030 registered voters in the

21st Representative District, 8,517 are Democrats, 5,117 are Republicans, and 5,396 belong to a third or no party.

That’s part of Ramone’s pitch: He’s an independent voice who votes issue-by-issue and his primary concern, he says, isn’t partisan politics—it’s his constituents’ wallets.

Burns doesn’t buy Ramone’s schtick. Try as he might to appeal to the center (and even the left), Ramone is a Republican, Burns says, with all the associated baggage.

With so many national issues bearing down on the election, Ramone must chart a delicate course between what his party wants and what his constituents demand.

Burns said many local issues, like traffic concerns, are apolitical and come down to a lawmaker’s ability to connect residents with the people or agencies who can solve their problems. The result is an untraditional election between a popular Republican in a solid-blue

district and a political newcomer whose views more closely align with the majority.

WHY STAY IN OFFICE, RAMONE?

Incumbent Republican Rep. Mike Ramone, who has been in office since 2009, faces Democrat Dr. Frank Burns for the South Pike Creek seat—one of the last held by Republicans in the state’s northernmost county.

By age 45, Ramone had established a series of successful businesses in northern Delaware and could have easily retired and dedicated the remainder of his life to leisure, he says.

“The businesses were good, people had been good to us and we were in a very strong position financially,” Ramone told Delaware LIVE News. “So I was like, ‘You know what, I think I’m going to try to give back to those who gave to us.’”

Ramone, now 61, said he never considered himself a politician, and still doesn’t. He doesn’t stay in office for the clout, he said, and would “get out of the way and help...if a great Republican or Democrat came along who I felt would be phenomenal for the district.”

This isn’t the year, Ramone said. His daughter, who he undoubtedly feels would meet that criteria, was rezoned out of his territory during decennial redistricting in 2020. She’s **running** for state representative against Rep. Paul Baumbach.

“The reality is,” Ramone said, “when they do redistricting and cut your whole family out of your district and put them in another district, I’m not the kind of guy that walks away from that—I’m not going to get bullied out of being a legislator.”

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BOOST '22 COLLAB RESULTS IN 88% OF CITY STUDENTS GRADUATING

BY JAREK RUTZ

Boost '22, an initiative to raise graduation rates among seniors in the city of Wilmington, resulted in 88% of those seniors crossing the graduation stage last May, nearly 20% more than 2015.

The initiative is a joint effort of five school districts that used one-on-one tutoring and mentoring, college visits, counseling services and more to make sure 435 out of 496 city seniors earned their diplomas. That graduation rate is higher than the **state** average of 87%.

The results of the program were announced Monday night during the **Redding Consortium's** Social Determinants Work Group meeting. The consortium recommends policies and practices to the governor and General Assembly that will help bring educational

equity and improve educational outcomes to students in northern New Castle County.

Brandywine, Christina, Colonial, Red Clay and New Castle Vo-Tech school districts agreed in January 2021 to make it a goal to have every city senior in each district graduate.

Boost '22, the name the districts settled on, benefitted from a previous program led by Colonial Superintendent Jeff Menzer. He had implemented a dropout prevention **plan** at William Penn High in 2012 that resulted in a graduation rate jump of 9% and a dropout rate fall of 6.3% in the decade that followed.

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SNEAK PEEK: CHANCERY MARKET FOOD HALL AND BAR

BY PAM GEORGE

In downtown Wilmington, dining options are abundant, from Le Cavalier to La Fia and The Quoin. But if residents and workers near the Brandywine River crave a variety of culinary choices, they have to schlep for their meals. No longer.

On Thursday, The Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar will open at 1313 N. Market Street, which longtime Delawareans still call the Hercules building. The new food hall features eight food-and-beverage vendors in a distinct indoor/outdoor setting.

A behind-the-scenes look at the new venue proved that the public is in for a treat. When it comes to bringing together multiple food vendors, the 12,000-square-foot hall is breaking the old rules—and that’s a good thing.

