

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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photo link: Delaware State Police



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Wilmington Initiatives



Caesar Rodney Climate Class



Tower Hill Invitational



**COMMUNITY STORIES**

For generations, the local Black community made memories at Jason Beach. Locals fondly remember gathering here to socialize, dance, picnic, and attend church services and baptisms.

*"Coming down the dirt road from the highway to the beach. It was just a little narrow dirt road. If you were clean when you came down, you'd get dirty before you'd get here 'cause it was so dusty."*

— Carl Stanley



*"Back then when it was segregated, the beach on the inside — the white kids played over there, and we played over here at Jason Beach. And one of the biggest questions we had was, 'I wonder if they're having as much fun over there as we're having over here.'"*

— Jonathan Kellam



*"We had the jukebox so we would go under the pavilion and dance. And there was good food we got from the concession stand."*

Sometimes during the summer [we went to Jason Beach] basically every day, every other day, but mostly we went on Sundays after church. That was when the biggest gatherings were.

— Virginia Sneed



*"I enjoyed Jason Beach because that was a meeting place for the community at large, to meet people from different parts of Sussex County. You would come there and have fun at the beach."*

— Howard West



*"We had a great time at Jason Beach listening to the jukebox and dancing. We played jazz, Lloyd Price and James Brown."*

— Willie Mae Wortham



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To hear and read more about the history of Jason Beach, scan this QR code



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# CAB STUDENT PLAYS YOUNG SIMBA IN 'LION KING' ON BROADWAY

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The first Broadway show that KJ Johnson saw was “The Lion King.” And now the Cab Calloway School of the Arts student is in the hit Disney musical, as one of two actors playing Young Simba.

When KJ and his father, Kenneth E. Johnson, got the news that he was cast, “There was a lot of jumping and screaming and being teary-eyed,” Kenneth said. “In that moment, it was all worth it.” That “it” included multiple auditions by Zoom, many late nights rehearsing and filming more than 100 takes of “I Just Can’t Wait to Be King.”

KJ (he’s credited on the show’s [site](#) as Kenneth E. Johnson Jr. but uses KJ for his performances and [Instagram](#) account) debuted on Broadway on Dec. 14. His contract with the musical runs through June 4, and it could be renewed, his father said. KJ—who’s 4-foot-7 and 68 pounds—will eventually outgrow the role.

They have moved from their Bear home to an apartment in Weehawken, NJ, right across the Hudson River from the [Minskoff Theater](#). “We’re trying to have the most normal semblance of life possible,” Kenneth explained.

“We created this new schedule for him,” he said, referring to their online lessons and thanking Cab Dean Anthony Gray-Bolden for working with the family so he could remain a student at Cab, where he is a vocal major. Also helping was the expertise of his mother, JaMeta, a school counselor.

“He’s a student actor,” Kenneth said, “and I’m proudest that he’s still on the honor roll.”

## THE ROAD TO ‘THE LION KING’

The road to Broadway began when KJ was 6 (he just turned 12) and saw “The Lion King” and started acting. That “Lion King” performance included a backstage

tour by James Brown-Orleans, who, as Banzai then and now, is now KJ’s cast mate. KJ’s first performance was at the Wilmington Drama League Summer Stock camp, where he played Peter Pan and other parts in “Shrek Jr.” Playing Tiny Tim in a Candlelight Theatre “Christmas Carol” taught him a lot about discipline, in handling 22 shows in 30 days.

“Five plays and five shows later, he’s in the show,” his Broadway bio reads.

His journey also included his father’s return to acting. KJ convinced Kenneth to try out for “The Color Purple” at the Drama League. Kenneth got cast but almost didn’t accept the part. Lucky for KJ, he did, because a cast mate in that show suggested that KJ audition for “The Lion King.” Just before the deadline last fall, they submitted KJ’s video.

“I loved it,” the assistant casting director said, asking that they rerecord it, lighter. Which they did. A lot.

The night before the next audition, KJ screamed so much while playing a video game that his voice was weakened.

“I can’t do this,” he said at one point. “I’m a believer,” the casting director said at another point.

The incident generated two life lessons. One was about considering his voice as a valued instrument that shouldn’t be damaged or broken.

The other was about what the family calls “curse words that aren’t,” Kenneth said. “We don’t say ‘can’t.’ We don’t say ‘try.’ The moment you say ‘can’t,’ you let your brain shut down.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A border marker buried under a manhole, a fiberglass presidential candidate and lots and lots of lima beans are some of the “weird, wonderful and obscure” elements that define Delaware in a new book.

“Secret Delaware” is the second book written together by Rachel Kipp and Dan Shortridge, a married couple who have lived or worked in all three counties. They visited most of the sites, wrote all the words and took most of the photos in their journey from the first entry (the arts in Arden) to the last (one of only three art conservation programs in America).

It is a fascinating book, worthy of the collection of any fan of the First State. That praise is not because this reporter’s work appears at least three times among the sources. It is because of how many interesting facts and figures—fun stuff not known to all natives—are packed into each two-page entry: the narrative, a photo or two,

# 'SECRET DELAWARE' UNCOVERS FIRST STATE'S FUN FACTS, FIGURES

if-you-go info and a related factoid to start (or stop) a conversation.

“**Secret Delaware: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful and Obscure**” is the 53rd book in a series about regional secrets from Reedy Press and is a follow-up to “100 Things to Do in Delaware Before You Die,” their 2020 travel guide for Reedy Press. Kipp and Shortridge’s next book is about “lost Delaware.”

