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DE State Parks Set Record



Appoquinimink to Review School Safety



Robby Tattersall Honored



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY KEN MAMMARELLA

David Amado is getting a new title in July from the Delaware Symphony Orchestra: music director laureate. He will continue to appear with the DSO, conducting selected concerts in the 2023-2024 season and beyond. The DSO will also welcome guest conductors next season, with a formal music director search beginning in 2024.

“I am proud of our work together over the last two decades—from two Latin Grammy-nominated recordings to the exceptional artistic growth I have led,” he said in the symphony’s release announcing the change.

AMADO GETS NEW TITLE AT DELAWARE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

“The DSO will always have a warm place in my heart, and I look forward to following its continued evolution, knowing it will always be a valued cultural asset.”

Amado was hired in 2003 following a nationwide search. The DSO will continue to honor Amado’s 20th anniversary throughout the current season, ending with Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony on April 28 at The Grand Opera House in Wilmington.

“Amado began his musical training in piano, studying in The Juilliard School’s pre-college and college divisions before going on to Indiana University, where he received a master’s degree in instrumental conducting. Returning to New York, he pursued further conducting studies at Juilliard with Otto-Werner Mueller,” he writes on his own [website](#). “His first professional conducting post, an apprenticeship with the Oregon Symphony, was followed by a six-year tenure with the St. Louis Symphony, where he served as both a staff conductor at the orchestra and music director of the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra.”

In 2016, he began a second music directorship at the [Atlantic Classical Orchestra](#) in Florida. Amado lives in Maine with his wife and twin sons, the New Haven (Connecticut) Register [reported](#) in 2018, when he tried to out lead the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.

“Maestro Amado has achieved a remarkable milestone of continuous leadership as our music director through some of the most tumultuous years that arts

organizations have navigated,” said David Fleming, president of the Delaware Symphony board. “His easy rapport with audiences, musicianship, and dedication to advancing professional musical performance in Delaware are extraordinary.”

“David’s dedication to the organization and professionalism are truly outstanding,” said J.C. Barker, executive director of the DSO. “The orchestra’s artistic level has soared under his leadership, and the success of his tenure and contributions to the community are remarkable.”





WILMINGTON GETS \$200,000 IN SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FUNDING

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Wilmington has received a \$200,000 grant from the new federal Safe Streets and Roads for All program. It's the only Delaware grant among \$800 million awarded for 510 projects nationwide.

The city is partnering with the Wilmington Area Planning Council on the grant. The Delaware Department of Transportation and Delaware Transit Corp. (the DelDOT unit that runs DART buses) have pledged staff support.

“This grant will save lives in Wilmington by building on the city bike plan’s Vision Zero goal as well as an ongoing DelDOT pedestrian safety study,” the city’s grant application said.

“Our approach will begin with creating an inclusive task force, representative of the city’s population, based on the proven **Wilmington Initiatives** framework. The task force will establish a timeframe within which Wilmington will eliminate transportation fatalities and serious injuries. We will analyze existing conditions and historical crash trends citywide. We will identify a high-injury network and employ the evidence-based Safe Systems Approach, along with proven safety countermeasures.

“This approach will reduce conflicts and manage speeds, thereby reducing crash severity and frequency. The plan will conclude with recommendations, includ-

ing policy and process changes, lower-cost systemic improvements and possibly some individual projects with higher cost and correspondingly higher benefit.

“The grant will also address broader city policy goals, such as equity, climate sustainability and economic development.”

“It’s great to see the city of Wilmington receive this funding award from President Biden’s bipartisan infrastructure law,” Gov John Carney said. “The city can use it to identify areas that need improvement to make Wilmington safer for both pedestrians and drivers. We look forward to working with towns and cities across our state to do more for roadway safety in the months ahead.”

SAFE STREETS NATIONWIDE

The grants will “fundamentally change how roadway safety is addressed,” the U.S. Department of Transportation wrote in announcing the grants.

Traffic fatalities in the United States reached a **16-year high** in 2021, and preliminary data indicate will remain near those levels in 2022, even getting worse for people walking, biking, or rolling as well as incidents involving trucks. A new **report** shows the economic impact of traffic crashes was \$340 billion in 2019.

A second round of \$1.1 billion in grants is expected to be released in April.





DEL. STATE PARKS SET ATTENDANCE RECORD: 8 MILLION-PLUS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware State Parks set another attendance record in 2022, with more than 8 million visitors. Attendance at the 17 Delaware state parks has increased each year since 2015. In the past five years, visitation is up 37%.

The most visited state park in 2022 was Cape Henlopen, with 1.9 million visitors. Alapocas Run, Auburn Valley, Brandywine Zoo, Fort Delaware and Killens Pond state parks and the First State Heritage Park all saw visitation increase more than 10% in 2022.

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, which runs the parks, used the announcement to pitch open jobs and push earlier reservations.

“Such voluminous visitation year-to-year calls for more staff working both at the parks and in adminis-

tration,” DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin said. “There currently is a range of job openings we look to fill as DNREC and the Division of Parks and Recreation work to meet demands from the rising growth.” Job postings can be found at www.jobapscloud.com/DE.