CHANCERY MARKET FOUNDERS

The 12-story trophy building has been a conversation

starter since it opened in 1983. The \$80 million project quickly received press for its 12-story atrium with potted trees and plantings.

Hercules, however, is long gone, and now many tenants in the renovated building are law firms, including Potter Anderson & Corroon, Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr and Morris, Nichols, Arsht & Tunnell. The occupants led to The Chancery Market’s name. After all, the Court of Chancery is Delaware’s business claim to fame.

But the market is no corporate café. The culinary collective is the brainchild of Scott Johnson and TSG Hospitality, which has been redeveloping 1313 N. Market St. and 1201 N. Market St. in the central business district.

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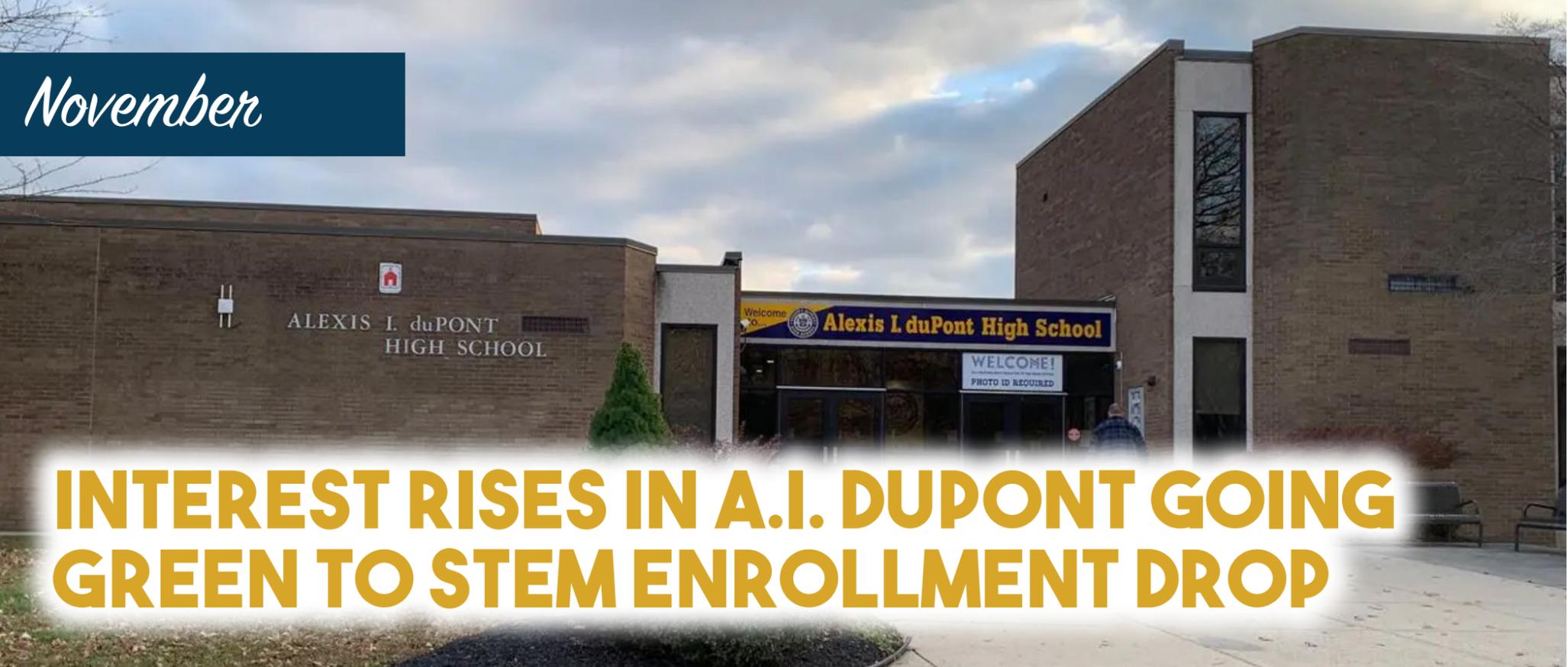
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INTEREST RISES IN A.I. DUPONT GOING GREEN TO STEM ENROLLMENT DROP

BY BETSY PRICE

The leader of a Red Clay task force wants to reinvent Alexis I. du Pont High School as a magnet school with a green campus that offers environmental science classes to prepare students for jobs in the eco-industries.