“Secret Delaware” is “dedicated to the journalists—the writers of the first draft of history.”

## SEARCHING FOR INFO

For both books, they searched their memories, the internet and newspapers.com. It helped that when they were reporters for *The News Journal*, they wrote about some of the topics—“We know that they were reliable stories and had great information,” Shortridge said—and they have worked with many of the other writers cited.

Shortridge was born in Boston and grew up in Laurel. He also worked for the Delaware Department of Agriculture, Delaware State Housing Authority and Sussex County Vocational Technical School District. He now owns a résumé writing business and works for Hook PR & Marketing in Milton.

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# WILMINGTON INITIATIVES AIM AT TRANSPORTATION, QUALITY OF LIFE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware’s largest city has a master plan to improve transportation and the quality of life, and it’s called the Wilmington Initiatives. Ten projects are listed on a landing [page](#) maintained by the Wilmington Area Planning Council. Creating a park over Interstate 95 is the most **prominent** and most **expensive**.

The initiatives go back to **1996**, when Wilmington started to develop “streetscape concepts for downtown corridors.” The initiatives now involve the city, the Delaware Department of Transportation; the Delaware Transit Corp., a DelDOT unit that operates DART buses; and the planning council.

The landing page says the projects total \$45 million—which would be dwarfed by the cost of the cap park.

Most projects involve making the roads safer for bicyclists and pedestrians and making the streetscapes look nicer. Here’s the current state of the nine other projects (which, as is often said, is subject to change).

### *Union Street reconfiguration*

A presentation from last spring offers a \$15 million to \$18 million plan to rethink Union Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Sycamore Street.

The familiar goals: “Better function as a Main Street corridor, balancing moving cars while functioning as a place for residents and neighbors to shop, dine, work, recreate, socialize and play” and “improve multimodal mobility and connectivity.”

The latest, preferred plans call for switching from angled parking to parallel parking; bike lanes; a long, thin rain garden in one section; wider sidewalks; and space for restaurants to host outdoor dining.

### *Bus service on Orange, King, Eighth and Ninth streets*

DelDOT has accepted a \$2.3 million **bid** that reconfigures Orange Street (between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and 10th Street), King Street (between MLK and 10th) and Eighth and Ninth streets (between Adams

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and Church streets). The “project is to provide better shelters and other amenities at bus stops within the Central Business District of Wilmington, along with safety improvements for pedestrians,” Diane Gunn, a senior engineer with Century Engineering, told DelawareLive. The work includes new bus shelters and LED signs with real-time bus arrival information.

### *Walnut Street, Third to 16th streets*

This project is intended to make it easier for people who live elsewhere in the city to get to jobs downtown. Make it safer, somehow, for bicyclists. Make it safer for pedestrians (one technique is to reduce the number of through lanes, reducing how many lanes of traffic that pedestrians face when crossing the street). Make it look nicer.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# FLUFFY TO HEADLINE CONCERT DURING STATE FAIR

BY BETSY PRICE

Fluffy is as Fluffy does, and Fluffy will be right-sizing the [Delaware State Fair](#) this year.

Comedian Gabriel “Fluffy” Iglesias will play the M&T Bank Grandstand on Thursday, July 21, at 7:30 p.m.

Iglesias is a stand-up comic and actor whose specials for Comedy Central and Netflix, including “I’m Not Fat...I’m Fluffy” and “Hot & Fluffy” have been crowd pleasers.

Tickets for his show will range from \$40 to \$70 and go on sale Thursday, Jan. 26, at noon.

He joins a lineup that includes Nelly on July 21, Riley Green on July 24, Demolition Derby on July 28 and Tyler Hubbard on July 29.

The State Fair runs from July 20-29 in Harrington, Delaware.



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*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# ONE STORE'S STILL STANDING AT TRI-STATE MALL

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The news coverage of what’s happening at the old Tri-State Mall (which closed in 2015, leaving a small strip shopping center still running) has largely ignored a store that’s thrived there since 1984. **Tri-State Liquors** is still in business, as several signs on chain link fencing along Naamans Road proclaim, and it’s planning to move soon across the parking lot to spiffy new digs.

“We have a really good long-term lease that they had to honor,” co-owner Andrew Byer said in explaining why his landlord is constructing a building just for Tri-State Liquors.

The other businesses in the retail strip are gone, the windows to their empty stores boarded up.

The mall opened in 1967 near Claymont and just off an Interstate 95 exit. The site’s major retailers have included Value City (bankrupt), Levitz (bankrupt) and Kmart (not doing so well).

The 41-acre site once featured a traditional mall, with stores accessed from the inside; a strip shopping center, with access from the parking lot; and several self-standing buildings. All told, the complex included 585,000 square feet of retail. Tri-State Liquors occupies about 15,000 square feet in the strip shopping center, and it will get about the same amount of space in a new building.

“We have a great business,” Byer said, adding that he looks forward to many more years of success. The store was founded by his parents, and he now co-owns it with his brother, Michael.

Its new building will be on the **site** of the old Levitz Furniture Outlet, which was **demolished** in 2021, just after the site was purchased by a company now known as **KPR Centers**.

Byer anticipates being able to move in late summer. “We are very excited about this new opportunity,” he

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said. Tri-State Liquors stocks 20,000 cases of imported and domestic beers, soda, wine, wine coolers, liquor and more,” according to its website.

“We consistently have low prices on the names you want,” he said, when asked to compare the store to Total Wine & More, the large liquor store on the other side of I-95.