And the division encouraged people to make reservations as early as possible, as prime spaces book faster than pre-COVID-19 visitation levels.

Division programs, volunteer hours and amenities all saw increases in 2022, compared with 2021. These included a 28% increase in school program participants, a 23% increase in volunteer hours, a 12% increase in visitors to Deerfield and Garrisons Lake golf courses (with nearly 60,000 rounds of golf played) and 40,000 visitors for events in 2022.

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE

10 MEALS WHEELS DELAWARE

Other state park systems saw declines in visitation in 2022, DNREC said in making the announcement.

HONORS FOR STATE PARKS

The parks system has earned two recent accolades.

In 2022, it was accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association’s Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. Fewer than 2%—or 199 out of 12,000 parks and recreation agencies in the United States—are CAPRA-accredited.

In 2021, for the second time, it won the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and the National Recreation and Park Association.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



LONGWOOD GETS BIT MORE DU PONTY BY ADDING GRANOQUE ESTATE

treasure is stewarded for future generations to enjoy.”

It will become the latest large tract of land to be put into conservation, a move that guarantees it will not be used for development. A conserved property usually has sold the property’s rights to be developed in perpetuity. It’s become a popular financial move that allows owners to cash in some of their properties’ value while preserving its existence as open land, but it also is a move that can prevent erosion and protect water by reducing runoff.

Granogue is one of the last remaining pieces of unprotected open space in the Brandywine River Corridor with large sections of farmland, forest, pasture, and meadow, the Longwood press release said. The house was built in the early 1920s by Irénée’s parents, who had nine children. Much of the property is actively farmed for corn, soy, hay, and dairy production, and it includes large sections of forest, pasture and meadow.

Longwood Gardens began with Pierre du Pont’s wish when he bought in in 1906 to stop the trees in a 202-acre arboretum from being turned into lumber. Since then, Longwood has become one of the world’s great gardens, but it also focuses on conservation and sustainability.

“Today, we are honoring the legacy of Longwood through an act of conservation to protect another landscape,” Redman said.

GRANOQUE OPENED FOR EVENTS

While private, Granogue has often opened its gates to the public. Brip and Barbie hosted events including bicycle and foot races, Boy Scout events and more. Granogue was often used by local organizations to hold events and fundraisers.

“Preserving this beautiful land is important to our family,” said Grace Engbring, daughter of Irénée and Barbara du Pont, Jr. and family representative for Granogue Reserve.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

Longwood Gardens, founded by Pierre S. du Pont in the early 1900s, is about to get another dose of du Pont. The Kennett Square, PA, gardens and The Conservation Fund will acquire and operate the longtime du Pont estate Granogue located in New Castle County. The 505-acre private estate includes the long-time residence of the late Irénée “Brip” and Barbara “Barbie” du Pont Jr. He died last month at the age of 103; she died in 2021 at the age of 96.

The move answers a question that area residents have wondered aloud about for decades: What would happen to Granogue when the du Ponts died? The agreement—which includes all the land and buildings—was worked out between Longwood Gardens, The Conservation Fund and Granogue Reserve LTD LLC, which owned the property.

“Longwood Gardens is honored to play a part in the preservation of Granogue,” said Paul B. Redman, CEO of Longwood Gardens, in a statement. “We understand the important role this iconic landscape plays in our region’s ecology, community, and quality of life, and we look forward to working with our partners to ensure this



TINY ART IN PARK BRINGS JOY TO NORTH WILMINGTON

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Whimsical art that has mysteriously appeared in a Brandywine Hundred park is generating smiles for people out for walks—and hundreds of fans online. On Monday, Sandy Meredith posted a snapshot on **next-door**, saying “To whomever is leaving these fantastic rock creations along the path between Tarleton and Cardiff...THANK YOU!

“You have made me become more observant of my surrounding while walking the dog and have put a smile on my face. I LOVE watching for them as the seasons change.”

In its first two days, the post earned 688 smiles, hearts and really big smiles from people as far away as California. None of the dozen or so people commenting, however, revealed anything about the artist(s?) creating them.

SEEKING ART CLUES

A reporting trip to the site generated few clues. On Wednesday, the completed sculpture that Meredith saw—three stones painted to look like a classic snowman—was still nestled in tree roots. A body-less head topped a nearby stump. And two more painted stones lingered near other trees. It was unclear if they were how the sculptures began or ended.

The park—called Tarleton Park on the side facing that development and Cardiff Park on the other end—is the kind of friendly place with Little Free Libraries at each entrance and, now, with its own special art.



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DELAWARE THIRD ON LIST OF MOST-RELAXED STATES

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware is the third most-relaxed state, based on how often residents Google for various terms related to sleep—or its lack.

Hush., a bedding and mattress brand in Canada, used Google Trends to discover the level of interest in nine search terms: sleep anxiety, how to sleep better, insomnia, why can't I sleep, sleep remedies, sounds for sleep, weighted blanket, white noise machine and sleep apnea.

Wyoming was the most relaxed, with a score of 23 (out of 100), and Oklahoma was dead last (but probably not dead asleep) with a score of 71.