The rebranding move, which has been warmly endorsed by government officials and others, is designed to help stem the shocking decline in A.I. enrollment, which dropped more than 50% in the last decade, by offering something new to attract more students.

“We decided that was a great thing for A.I. High to become the greenest high school campus in Delaware and in Greenville,” said Victor J. Leonard Jr., a member of the **Red Clay Consolidated School District** board, in an October board meeting.

The idea was met with support from the public at the Nov. 16 board meeting—including state Sen. Laura

Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, a former educator—but also with fretting by some administrators and board members who questioned Leonard’s committee organization and purpose.

Board member Cathy Thompson warned for the second meeting in a row that the task force was not operating under the board’s rules governing committees.

Instead of a loose group of people interested in the idea running around gathering ideas, the task force should have a defined mission, specifically-named members who include teachers, and an expectation of what it would produce, she said Wednesday and in the October meeting.

No matter what Leonard’s group is called, it’s an advisory committee, she said. Leonard, who taught at A.I. for 20 years, had suggested the task force, and himself

as its leader, in the board’s September meeting.

ENROLLMENT DROP

A.I. du Pont, which was founded in 1893, had been an academic and athletic powerhouse for decades before enrollment began slipping in 2009. It got national attention in 2020 as the site for the first campaign event featuring Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris.

Leonard said in September that the district had been talking about how enrollment at A.I. had dropped from 1,220 in 2009 to 547 this year, but was doing nothing about it. The drop in enrollment had decimated achievement scores, athletic teams and extracurricular activities such as band, he and others said.

An October report from the administration listed many reasons for the enrollment decline:

- The district has insisted that charter and magnet schools take more Red Clay students instead of choosing those outside the district.
- Magnet schools such as the Conrad Schools of Science and the Cab Calloway School of the Arts have matured. Conrad, for example, started as a magnet school with 216 students in 2007 while A.I. du Pont had 1,500. By 2021, Conrad had 669 students.
- Wilmington Charter School also takes more Red Clay students.
- Odyssey Charters opened just down the road from A.I. in 2015 and 74 Red Clay students now go there.
- The district stopped busing in 2018 for students who choiced into A.I. du Pont, meaning they had to find their own transportation, and the number of those students dropped.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



BRIDGEWATER JEWELRY: FIVE GENERATIONS, 140 DRAMA-STUDDED YEARS

BY BETSY PRICE

An unassuming corner shop in Historic New Castle will start celebrating its 140th anniversary—and its five generations of owners—on Small Business Saturday (Nov. 26).

The colorful history of **Bridgewater Jewelers** starts with an English immigrant who lost a leg in a wood-chopping accident as a child. It goes on to encompass a grandson who committed suicide in the churchyard across the street before leading to today's Mary Bridgewater, the only one of five children interested in the business.

“One of the unique things is no two generations were ever in the store together,” says Mary.

While the store offers all kinds of jewelry, from costume to high end, and services such as repairs and engraving, Mary said the shop's forte is helping customers design the pieces they want.

She is particularly proud of helping people—especially young men buying engagement rings—find a ring in their price range that suits the young woman they plan to propose to.

Many customers walk in and say they've been told that they need to spend several months of paychecks on a ring, or they'll say they have \$1,000 to spend and ask what they can get for that.

“That's not how we're going to start this conversation,” she tells them. “Sit down. Let's talk about what we're looking for. Tell me about her.”