## THE FUTURE OF TRI-STATE MALL

The developer of the new space anticipates a single tenant, but has designed the building to be capable of accommodating up to four tenants, said Mike Hoffman, of Tarabicos, Grosso & Hoffman and the developer’s local attorney. No tenants have been signed for the distribution center, he told Delaware Live.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo link: SoDel Concepts



# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# CELEBRITY CHEF ROBBIE JESTER REVEALS BRUNCH BOARD SECRETS

BY PAM GEORGE

On a Sunday afternoon in January, about 30 men and women packed a room at [Bellefonte Brewing Co.](#) in north Wilmington. Although they were sipping pints of beer, they were there for more than the craft brews.

It was another sold-out class on board making taught by [Robbie Jester](#), owner of [Pizzeria Mariana](#) and In Jest Events. The attendees were brushing elbows with a TV star—Jester is the winner of “Pressure Cooker,” a Netflix culinary competition and reality show.

The Delaware chef won fans nationwide for his affability and authenticity, and both traits were displayed during his classes.

## BRUNCH BOARDS

His first session last November was on cheese-and-meat boards, which many people—and restaurants—call “charcuterie.” But boards aren’t limited to the traditional. This class, for instance, was on brunch boards, and the Feb. 8 class is on the Lover Board, a sexy mix of chocolate and cheeses.

Boards also go beyond, well, boards. For example, Jester often covers an entire table. Here are some tips and tricks for brunch made easy.

### *Start with butcher paper*

The paper will protect the table or linens and give the “board” a defined space. You can also use deli wrapping paper.

### *Gather your serving pieces*

You don’t need to spend much. Jester bought two silver trays from a thrift shop for \$1.25 and shops Target for affordable dishes for catering gigs.

Choose solid wood or solid marble board — but not a mix. Too often, the marble comes free from the board.

“They’re not made well,” he said.

You’ll also need spreaders and tongs, which Jester buys on Amazon.

### *Use whipped cream cheese for spreads*

A tub of cream cheese costs more, Jester acknowledged. “But it will make your life easier, and you’re going to



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whip it anyway,” he said. The cream cheese should be at room temperature before you add seasoning.

### *Use seasoning blends*

For fast flavor, reach for a spice blend. Jester likes Spiceology products and used Really Ranch and Everything Bagel for the demonstration. However, use whatever blend you wish, he said.

Before adding the seasoning, flip the container upside down and shake well. Blends contain particles of varying sizes, the chef explained, and shaking them ensures they’re well mixed. Add only a little at a time—you can always add more.

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*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# MINI-BOND BILL GETS MIRED IN SENATE DEBATE OVER LABOR CHANGES

BY SHANNON C. KEITH

A typically commonplace measure that would have added 17 projects to this year's Bond and Capital Improvements funding got mired in controversy Tuesday over wording that required union and minority participation in four bids. That requirement in a four-project pilot program would mean that some minorities, including Hispanics, would be left out, Senate Republicans maintained.

Rep. Jack Walsh, D-Newport/Stanton, sponsor of [Senate Bill 35](#), and others argued that it actually made sure they could participate and that the measure would increase minority opportunity to earn state bids.

Ultimately, the measure passed 15-6 along party lines in the Senate Chamber today.

The change in labor requirements was detailed in epilogue language and included mandatory hiring of union and minorities, along with state residency goals

suggested by the Office of Management and Budget for four Department of Transportation projects.

The pilot projects have no place in SB 35, the Republicans said. They worry any findings could ultimately end up altering Delaware's approach to the areas of Community Workforce Agreements and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise. Any pilot project sets a precedent that almost always is adopted, Republicans said.

## MINI-BOND CHANGES

Walsh and Cerron Cade, director of the Office of Management and Budget and former secretary of labor, said the pilot projects will ensure a bigger minority stake in state-funded construction contracts.

One minority engineering and construction owner, Javier G. Torrijos, testified that for members of the Latino community, the pilot projects add up to nothing more than a "union mandate."

"If anything this will lift up the Latino community," Cade said. "It doesn't mandate any union requirement."

Rep. Dave Wilson, R-Seaford, questioned the lack of public input and discussion. "I've served on the Bond Bill committee, never seeing anything like this," said Wilson. "I'm getting all kinds of phone calls."

Cade said some of the projects are slated to begin this spring.

"Labor is going to have to make a commitment," he said. "They will have to hit specific minority hiring goals and state residency goals."

Cade defended the pilot projects inclusion in what's normally just a list of additional projects.

"We aren't just doing a pilot for the sake of doing a pilot," he testified.

He pointed to reported workforce disparity among minorities with data collected from 2015-2020 as justification for the pilot projects. The data revealed that Latino firms had secured only 3% of state projects across those eight years.

"We don't see them on state projects," Cade said. "While these firms are plentiful, they aren't necessarily getting state contracts."

"We're not against diversity," said Torrijos, owner of TORREngineering LLC. "We want more of the pie. The process was wrong."

Torrijos said he'd looked at the impacts long-term. "I'm standing here representing every Latino owner who doesn't have unions or union workers," he said. "You want to have a diverse workforce then take the language out. What we're asking is to take the language out."

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# ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH: OSIENSKI REFILES MARIJUANA BILLS

BY BETSY PRICE

Heeeeeeeee'ssss back.

Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, filed new versions Friday of his bills to legalize the sale of marijuana and to create a marijuana industry in Delaware. He said during a press conference that he believes the new legislators elected to the General Assembly—which includes many progressives—will help him get the votes he needs to pass the bills and to override any veto from Gov. John Carney.

Osienski's possession bill passed both the House and Senate last year, only to be **vetoed** by Carney, who has repeatedly said nothing has changed his mind about

making marijuana legal to buy and consume. The House did not override the veto.

Osienski stressed that Delaware is losing tax and other revenue because New York and New Jersey already allow the legal sale and Maryland will be doing it by July. Marijuana use has been decriminalized in Philadelphia, meaning you can't be charged for having small amounts in Philadelphia and Allegheny counties, but it's illegal elsewhere.

House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said that Osienski has been working hard to create digestible bills, but he wanted to explore the bills more

fully before commenting on their merits. The biggest problem with legalizing marijuana is that it remains a controlled substance on federal drug lists, and that federal regulations make it difficult to sell or pay for marijuana using credit cards and other means.

Ramone said he's not a fan of filling prisons with people who use marijuana. He'd like to see a system set up that would control sales in a way that encouraged moderate use. He pointed to the use of alcohol, saying those products are labelled to tell the consumer exactly how much of the drug they are consuming. He'd like to see the same thing for marijuana products.

"Will it be abused? Alcohol is abused. Everything's abused by some people," Ramone said. "But the majority of the people I think would be safer and hopefully use it in a very safe way."

Ramone said, "I think the more knowledge people have what they're putting in themselves on a consistent basis, the better they can manage themselves without the government being in the middle of that."

## MARIJUANA BILLS SCHEDULING

Osienski said he hopes **House Bill 1** and **House Bill 2** will be heard and passed in committee next week, so they could be introduced on the House floor when the General Assembly returns from its February break.

HB2 is already on the agenda of Tuesday's noon House Revenue and Finance Committee. Watch that hearing **HERE**. HB1 is on the agenda of Wednesday's 11 a.m. House Health and Human Development Committee. Watch that hearing **HERE**.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

# ANKLE MONITOR LEADS TO SIXTH MAN CHARGED FOR DOG FIGHTING

BY BETSY PRICE

An ankle monitor led to the arrest of the sixth man who has been charged with animal cruelty and more in a Seaford dog fighting case. The Office of Animal Welfare and state police raided a Seaford resident Jan. 8 and charged five men then. The officers rescued 14 animals that day. One died and five required medical care. Four of the dogs have been released.

Ronnell Jacobs, 45, of Laurel was arrested Jan. 12, a OAW press release said Friday. Jacobs was charged with two counts of owning, possessing, keeping or using an animal for the purpose of fighting and one count of being present at an animal fight, all felonies; and two counts of cruelty or neglect to animal, both misdemeanors.

Animal Welfare officers discovered information about Jacobs, who fled the scene at the time. He was under the supervision of the Department of Corrections' Probation and Parole Office and wearing an ankle monitor

the press release said. Location data showed Jacobs was at the Lonesome Road property at the time of the dog fighting incident.

When Jacobs was arrested, the release said, four dogs were seized. Two were found chained in the woods behind the home and had injuries consistent with dog fighting. Two of Jacobs' dogs required emergency veterinary care. One was determined to be unable to recover from its wounds and was euthanized. The dogs are being monitored and evaluated by Brandywine Valley SPCA medical staff.

A press release from the Office of Animal Welfare said that of the 18 rescued, three have died and two have been adopted. The other dogs continue to recover and some may be ready soon for behavioral evaluation before they are allowed to be adopted.

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*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

## DOE OWNS LEAD TESTING BLUNDER, EXPECTS NEW RESULTS BY MAY

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Senate committee hearing Tuesday heard the state Secretary of Education apologize about the way lead testing in schools was handled and that trained pros will handle testing instead of school staff.

Through a federal grant, the Department of Education began a sampling initiative in October 2020 to identify the levels of lead within drinking water at schools.

“While well-intentioned, mistakes were made in this initial lead sampling including testing buildings during COVID-19 closures and testing many nonconsumption sources,” said Secretary Mark Holodick.

“We also didn’t communicate the results nearly as well as needed. We didn’t communicate well with our partners, meaning our districts, we didn’t communicate well with our communities or the state as a whole.”

### TESTING FOR LEAD AGAIN

Last month, the state hired [Batta Environmental](#), a New York environmental consultant, to retest all fixtures that showed dangerously high levels of lead. The state didn’t have a lot of confidence in the first round of sampling conducted via the federal grant. It used school staff to take samples.

“This time trained professional staff are completing the testing,” Holodick said.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#), which provided the \$209,000 grant to Delaware in 2020, says that anything over .015 milligrams of lead per liter of water is dangerous. Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, chair of the Senate Education Committee, asked how the state plans to fund this second round of testing.

It will use \$1.35 million in state general funds provided

by the Office of Management and Budget, said Kim Klein from the Department of Education.

First-year Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, questioned if the expense is worth it.

“Water is a very small percentage of what contributes to a child’s high level of lead poisoning,” he said. “So if a child has elevated levels of lead in their blood, would you expect that to be 100% or majority contributed to a high level of lead in a school that’s been identified as a high level of lead?”

Dr. Jonathan Miller, a pediatrician at Nemours, said he would not assume that the school was the main source. Miller told the Senate Health and Social Services Committee that children six years old and under are most vulnerable to lead poisoning and having lead negatively affects their brain development.