Delaware scored 35.

“Being relaxed plays a major part in helping you to fall asleep,” the company said in releasing the results. “There

are plenty of things that can prevent people from feeling relaxed at night, for example poor sleep hygiene, work-related stress and even medical conditions. So, many people who struggle to feel relaxed will be searching for things to help them wind down and hopefully improve their sleeping pattern.

“However, what’s interesting to see here is that many of these top 10 areas offer incredible natural scenery, including Wyoming’s stunning mountains and Maine’s tranquil lakes. Perhaps the peaceful landscapes are one of the factors that can contribute to winding down and achieving a good night’s sleep.”

Hush. provided no examples for Delaware’s incredible natural scenery.




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photo by fauxels on Pexel



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



CHILD CARE REPORT: FIRST STATE LACKS AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new report from [Rodel](#) shows that First State families do not have adequate access to affordable child care.

A coalition of advocacy groups—including Rodel, the [Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children](#), [Delaware Readiness Teams](#) and [First State Pre-K](#)—conducted a survey with hundreds of Delaware families to gauge their feelings about child care services.

Caregivers of children five years and younger shared common complaints about long waitlists, high prices and a lack of options around them. According to the survey, 81% of caregivers said the expenses of child care hold their family back from improving their situation.

The report found that 71% of caregivers looked at multiple places to send their children to, but 37% of them were waitlisted by at least two centers; 21% were flat-out rejected services.

The numbers are worse for parents in Kent or Sussex

counties. Seventy-three percent of those people were waitlisted by at least two centers, while only 45% of New Castle County caregivers were.

“Kent and Sussex just don’t have options,” said Toni Dickerson, an administrator at [Sussex Preschools](#) and the chair of the [Child Care Association of Sussex County](#). She helped Rodel with the report. Rodel is a nonprofit focused on transforming public education in Delaware.

“For my centers, specifically, we have five locations and three of those locations are the only center-based options within the zip code,” she said. The Seaford School District only has one full-time child care center in the district, she said.

Sen. Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, who’s on the Senate Education Committee, said he agrees with concerns Rodel pointed out and he has been working across

the aisle with his colleagues since the summer to rectify them.

“As they correctly point out, access to pre-K and after school care is becoming exceedingly difficult,” he said. “It’s my hope that the increases recommended by Gov. Carney in the upcoming budget will be adequate to allow child care centers to attract qualified individuals to work at their centers, and thereby opening up spots for additional children.”

Dickerson said Carney’s recommendations are just small steps on the right path.

Carney’s recommendations include:

- Investing more than \$10 million in child care programs and raising the income limits of parents who can qualify.
- Changing eligibility for those who use the state’s Purchase of Care program for help with child care to 200% of the poverty level, reaching more children.
- Doubling funding the Early Childhood Assistance Program to \$12.2 million, to serve more three- and four-year-olds, and provide programs with more resources.
- Allocating funding for House Bill 33 to lower preschool special education student-teacher ratios.
- Utilizing a \$8 million federal Preschool Development Grant to help strengthen and expand the state’s early childhood infrastructure to infants and toddlers.

This would create more access and allow more families to be reimbursed for their child care payments, Dickerson said. She also noted that staffing is a major issue.

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photo link: SoDel Concepts



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



HELL'S BELLES IS A NEW BAKERY IN WILMINGTON'S LITTLE ITALY

BY PAM GEORGE

Wilmington's Little Italy section has been home to some of Delaware's most iconic bakeries. Take, for instance, DiFonzo's, which opened here in 1945. After the Wilmington site closed in 2004, Black Lab Breads moved in. Meanwhile, Sheila Papa opened Papa's Pastry Shop in 2001. Stephanie Grubb recalls each bakery.

"As a kid, I remember coming down and going to all the different shops on Union Street that aren't here anymore," said Grubb, who lives in Bellefonte. "There's so much history on this street and people always remember it as having bakeries."

Grubb and her partner, Hannah Schoenbach, are keeping the legacy alive. On Feb. 3, the partners held the grand opening for **Hell's Belles Bake Shop** at 600 N. Union St.—Papa's Pastry Shop's old location.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Grubb and Shoenbach met while working at De La Coeur, a café specializing in pastries and breakfast. The café had an original location on Lovering Avenue in Wilmington's Forty Acres community and a second location in Independence Mall on Concord Pike.

Although the Forty Acres site had just eight tables, it was regularly packed. The suburban store was just getting started when the COVID pandemic hit, initially shutting down indoor dining. Owners Gretchen and Alex Sianni closed both sites in spring of 2020.

Now jobless, Schoenbach, a graduate of the French Culinary Institute, and Grubb, decided to open a business. "We weren't sure if it would be a takeaway model or an online business—or what it would be," Grubb said.



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To start, the entrepreneurs sold pastries at Westside Farmers Market at Cool Spring Park. Meanwhile, they investigated a lease on Papa's old space, which had been vacant for nearly seven years.

WELCOME TO UNION STREET

The partners, who had to buy all new equipment, are pleased with the location. "There are so many small businesses on this street—it's a great spot to be," Grubb said.