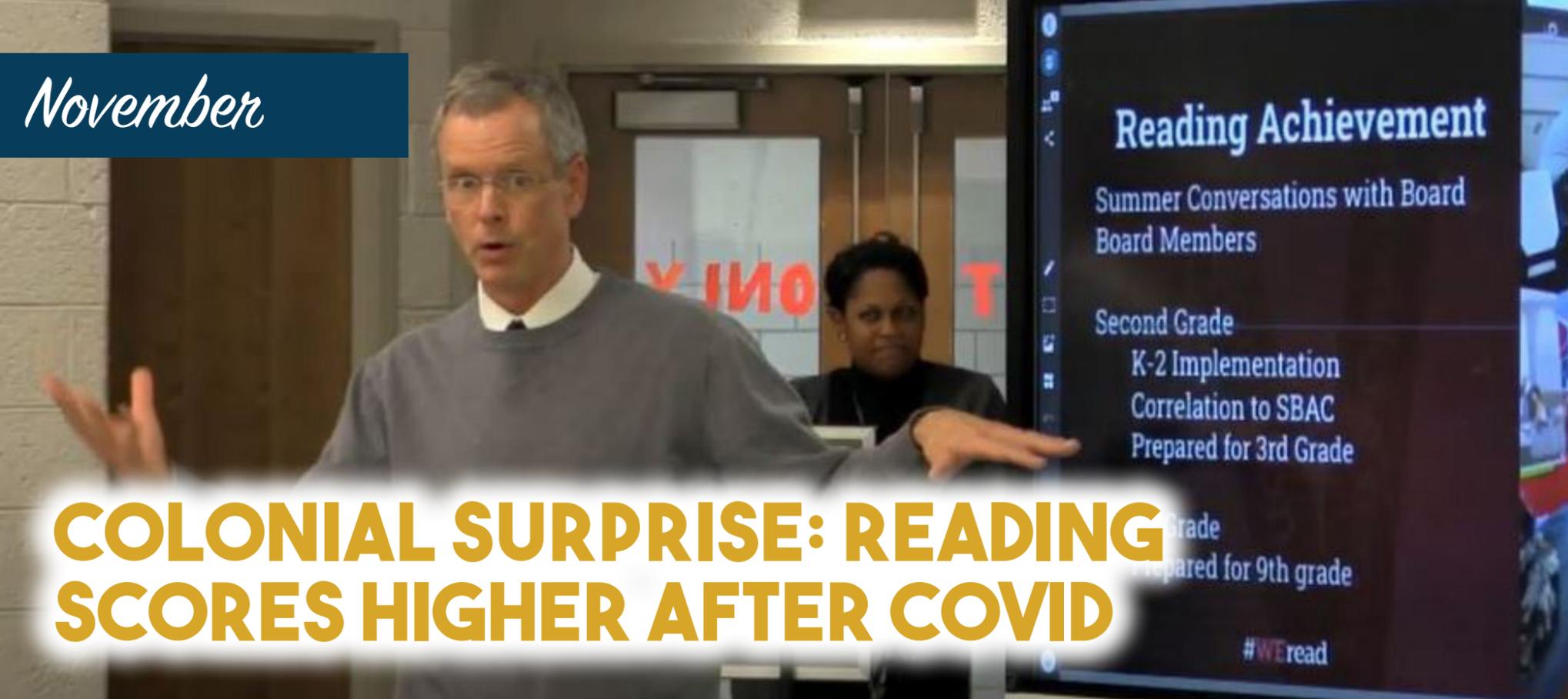
Too many people get caught up in the idea of the expense or showiness of a ring rather than putting thought into what it means and how it suits the person receiving the ring.

She cites the case of a young man from New Jersey who was afraid to tell her that his girlfriend was a bit Goth. She wore black clothes and black eyeliner all the time.

“We ended up with a salt and pepper diamond with black diamonds around it, which was perfect for her,” she said. Those diamonds still have flecks of carbon in them instead of being crystal clear. “We got it into his budget. It's was right for him, and he was elated that I could get something nice in his price range, because they are obviously a little less expensive,” she said.