Some of the side effects are loss of appetite, feeling tired or irritable, poor growth, nausea and vomiting, constipation, stomach pain, joint pain, muscle weakness and headaches.

“As a state government, we have a unique constitutional responsibility and moral responsibility to make sure that our schools are not contributing to that problem, whether it’s 1%, 2%, 5%, 10%, 15%,” said Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Claymont.

Delaware Health and Social Services offers blood lead screenings by appointment for all ages at public health clinics that are located throughout the state. Miller suggested any child under six as well as anyone who has any of the symptoms of lead poisoning should be tested.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

# CARNEY'S EDUCATION RAISES CAUSE STIR IN COMPENSATION COMMITTEE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Gov. John Carney's announcement last week of a 9% pay raise for teachers caused a lot of comment in Monday night's Public Education Compensation Committee.

Also discussed was a proposal to keep teachers in their Delaware jobs by giving them full pension benefits at 25 years of service instead of making them wait until they reach 30 years.

Carney said his 2024 budget, which starts July 1, will give classroom teachers and specialists a 9% raise and all other educators a 3% raise starting in the fall.

Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, and chair of the House Education Committee, said her only concern is figuring out who gets the 9% raise and who doesn't.

"If we do this for one, then where do we draw the line in not doing it for everyone?" she said. "If we pick one group and then we exclude the others, there's going to be a lot of hurt feelings, and I think it could cause a lot of problems for this group."

The compensation committee was created to make recommendations about teacher pay after Maryland and New Jersey said they will dramatically raise teacher pay in the next few years, giving starting teachers a salary of \$60,000. Afraid that would attract Delaware teachers, the compensation committee was charged with issuing a recommendation by this fall.

Stephanie Ingram, president of the Delaware State Education Association, the state's teacher union, asked the committee to evaluate what the pay scale would look like if all educators were getting the 9% raise.

"In order to stay competitive, we need to make sure that we are raising everyone's salaries to a respectable level," she said. "I just want to know what that would look like as far as how much money that would cost the state."

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, said the group was formed to address the shortage of teachers and ways to keep teachers in Delaware.

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If there's another job category that's short in a particular year, the committee should look at it then.

"It might be good as policymakers [to] just come up with a kind of unified definition of how we're going to look at the jobs that are needed, and how we address that depending on what the fiscal year looks like," Smith said.

The state pays about 70% of an educator's salary, with local districts or charters covering the rest.

CLICK TO READ MORE



## Education

# CR CLIMATE CLASS: STRAIGHT OUTTA ANTARCTICA



phylum arthropoda, which Taylor’s class will be studying in the coming weeks.

It took the team of researchers 10 days to travel from Delaware to Antarctica. They went through the Drake Passage, a straight underneath the southern tip of South America. “That was not fun,” said researcher Matt Breece, who said his ship faced 30-foot waves in the passage.

The team has been working at Palmer Station, an American research base on the northern tip of Antarctica.

“In addition to the IT people we have here, it’s essentially a little small town,” Breece said. “We have two cooks, we have an electrician, a plumber, a carpenter all on the station.”

UD’s team of researchers is expected to leave Palmer Station Feb. 1 and return home by Feb. 9. Palmer Station is located in one of the fastest warming places on Earth right now, he said. That’s been especially bad for the Adélie penguins who like to live near sea ice.

The penguins also like to raise their chicks where they themselves were raised, but with ice coverage waning drastically in the past decade, there are fewer places for them to raise their offspring. This has caused their population to decline, according to Breece.

“It’s really cool to be able to have access to a very interesting research team that’s doing really cool and important stuff,” Wadhams said.

Breece said the research team is now working on compiling data with their submersible vehicles and satellite tags in order to identify what areas of the ocean have the highest concentrations of krill to track migration patterns of the prey.

He likes best the Chinstrap penguins, who are closely related to the Gentoos, since “they are funny and seem to be more curious than the Adélies.”

Caesar Rodney senior Damon Grant said the presentation helps bring to life what he and his classmates are taught.

### BY JAREK RUTZ

Caesar Rodney High School students had a front row seat Tuesday to penguin research in the South Pole.

You read that right. The students were connected online to a group of University of Delaware researchers down at the pole.

“I really liked learning about how global warming is either affecting or helping certain populations of penguins in Antarctica,” said senior Ella Wadhams. “When they were talking about the submersible vehicles that you use, we talked about vehicles like that in class and it was interesting to actually see them being used in real life.”

UD’s team in Antarctica is examining penguin-prey feeding habits of the Gentoo and Adélie penguins to show the impact climate change is having on these systems. The team uses a new underwater autonomous vehicle to map the krill and phytoplankton populations. The two penguin species eat krill.

About 90 students gathered for the online event. Christine Taylor, a Caesar Rodney High School teacher, said the classes have just started talking about what’s happening in the ocean and how it affects the food chain. Krill are invertebrates classified as

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# STATE TO EMBRACE NEW MATH 'FRAMEWORK' TO RAISE SCORES

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Delaware Department of Education is championing higher-quality math curriculums, spending more time on the topic and offering more professional training to teachers. It is part of what the department calls a framework to help combat the state's atrocious scores in math, including 18 schools that have single-digit proficiency **scores**. Just 29.48% of First State students are proficient in math, according to the **state report card**.

It's the first statewide math plan and it will serve as a complement to Delaware's literacy plan. The reading plan was released in 2019 with the goal of having students proficient in reading by the time they finish third grade.

Designing a new framework for state math classes wasn't plug-and-play.