One of those businesses is **Sweet Somethings Dessert Shop**, which opened in 2004 at 1006 N. Union St. Among Sweet Something's offerings is specialty cakes. There's no competition there.

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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



JFC HEARS ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION STAFF RETENTION

“I’m optimistic that we’re starting to turn the tide and things are gonna get better. We’re offering a \$10,000 sign-on bonus. We’re offering the cadet lodging if you live past 75 miles of our training facility. We’ve offered some retention bonuses going back a couple of fiscal years using ARPA funds, trying to keep staff here and keep them from retiring.”

RETENTION ISSUES

Several factors contribute to a lack of retention, including less pay and odd hours, he said

“During COVID we saw a tremendous increase in the number of retirements,” Hudson said. “We get on the other side of COVID and then we have what they call the great resignation and there’s so many job opportunities.”

One academy student “went to the NAPA Auto Parts for more money and a more stable schedule, straight day work, weekends off. Young people coming into our industry, whether it be probation and parole, or to be a correction officer, they’re gonna have to work some weekends. and correction officers are gonna have to work a lot of evenings. A lot of weekends. So that seems to be a factor as well.

“Because they come on, they work permanent four to 12 with Tuesdays and Wednesdays off, and they see another job opportunity that pays 25 more cents an hour with weekends off, so they’re taking that job.

“So I’m hoping...as some job markets slow up, people come back to state government. So hopefully we’ve turned that corner.”

Ruth Briggs King, a Republican who represents the Millsboro area, said before the hearing that there needs to be enough funding for officers and they need to address retention rates.

“Looking at the increase that we see, less in incarceration, more in community corrections, which is parole and probation,” she said. “So I want to make sure that we’re funding adequately for the increased load that we placed on those officers. You can’t decrease the number of those being supervised and not increase those who are doing the supervision and re-entry work.”

Patricia May, a retired counselor, spoke during the public comment period to pay raises for counselors and non-uniform staff. When she retired, with 30 years of experience in corrections, she was “only making in the low 40s. If I had not had a husband that could help support me, I wouldn’t have been able to afford my own housing. When I looked at the pay scale just now, it looks like we’re still extremely low.”

Citing her duty during the 2017 Vaughn prison riot, “I was in just as dangerous a situation as the officers.”

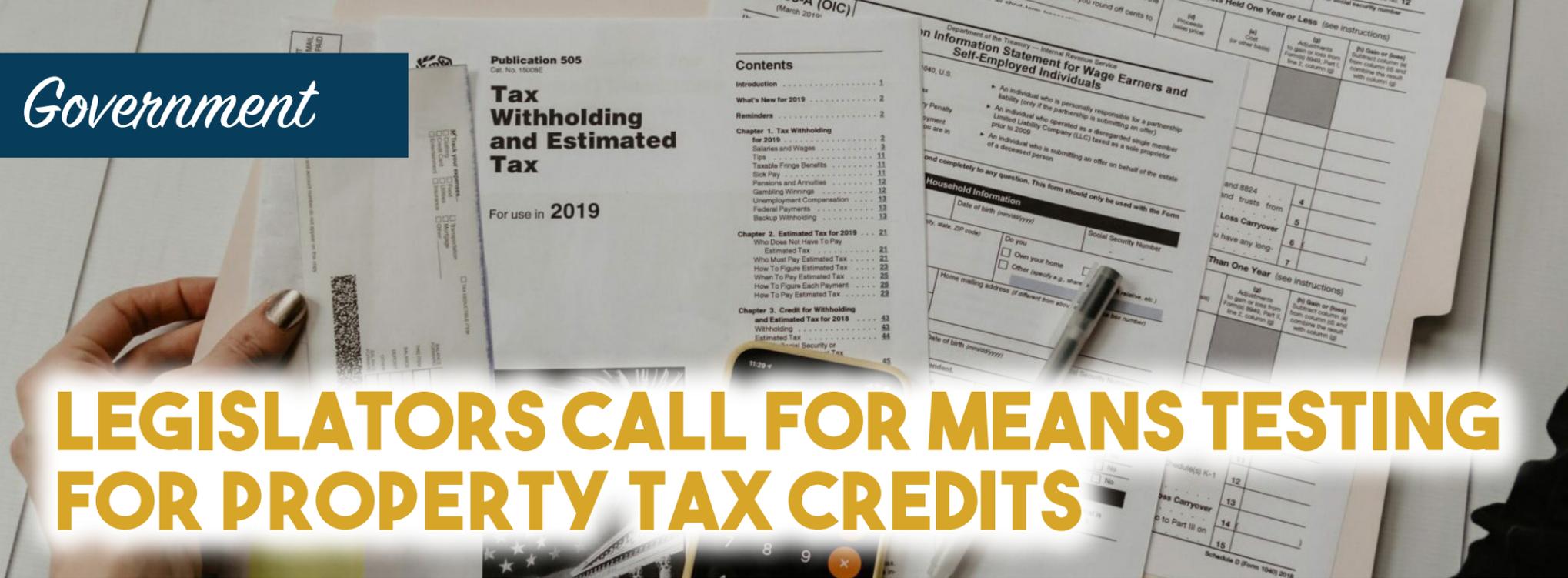
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BY SAM HAUT

Staff retention in Delaware’s prison system was an important issue at Wednesday’s Joint Finance Committee budget hearing. Monroe Hudson, the commissioner of the Delaware Department of Correction, told Sen. Laura Sturgeon, a Democrat who represents the Greenville area, that he thinks the department has made progress since 2017. It now has 2,647 full-time employees, the most since at least 2008.