His fiancée loved it, too.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



COLONIAL SURPRISE: READING SCORES HIGHER AFTER COVID

BY BETSY PRICE

Colonial School District Superintendent Jeffrey D. Menzer unearthed a surprising fact while he was devising a method to track the effectiveness of a new focus on student reading skills and scores. The 2022 eighth graders who had been at Colonial schools since second grade, scored higher on reading proficiency tests than those in eighth grade in 2019, Menzer told the Colonial School Board Tuesday night.

“You’re telling me our post-COVID students outperformed their pre-COVID peers in reading,” the superintendent recalls asking the data team.

That data showed 40.9% of the 2022 eighth graders maintained or improved their ranking as proficient—meaning they met their grade’s standard. But only 35.5% of the 2019 eighth graders did, the data showed.

“I’m hearing all about learning loss and how we fail the students and the staff are panicked that they failed our students during COVID and they’re not doing anything to help them, but our post-COVID cohort actually outperformed the pre-COVID cohort,” Menzer said.

He credited the dedication of teachers who kept trying to help students with schools closed and classes forced into online sessions that were not comfortable for students, teacher or parents.

“Granted, we’re still not meeting the standard. We need to be totally transparent,” Menzer said. “This 40.9% here is low, but it’s higher than it was before COVID. So whatever we did for students to help them stay on track, I believe this is something to be celebrated by every teacher on this staff.”

The comparison pleased Laurisa Schutt, executive director of First State Educate, a nonprofit devoted to improving Delaware’s public schools.

“Menzer is using data analytics to determine what is working and what is not working so his educators know when and how to pivot,” she said. “The outcome is that kids are learning—with proof. Data is not something to be feared for blame—it is valuable information from which to focus precious little time. Well done, Colonial, for leaning into the high stakes of now!”

Britney Mumford, executive director of Delaware-CAN, a nonprofit that encourages everyday citizens to get involved in education, said Colonial’s data is truly encouraging.

“They show us that when we adopt innovative but proven new methods we can expect improvement,” she said. “The dedication of Menzer and the Colonial School District on improving reading proficiency deserves applause but what I really love is their candor on the topic.

“While scores have improved, he doesn’t hesitate that they can’t take their foot off the gas. Hats off to a team that pushed even harder in such trying times. Let’s replicate this success.”

FINDING THE READING SCORES

The system’s discovery comes as the district is spending about \$3 million to buy a new curriculum that gives the district a more comprehensive way to focus on the science of reading.

That money is coming from Colonial’s share of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds designed to help schools cope with problems generated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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A NEW VIEW: ROCKFORD TOWER IS LIT FOR THE HOLIDAYS

BY BETSY PRICE

For the first time, Rockford Tower is lit up for the holidays. Fourteen of the tower’s 16 windows have been trimmed in gold lights and will stay lit into January, says Wilmington City Councilman Nathan Field, who not only masterminded the effort and helped string lights. The other two windows were not near the staircase and would have been difficult and unsafe to reach, he said.

The lights have only been up for three days and compliments are pouring in on Field’s [Facebook](#) page.

“Wow, Nathan,” wrote Margaret O. Vavala. “Thank you. They look great!”

“Dude! This looks great,” wrote Chris McConigle. “Good work.”

“Just beautiful,” wrote Frances Lippincott Van Leeuwen about a photo of the city from inside the tower that Field has posted at the top of his Facebook page.

“I never made it to the top,” Van Leeuwen said. “Thanks for the view!”

That view is one of the things that enthralled Field.

“It’s a surreal, almost spiritual experience being up there above everything. It’s so peaceful,” he said. “You look around and you feel like you’re a bird.”

Field said he got the idea from seeing other cities’ landmarks decorated with lights.