"We looked at a couple of frameworks that had been published by other states and there were very few to

even be able to reference," said Jamila Riser, executive director of the Delaware Mathematics Coalition.

Some legislators questioned how the framework will be effective if it doesn't include goals and metrics to measure success.

"It's a lot of words that don't have a goal beyond lofty aspirations," said Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown. She is on the House Education Committee. She thinks the plan is filled with a lot of jargon and fluff-words that aren't specific enough to make her feel confident that math outcomes will improve.

"Parents want to see some real specific goals and proposed outcomes for student achievement in mathematics, not what they're going to do or the collaborative efforts or all these workgroups," she said.

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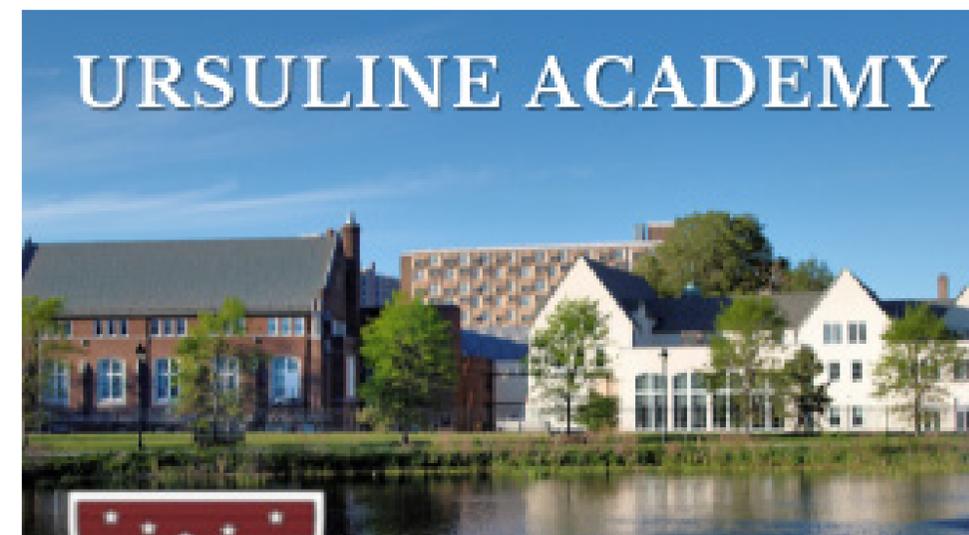
The families of 18,223 students made the charter school choice for the 22/23 School Year! Next year's choice window is open through Jan 11, 2022.

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# SMYRNA TO SPEND \$450,000 IN COVID FUNDS TO LIGHT TURF FIELD

BY JAREK RUTZ

A **Smyrna School District**'s board decision to use the district's \$450,000 in pandemic relief and more to install lighting at its middle school's turf field didn't pass without debate. The proposal touched off a flurry of comments about whether that is the best use of the one-time federal money. The district has \$80 million in deferred maintenance, according to Roger Holt, director of operations at Smyrna.

"We're in this building now that we're deferring the roof on, and it needs a roof," said board member Christopher Scuse. He said many of the parking lots are too small, which forces long lines of traffic, sometimes a quarter-mile down the main road outside of the school's property.

"I look at things like that and I just think we have other uses for that kind of money," he said.

Holt reminded him that there's limitations to how they can use Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds.

"We can repair an existing parking lot, we can rip up asphalt and put new asphalt down," he said, "but we can't expand."

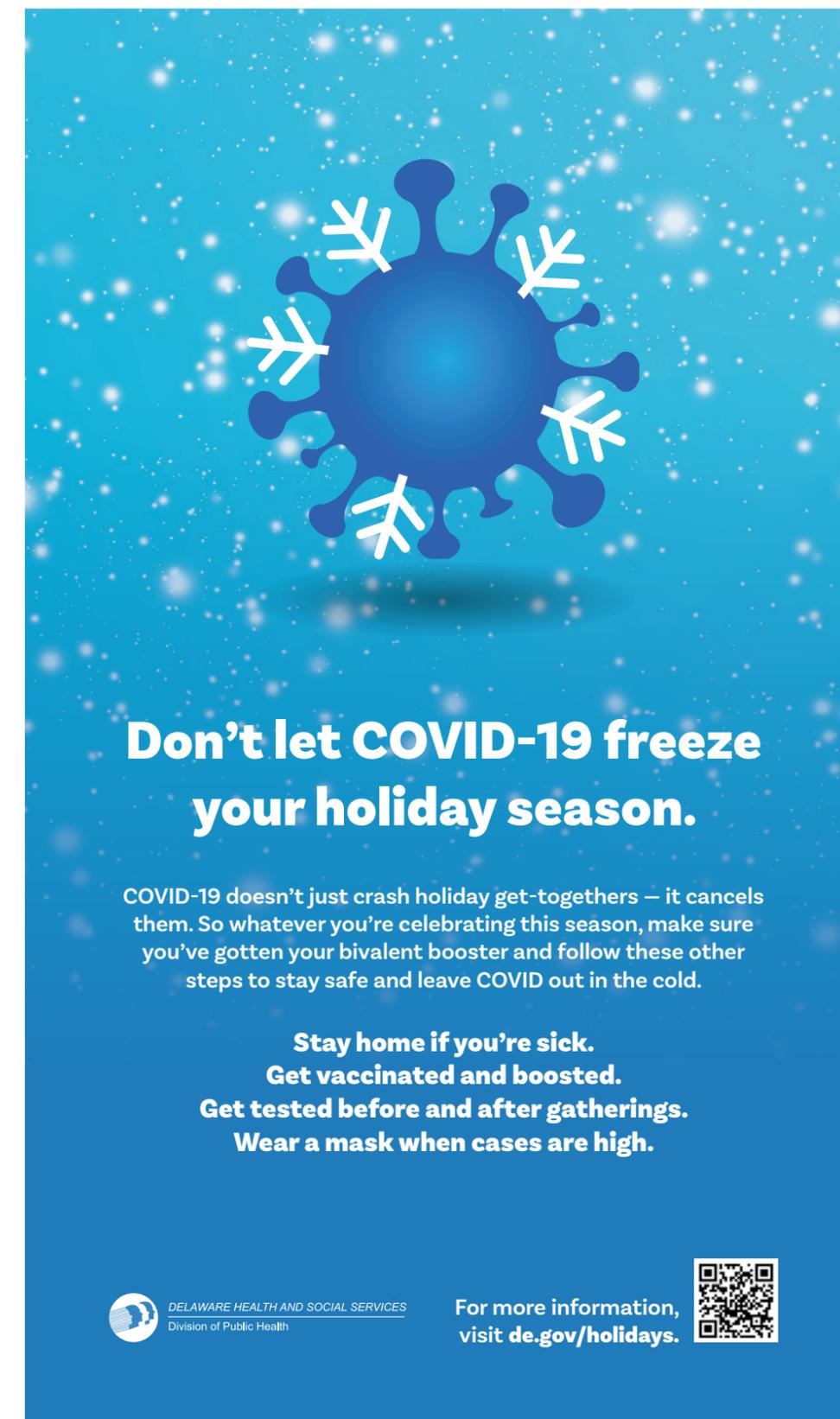
There were three rounds of ESSER funds given out. For the turf field project, the district would source the funds from its ESSER II allocation of \$3,475,369. All ESSER II funds must be spent by Sept. 30.