“I can’t say our numbers have gotten better, but I am very optimistic,” he said. “We have 329 vacancies, about a 17% vacancy rate for correction officers,” Hudson said.

The class hired last December was the largest class hired in the last two years, he said. It started with 36 and dipped to about 30. A class that starts in two weeks has enrolled 28.



LEGISLATORS CALL FOR MEANS TESTING FOR PROPERTY TAX CREDITS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Calls to consider means testing before granting veteran and senior housing tax breaks shocked a legislative committee last month. Delaware’s secretary of finance doesn’t think an income-based means test for property tax breaks is likely. Even so, Rick Geisenberger did say that a means test based on property values not only could happen, but should.

“Seniors get a lot of benefits under the Delaware income tax law,” Geisenberger said. “They get to take an extra personal credit, which is worth an extra \$110 deduction in income taxes. They don’t get taxed on their Social Security. They get to deduct up to \$12,500 of their pension when they turn 60. And when you get to the age of 65, you get an extra standard deduction worth \$2,500.”

WHAT IS A MEANS TEST?

Means tests usually involve setting limits on whether someone is granted a tax break by looking at income, savings and other factors. Think food stamps, which is

now called SNAP or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In Delaware, a single person can receive a maximum of \$281 a month. That number is \$516 for a household of two, \$740 for a household of three, \$939 for a household of four, and the number continues to rise with each additional person. To be eligible for food stamps, an individual or household must make below a certain income.

In a House Education Committee meeting last month, several representatives brought up the idea of means testing for the 100% disabled veteran tax break. It’s an uncapped credit for disabled veterans who live in Delaware for three years. The discussion was prompted by [House Bill 30](#), which would remove the three-year residency requirement.

Expanding the tax credit would cost the state between \$248,887 and \$518,514 in Fiscal Year 2024, according to the bill’s fiscal note. It would rise about \$40,000 to

\$70,000 in coming years, the fiscal note said.

The average veteran tax credit is \$1,500, with a range from \$633 to \$4,632. Now, 710 disabled veterans benefit from the credit. With more than three months left to apply for the break, the Finance Department expects a total of 923 beneficiaries this year.

“I understand that it’s not always easy to means test, because then you’re also talking about hiring staff to process everything,” said Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, said at the meeting. “I do hope that we will continue to have conversations about the best way to give relief to people who need it and give the maximum amount to those who need it.”

He referenced his 13 years working in Medicaid and other health programs, and said he has concerns about there not being a means test for the senior school property tax credit. Delaware currently caps this credit at \$500 for seniors 65 years and older who have lived in the state for at least 10 years.

Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, called for a means test during January’s meeting as well to make sure those who don’t need the tax cuts are not taking advantage of the state. Although property taxes help fund schools, districts don’t lose a penny when seniors get a tax break.

“Whatever the lost revenue is to the school districts is then 100% reimbursed by the state,” Geisenberger said.

Delaware was on the hook for \$28,789,300 for the senior tax credit and \$2.5 million for the disabled veterans one in Fiscal Year 2023, according to the budget bill.

Property taxes are a local, county-designated tax and counties do not have individual income tax information at their disposal, Geisenberger pointed out.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



TRANSPORTATION PLAN EYES TYLER MCCONNELL, HARES CORNER, I-95

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Proposals for a notoriously congested bridge (the Tyler McConnell, in North Wilmington), Delaware’s busiest intersection (Hares Corner, aka U.S. Route 13 and Delaware Route 273) and Interstate 95 in Cecil County highlight the latest [regional transportation plan](#).

The Wilmington Area Planning Council collected comments at an [open house](#) Wednesday, Feb. 8 in Newark and online through March 6. [Registration](#) is requested for the event, titled 2023 Our Town.

Speakers at the meeting include Rebecca Higgins, senior policy advisor at U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Work, on funding an equitable system; and Todd Litman, founder of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, on developing innovative solutions to transportation problems.

The plan runs through 2050 and is the latest in a series going back to 1996. “Only transportation projects

found in the RTP are eligible for federal funding,” the council says in introducing the plan. “It is a living plan, subject to continual revision (at least every four years) and a tool for informed transportation and policy decisions that reflect public views.”

The council is proposing several policy “tweaks” in this update.

- “Eliminate all traffic-related deaths and severe injuries, while increasing safety, health and mobility for all.
- Support national defense preparedness and data sharing.
- Reduce carbon emissions via a new performance target for lower vehicle miles traveled by 2030.

“There are more than 100 projects on the draft ‘fiscally constrained’ (or financially reasonable given the forecasted funding) project list in New Castle County and about a dozen in Cecil County,” the council says.