“These types of things can add excitement to living in a neighborhood and build up pride about living in Wilmington,” Field said. “I just thought that if you drive

past Rockford Park when it’s dark, you have this beautiful tower that nobody sees. So during this cold winter season, why not add the light and energy and allow people to appreciate this beautiful landmark 24/7?”

ROCKFORD TOWER HISTORY

Rockwood Tower, built in 1903 during the Industrial Revolution to hold water, is an iconic Wilmington structure, Fields said.

“I think I could make a pretty strong argument that it’s Wilmington’s most iconic landmark,” said Fields, who represents the council’s District 8. “It is so central to the neighborhood.”

The tower sits on a hill in Rockford Park, near the Brandywine River. Today, it’s in an upscale neighborhood that includes the Delaware Art Museum.

Then, the park was meant to offer mill and quarry workers respite from the noise and grime of their jobs. It was created with land donated by the du Pont and Bancroft families.

Designed by Theodore A. Leisen, the tower was meant to appear ancient and used both Italian Renaissance Revival and Gothic architecture styles, says a [history](#) by Elizabeth Androskaut on the Delaware State Parks blog.

Field said the design and masonry remind him of buildings in Rome.

The stones for the Rockford Tower are Brandywine Blue Rock quarried from along the river or taken from remnant farm walls.

When the tower was being planned, park commissioners had wanted an observation tower built on the same hill, so the two projects were combined.

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AS A.I. DU PONT HIGH ENROLLMENT DROPPED, SO DID TEST SCORES

BY JAREK RUTZ

As enrollment declined at A.I. du Pont High School starting in 2008, the percentage of minority students and English Language Learners rose dramatically while test scores dropped steadily. That year, the school enrolled 1,492 students. Today, just 680 students are enrolled at A.I.

In 2008, the student body was 24.1% Black, 11.8% Hispanic and 60.2% white, according to state report card archives. This year, 44.4% of the school's enrollment is Black, 35.7% are Hispanic and 15.7% are white. The percentage of English Language Learners rose from 5.6% of students to today's 15.44%. The number of low-income students increased 13.5%.

"I do not believe enrollment is in any way connected to test scores," said Principal Kevin Palladinetti.

Mark Pruitt, director of secondary schools at Red Clay, said any comparison of test scores needed to be taken with a grain of salt because of the pandemic.

"There's going to be a dip in every school in the state, and probably the country," he said. "It's been very difficult to get good data."

But the school's struggles didn't start with the pandemic. Data from 2008 to 2018—all before the pandemic—showed SAT scores and reading and math proficiency declined. Palladinetti pointed out that enrollment didn't fall 54% overnight.

"The enrollment drop has been very gradual over time, so the impact in the building isn't as dramatic as people assume," he said. "We're talking about a 10- to 11-year period of time here, so it's been slow and steady."

It's easier for families with multiple children to send their children to the same school and that has meant A.I. High often didn't lose just one student to another school—it also lost that student's siblings and family members.

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December

POLICE CHIEF SELECTED TO LEAD ST. LOUIS PD

had worked with the council to create a body-worn camera program.

“As the administration seeks a new police chief, it is my hope that the next chief is promoted from within the Wilmington Police Department, is someone with a vested interest in the city, and who will work day and night to ensure that the residents of Wilmington can feel safe,” Congo said in a statement.

He said law enforcement is a collaborative effort and the council will remain engaged with the administration and police department to continue improving morale within the department.

“I also hope to see a revival of a dedicated Community Policing Unit,” Congo said. “This unit was once comprised of a select group of officers who were visible within communities to help facilitate relationship-building with residents and who attended community meetings in their assigned areas.”

Tracy has served as Wilmington’s police chief since April 2017. Before leading that department, the Bronx native held command positions in the New York City and Chicago police departments.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki hasn’t yet said how the city plans to replace police Chief Robert Tracy, who on Tuesday was selected to lead the St. Louis, MO, Police Department.

Tracy’s selection as the Gateway City’s top cop was **announced** by St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones Tuesday morning. It’s the first time in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department’s 214-year history that it’s hired a chief from outside its ranks. Tracy will remain Wilmington’s police chief until Jan. 6, 2023.