The move comes a week after Smyrna's football and field hockey teams were **honored** at the Legislative Hall in Dover for winning state championships this season.

"This doesn't quite jive with me," said board member Charlie Wilson about using the federal funds for lighting a sports field. "I think we should aggressively pursue supporting teaching and learning that we're here for."

Wilson, who was elected to Smyrna's school board in 2021, said he joined because he wanted the district's academic performance to match its athletic performance.

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# NEWARK CHARTER'S AYOMIKUN ADEOJO WINS MLK SPEECH COMPETITION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Newark Charter Junior High student won this year's MLK Voice 4 Youth competition. Eighth grader Ayomikun Adejo took home \$2,300 for his first-place finish.

"This event has given me opportunities that I've never had before," Abejo said. "It has opened my love for public speaking and has brought joy to my life."

The competition's cash prize is not what drove him to compete, he said, but rather the passion of spreading the word and truth to the youth and the world.

The annual statewide spoken-word competition was held Sunday at the Baby Grand in Wilmington to honor Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Now in its eighth year, the event featured seven contestants who used Dr. King's message of hope and change to creatively express their views on current issues and share how his legacy speaks to them today. In addition to live audience members, people from Ghana, Nigeria, Canada, the United Kingdom, Guyana, Panama, Sweden, South Korea and New Zealand tuned in virtually.



This was the first year the contest was open to junior high students, with the top scorer from that group getting \$250. Adejo swept the board with his piece, "Keep Moving." Here is an excerpt:

"You can't do this, you can't do that. Oh, you'll never be able to do this, and it's impossible to do that. That's just a fraction of what we hear from some of the people we love, or hate and even the people we know or don't know because there will always be people wishing for your downfall.

"You see, I like to think that me and Martin Luther King are some-what alike. We are both strong Black men; we stand for what's right, we are headstrong and we don't stop until we get what we desire. This means

Dr. King and I never give up and never let the oppressors and bullies puncture and tear through our skin like flesh-eating lions feasting on their prey. In other words, as a young Black man I've learned to stand up for what I believe in no matter what the consequence is. Even if my voice starts out as just a whisper."

Boluwatife Aminu, a senior at MOT Charter High School, took home \$1,000 with her second-place finish, and Iweena Mukherjee, a junior at the Charter School of Wilmington, earned \$500 after finishing third. New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer gave \$50 gift cards to all seven participants.



photo by Nick Halliday



*Sports*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# BONUS HOOPS AS NO. 7 APPO HOLDS OFF NO. 6 CARAVEL

BY GLENN FRAZER

When the sixth- and seventh-ranked teams in the Delaware Live-302 Sports poll get together, a close game is expected. That is exactly what transpired Tuesday night as the Caravel Buccaneers (No. 6) and Appoquinimink Jaguars (No. 7) battled into overtime in a Jags' 71-62 victory.

There was no indication the game would be tightly contested early, as the Jags made three shots beyond the arc, one each by Haji Bell, Riley Buzby and Christian Barksdale to take a 20-11 lead with 1:10 to go in the opening quarter. Caravel tightened things up as Trevor Webster went on a personal 7-0 run closing the gap to 30-27 in the second period. The first of two buzzer beaters happened just before half, as the Bucs' Ryan Black drained a "three" and the two teams headed to the locker room with Appo ahead 32-30.