Of course, proposals, priorities and prices change. Here’s a look at the ones that are the most significant (they’re also the most expensive).

Roads

- Widening Interstate 95 through Cecil County, \$1.2 billion estimated cost, in service 2050.
- Hares Corner grade separation, \$469 million, 2045. The traffic lights on U.S. 13 and Delaware 273—Delaware’s busiest intersection—could be replaced by an overpass and cloverleaf ramps, like what now

exists at U.S. 13 and Delaware Route 141, a mile or so to the the north. “We would expect that the DelDOT planning process will evaluate traditional designs as well as the innovative concept presented in 2020 and [2021 Bike Delaware events](#),” said Heather Dunigan, principal planner for the agency.

- Widening Delaware Route 1, U.S. 40 to Road A (near Christiana Mall), \$300 million, 2036. Long-term safety improvements and congestion mitigation by widening the highway.
- [Maryland 222](#), U.S. Route 40 to Maryland Route 275, and the I-95 interchange, \$270 million, 2045. Adding new lanes in each direction and reconstructing the interchange near Perryville, Maryland.
- [I-95/Delaware Route 896](#) interchange work, \$257 million, 2026. Ramp realignments and other geometric improvements to address congestion and crashes caused by merging and diverging through, entering and exiting traffic.
- [Widening Route 1](#), Tybouts Corner to Road A (near Christiana Mall), \$115 million, 2024. Short-term safety improvements and congestion mitigation by widening nine miles from just south of I-95 to Tybouts Corner.

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COLLEGE BUDGET HEARINGS BRING UP SAFETY, SALARY CONCERNS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Funding requests from three state colleges in General Assembly financial hearings Thursday drew questions about campus safety, fair pay and transparency.

Collectively, Delaware Technical Community College, Delaware State University and University of Delaware asked the state Joint Finance Committee for \$32,534,000 for Fiscal Year 2024, which starts July 1.

The committee, made of members of both the state House and Senate, decides what will be in the state budget presented to the full legislature in June. It holds hearings with dozens of agencies throughout February.

Gov. John Carney’s proposed 2024 budget for higher education includes:

- \$60 million—Deferred maintenance, capital improvements and technology upgrades at UD, DSU and DelTech

- \$1.5 million—Joint Engineering Program between DSU and UD
 - \$932,000—Year 3 of the DelTech Compensation Stabilization Plan to reduce faculty and staff turnover
 - \$1.4 million—Increase for First State PROMISE Scholarship at UD, with total scholarship amount of \$16,542,800
 - \$4 million—Increase for SEED+ for DelTech and UD for total amount of \$14,165,700
 - \$1.7 million—Increase to INSPIRE scholarship for DSU, for total amount of \$8,584,800
- Here’s what UD, DSU and DelTech asked the JFC for, and what committee members and the public wanted to know before a check is written.

Delaware Technical Community College
Several committee members slammed Del Tech Pres-



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ident Mark Brainard for salary disparities and a deteriorating work environment.

“The top eight positions, not including yours, Mr. President, comes to \$1.2 million for eight people,” said Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel. “Is that justifiable?”

Brainard said the average salary for a professor is between \$50,000 and \$60,000 and said it’s the call of the committee to determine if the wage discrepancies were fair. Lawson pointed out that Brainard makes \$274,000, about 400% more than the average professor.

“The board voted to give you a 25% raise in one fell swoop and your employees got maybe a 3% increase,” he said. “I just don’t understand how you’re in it for the students but yet the folks who have direct contact with the students are making 50 to 60k. The top seems awfully heavy.”

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photo link: Christiana High School

CHRISTIANA HIGH SCHOOL	
BOYS TRACK RECORDS	GIRLS TRACK RECORDS
NAME	NAME
1. [Name]	1. [Name]
2. [Name]	2. [Name]
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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



APPO TO REVIEW SCHOOL SAFETY, INCREASE SECURITY

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Appoquinimink School District will review its safety measures and increase security at entry points for events. The changes follow a gun being found Monday night in a hallway when Appoquinimink High School was hosting a basketball game against Tri-State Christian Academy.

“The adults and the students handled that situation very well, thanks to the training that they’ve been given,” Superintendent Matt Burrows told the district board on Tuesday.

With about four minutes left in the game, a disturbance near the bathrooms prompted an administrator and two State Police officers on extra duty to go into the hallway.

“We did have video in the area, so we were able to quickly identify who the alleged assailant was at that time and were also able to identify that, during the melee, a gun did fall out of the pocket of the individual and landed on the floor,” he said.

The gun then appeared to be kicked and it went off, with the bullet striking a wall. No one was hurt.

Delaware State Police Detective Brian Timmons is leading the **investigation**.

“Thus unfortunately is not just something that impacts our school district,” Burrows said. “It impacts our community, where we have seen increased violence and gun violence...We’re going to do everything that we can do.”

Last month, a 16-year old male was charged in connection to a **fired gun** in Colonial’s William Penn High School. In September 2022, Appoquinimink School District and Howard High School changed their **football admissions policies** in response to a shooting that took place right off of Appoquinimink High’s campus during a game, and crowds storming the exits and hopping fences at a Howard game.