“Between now and then, I’ll have more to say about the transition to a new police administration,” Purzycki said in a **news release**.

Wilmington City Council President Ernest “Trippi” Congo II congratulated Tracy—an official he’s been highly critical of—on his new job. He noted that Tracy

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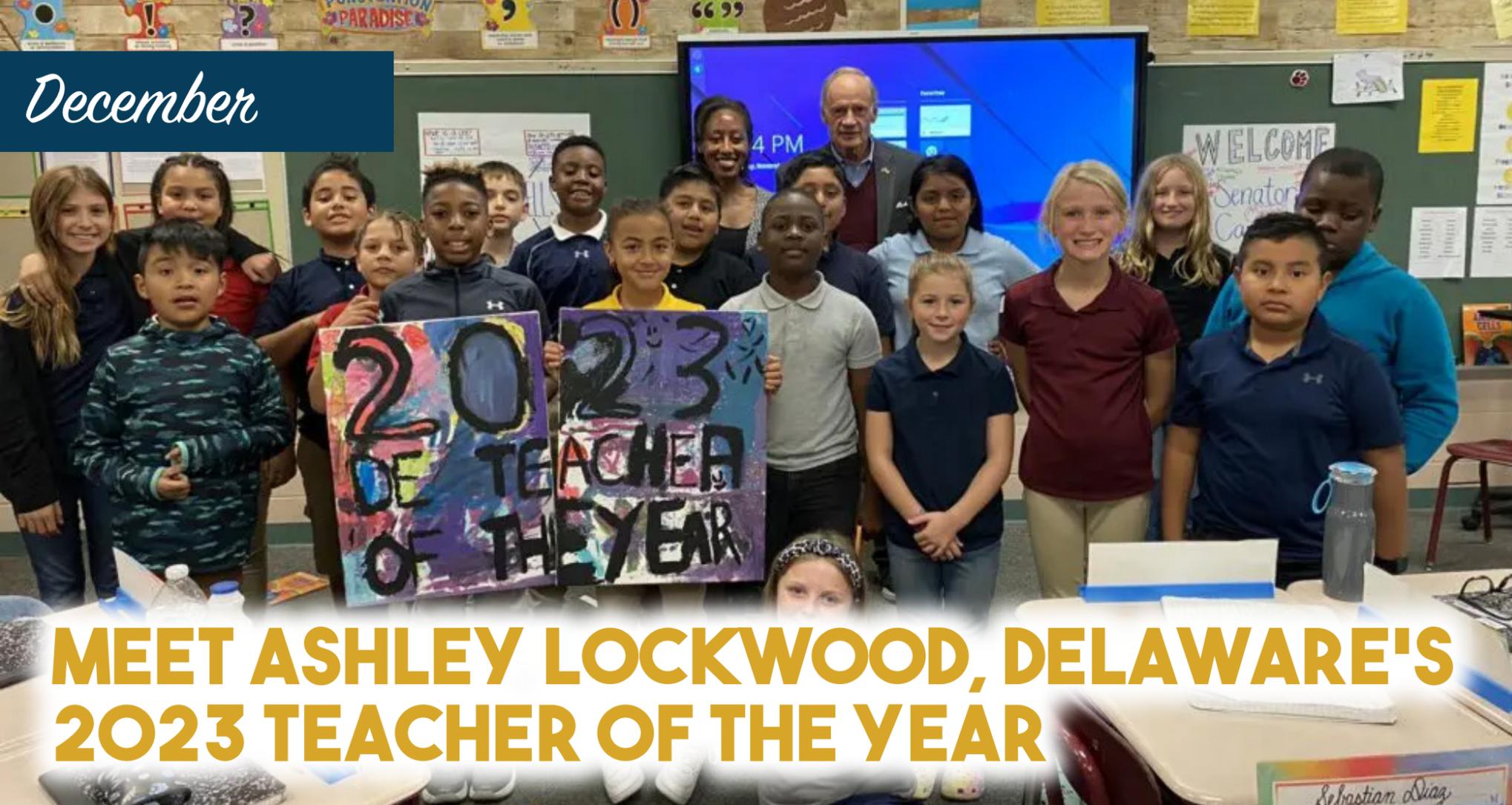
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December