The Bucs and Jags would battle the entire second half. Appo went on an 8-0 run early in the third quarter thanks to the "3-B's" as Buzby and Barksdale nailed long-range shots and Bell converted a layup. That gave

the Jags a 40-32 advantage. Undaunted, Caravel put together a 10-0 run on baskets from Mekhi Carmon, Miles White, and six points by Dominique Wyatt. That run gave Caravel its first lead (42-40) since the start of the game. From that point on, the game would be closely contested.

There would be seven ties in the second half and you could feel the tension building. The final 3:30 of regulation featured tenacious defense, clutch rebounding, and excellent-unselfish ball movement. With the home team Jags nursing a two-point lead, Rey' Carrier used his length to save a ball headed out of bounds and made a great pass to Buzby for a "lay-in" and a two possession advantage. On the other end of the floor, a White "dish" to Wyatt in the lane produced another "highlight" basket and the Bucs closed to within two points. Those two players would reverse roles on the following play, as Wyatt found White for a layup and the game was knotted at 50-all with 1:45 to go. Two foul shots by Appo's Barksdale and a Buccaneer bucket by White and the

game was 52-52 with barely 80 seconds left.

The defenses took over until Appo was whistled for an offensive foul with 26 seconds on the clock. Caravel head coach Mark Tobin called a timeout to set up the pursuing (and crucial) play. The Bucs came out of the timeout and worked the clock down until Wyatt drove into the paint, cradled the ball in his right arm and "kissed" the glass for a 54-52 lead. Appo coach Tom Purse quickly called a timeout to set up the final nine seconds and hopefully tie, or take the lead. Daniel Harvey was guarded tightly as he crossed half court. He momentarily bobbled the ball before passing off to Bell. Haj' faked right, moved left and swished the buzzer-beater jumper to send the crowd into a frenzy, and the game into the extra period.

The overtime began with Buzby making two free throws, and a Caravel long-range jumper by John Clemmons to give the Bucs a one-point lead. After two foul shots by Carrier and one by Trevor Webster, the game was tied at 58-all with 90 seconds left. The Jags grabbed a two-possession lead when Buzby made four consecutive foul shots and Caravel could not overcome that deficit. Buzby went 9-of-10 at the line in overtime keeping the Jags "at arms length" from the Bucs, who were forced to foul in the final moments of the game.

Caravel was led by Wyatt's 18 points, while Clemmons added 13, and White scored 12. The Bucs fell to 6-4 with "in-state" losses to Tower Hill and Appo, both ranked in the top 10.

Appo was paced by Bell's game-high 19 points, Riley Buzby put up 17 with all but three of those points coming in the second half and OT. The Jags improved to 9-3 with the win.



# TOWER HILL INVITATIONAL PRODUCES SPIRITED COMPETITION

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The season's Indoor track & field is winding down as the DIAA State championships are on tap in two weeks. Several Delaware high school athletes met at the Carpenter Fieldhouse on the campus of Tower Hill yesterday and turned in some stellar performances. Sixteen schools participated in the Invitational with a large crowd in attendance.

The day began with St. Mark's senior Samantha Miner winning the 55m hurdles in 9.40, while her Spartan teammate Bryce Tucci won the boys' hurdles in a time of 8.39. Tucci also took first place in high jump. Caravel freshman Kennedy Smith won the girls' 55m sprint event in 7.5 while Dominick Pietlock of Tower Hill took first in the boys race with a time of 6.73, as the sprinters took early stage. Pietlock also was a double-winner as he finished first in the long jump.

The relay events drew loud encouragement from the spectators. On the girls' side, Middletown edged Archmere in the 4x200 relay by .5 seconds. Host Tower Hill took first in the 4x400 while Newark Charter won the 4x800. The Archmere boys' team won the 4x200, and just like the girls, the Hillers boys won the 4x400 and Newark Charter took the 4x800 event.

There were many highlights, including the 1-2 finish in the boys' 1600m race as Middletown seniors Jonas Rush and Walter Samuels were separated by .6 of a second. Rush led from start to finish in a time of 4:42.12 while Samuels closed the gap on the final lap, finishing a close second in 4:42.79.

For a complete list of all events and results, visit <https://de.milesplit.com>.



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# HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL, WRESTLING RANKINGS: WEEK 7

BY NICK HALLIDAY

# DELAWARE **LIVE** SPORTS TOP 10 RANKINGS

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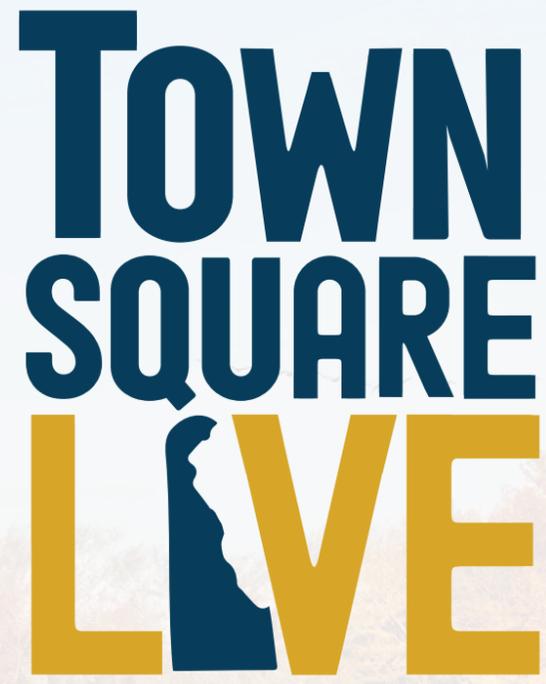
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