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WILMU INTRODUCES FACULTY FOR NEW LAW SCHOOL OPENING IN FALL

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington University introduced the eight faculty members that will help build its new law school. Jefferey Zavrotny, associate dean for law admissions, said the school has had about 40 applicants thus far for the first classes, which begin this fall. Dean Phillip Closius said they expect about 100 students to enroll in its first year.

Closius was the dean of the [University of Baltimore School of Law](#) for four years and also taught at the [University of Toledo School of Law](#) for 28 years before joining WilmU.

The school is not yet accredited by the [American Bar Association](#), but Closius said it should be by March 2025, a year before its first class takes the bar exam.

WilmU's [website](#) now lists the required courses, which include 29 first-year credits, 38 upper-level credits and 19 elective credits. Originally, WilmU planned on making the night sections exclusively online, but the ABA forbids the online-only option until the school has earned provisional accreditation. All night courses, except the contracts class, will be in-person.

All eight professors said that they share the passion for the accessibility and affordability that the university has been promoting.

The cost for full-time students will be \$24,000 per year and \$18,000 for part-time students, which the Closius said is the cheapest tuition of any law school in the region. To compare, Widener University's Delaware Law School (the only other law school in the state) costs a first-year, full-time student \$57,376 per year and part-time students \$43,032.

Edson Bostic

Bostic, a former federal public defender for 25 years and the chief federal defender for the U.S. District of Delaware from 2006 to 2021, will teach criminal law.

"He has probably the most trial experience in criminal law, certainly in the state, and maybe in the country," said Closius. "He has spent a lifetime devoting himself to representing indigent criminal defendants."

Growing up in Barbados, Bostic's mom always pushed him to be a lawyer. Bostic graduated from Rutgers Uni-

versity School of Law and has taught at the Temple, Widener and Rutgers law schools. He said that the inclusivity and opportunity that WilmU's law school promises attracted him to join the faculty.

Veronica Finkelstein

"I absolutely love the law," said Finkelstein, who has won the teacher of the year award at Rutgers University-Camden every year since 2007.

"I don't complain about long hours. I have the best job you could possibly have, and I know the reason that I love the law is because I had a great professor in law school, who showed me how to really unlock the power of the law."

She hopes to show her students that power, and highlight how the law makes a difference for individuals and collectively as a functional society.

"I love to teach, and I want to be that teacher," she said. "I want to be that person who makes the difference for the students at our law school."

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ODESSA STUDENTS SEND BIRDS OFF WITH 'FLY, EAGLES FLY' PERFORMANCE

BY JAREK RUTZ

What do Odessa's choir, orchestra and band students have in common, besides a love of music?

The Philadelphia Eagles.

And to express their support, Appoquinimink's **Old State Elementary** and Odessa Middle and High School ensembles performed the team's fight song "Fly, Eagles Fly" Tuesday. The students wanted to give the NFC Champion Philadelphia Eagles a proper send off to Super Bowl LVII in Arizona. In five days, they play the AFC Champion Kansas City Chiefs.

"This day is about unity in our schools and it's awesome for us to come together for the Birds in their most important week," said Brian Endlein, **Odessa High School's** band director. "This is a fun way to kind of send them our well wishes."

"Having multiple groups from different schools come together is not something we usually get to do," said Odessa High junior Angel Wilson. "So this united day

allows us to not just listen to each other, but see where everyone is in their playing abilities, which evokes excitement."

He joked that although the school's mascot is the duck, birds of a feather flock together.

"When we found out we were all playing together, we all thought it was the coolest thing," he said. "You don't get to see 250 students come together often to not only display their musical gifts, but to celebrate the success of our football team."

Voni Perrine, principal of Odessa High, conducted the musicians eloquently, with a sharp, uniform silence abruptly following the student chanting "E-A-G-L-E-S EAGLES!"

"Our school values include being united, creative, determined and kind scholars, and we were able to put that on display in a joyous event," she said. "We have staff who are huge Eagles fans who helped put this together, and the students are excited too, so the performance was a great way to highlight our unity."

The Eagles will be donning their midnight green jerseys, the same ones they wore when they won the first Super Bowl in franchise history, defeating Tom Brady and the New England Patriots 41-33 five years ago.

Odessa High special education math teacher Kyle Curry, who's built like Eagles center Jason Kelce and has a similar burly beard, mimicked his doppelganger by

rocking a mummer costume during the performance.

He was copying Jason Kelce's now famous mummer costume worn during the 2018 victory parade.

"I bought it off Amazon," Curry said, "C'mon, I just had to!"



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OPERATION HAIR CARE: CUTS, TRAINING FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

On Tuesday a steady procession of elementary students climbed into chairs at the **Paul Mitchell The School** and were transformed from apprehensive to glowing. The students were participating in Colonial School District’s Operation Hair Care, a program that offers homeless students help with hair and makeup styling. It’s also for students whose families are financially challenged.

It involved about 15 younger students who received shampoos and hair cuts, and about 15 William Penn High School students, all of whom hope to go into hair care, makeup and beauty.