MEET ASHLEY LOCKWOOD, DELAWARE'S 2023 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware’s teacher of the year didn’t set out to be an educator. Ashley Lockwood chose to earn a bachelor of arts in sociology from the [University of Delaware](#) in 2010. She planned to focus on how children interact with each other and develop.

After graduation, she returned home to Seaford without a job and was trying to decide what her next steps would be. “It was definitely a period of transition,” she said.

After her mom suggested she try substitute teaching, Lockwood returned to the Seaford School District, subbing in several schools.

“That’s when I decided that I wanted to become a teacher,” she said. “That’s what I wanted to do. There was no other career that could connect you with students the way that teaching does.”

Lockwood believes her passion for educational equity is why she took home the 2023 Delaware Teacher of the Year award.

“I teach in a classroom with a lot of students from multilingual backgrounds,” Lockwood said, “so all of those experiences definitely lend to my platform of wanting to close the gap for underserved populations of students.”

She handles the English portion of a Spanish immersion program for fifth-graders at LuLu Ross Elementary School and also leads the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee for the Milford Education Association.

The Milford teacher also serves on the state teacher’s union’s Ethnic Minority Affairs and Milford’s Equity Action Committee.

“Those committees that I lead or am involved with are all centered on that one special thing, closing the gap for students of color,” she said. “I think for teachers, it’s important for us to find what it is we’re most passionate about in the world of education.”

After she realized how much she loved teaching, Lockwood doubled down and enrolled at Wilmington University’s master of education program the following spring. After earning it in 2013, she left the First State to teach special education in Dorchester County, MD, for three years.

Lockwood returned to Delaware in 2016 when she was hired at LuLu Ross, where she plans to stay.

LOCKWOOD AT LULU ROSS

Prior to working with the Spanish immersion program, Lockwood taught fourth-grade inclusion classes, which were a mix of students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

“I don’t know I’ve ever heard anything negative come out of her mouth,” said LuLu Ross Principal Cynthia McKenzie.

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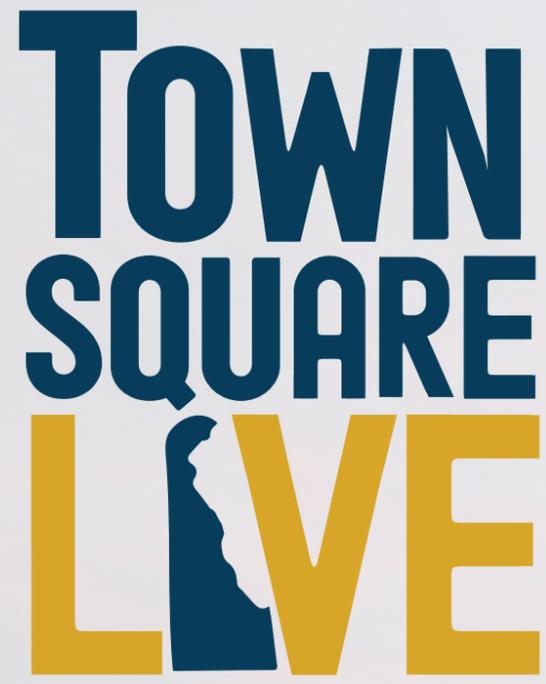
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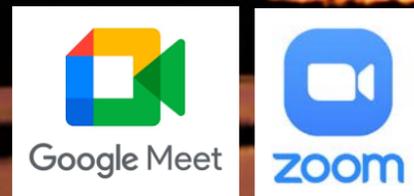


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