The younger students were mesmerized by colorful drapes fastened around them for the cuts. One bright yellow included cartoons of jungle animals and really popped against the black of the studio.

It was an honor to be able to work with the kids, said Monique Lusby, a former student at Paul Mitchell.

“They’re so excited and happy that it’s their first time here,” she said. “I love it. It’s just a great day and it feels good to give back to the kids and make them feel great.”

Senior Chemdiya Apere was thrilled to be working with Paul Mitchell professionals. She was able to tour the studio and listen to talks about choosing hair and makeup to suit your own hair.

HISTORY OF OPERATION HAIR CARE

Lauren Wilson, public information officer of Colonial School District, started Operation Hair Care in 2018.

“It started out of a conversation I was having with a family crisis therapist,” Wilson said. “We were simply walking down the hall and a student that passed by had his hood up.”

The therapist told her the child likely didn’t want anyone to see his hair because he lived in a motel and his family couldn’t afford to get it cut.



Wilson, who believes the adage of when you look good, you feel good holds true, said it made her think about how a student’s hair affects self esteem and social behavior in and out of the classroom.

In its first year, Operation Hair Care involved only Wilson’s personal hair stylist, who cut a handful of students’ hair. Now, dozens of students are served, with a trip to the hair studio four times a year.

It’s a win-win, as the Paul Mitchell students need to fulfill a certain number of community service hours.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

PARENTS PLEAD FOR SAFETY IN HEATED BRANDYWINE BOARD MEETING

BY JAREK RUTZ

Complaints about safety at **Springer Middle School** at Monday night's **Brandywine School District** meeting devolved into a shouting match between a board member and a parent.

About 12 parents and several students told the Brandywine School District the same thing: They're concerned and outraged about the lack of action after bullying, fights and other events have compromised student and staff safety.

Most of the speakers referred to an incident that involved Springer Middle School Principal Tracy Woodson. It was unclear exactly what occurred, but parents at the meeting said Woodson was trying to break up an altercation between students and ended up on the ground in need of an ambulance and out of work for a week. Efforts were unsuccessful Tuesday to get more details about the incident from the district.

The complaints escalated to the point that board President John Skrobot III threatened to kick people out

of the meeting. "There is a civility clause that says that if you're going to come and be in attendance, you are going to have to act civilly, and we will pursue that, we will pursue that," he said.

Dylan Thompson, a parent, said it's embarrassing that parents have to come to the school board meeting every month to talk about the same issue.

"The smug look you had Superintendent Hohler when she [another parent] talked about safety, half the board is not even concerned and not even looking," Thompson said. "There's no care. What are we going to do to make these kids feel safe?"

He accused the board members of only caring about shaking hands and kissing babies while not doing what they were elected to do—keep staff and students safe.

Board member Ralph Ackerman then began to shout. "You are wrong, excuse me! We certainly do care," he said. "No, I'm not attacking the parents!"

Thompson said Woodson is doing everything he can

to keep Springer safe, but he needs help from the district. "I came here in November by myself," he said. "These people all finally came on their own tonight and thank God for that. I was one of one in November, and now I'm one of 50."

Parents called for an audit of the student code of conduct, revised disciplinary measures and intervention programs that deal with bullies and others causing harm to staff and students.

"My son will not be in Springer next year so you can use that \$17,240 or whatever the state gives you to maybe help another child or help these other kids out there," he said, "but my son isn't the only one Springer is losing in June."

Warren Stradley said his child came home back in October after being bullied and pleaded with him and his wife to be homeschooled.

"The code of conduct is a huge problem and there's so many loopholes in it," he said. "A kid can do whatever he wants and get a slap on the wrist."

Rebecca Campbell's daughter also goes to Springer Middle School. "She has been tearful coming home and before bed because she fears the violent atmosphere at Springer," she said.

Campbell repeated some of the comments that she's heard from other concerned Springer parents, which includes children getting their head bashed into the wall, students being afraid of the hallways and running to class to avoid bullies, and fears of sexual assault.

Another parent said some teachers allow vaping in class.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

NEW PRIVATE SCHOOL COMING TO SUSSEX THIS FALL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new private school is coming to Sussex County in the fall. Dustin Yoder said he started **Headwaters Acton** to serve people who have a deep dissatisfaction with traditional education.

He and his wife Stefanie Yoder live in Sussex County and wanted their four young children to have a different path of education than they experienced. After sending three of their children to their local Montessori school, they decided to opt for homeschooling because of “the constraints of the government on the public school system.”

They found Acton Academy, a national network of private schools with 270 locations across the world. Yoder said the model blends the freedom, cooperation and academic rigor that he wants Delaware’s young learners to experience as they mature. Although the Yoders haven’t settled on a location, they’re hoping to secure a building in Milton.

“That’s kind of close to where we live, and we figured Milton was really central so we could pull from Lewes, Milford and even Georgetown,” Yoder said. “It’s sort of a nice triangle there in the western part of the county.” If they can’t find a place in Milton, they’ll likely locate in Milford. Yoder works in his family business, Dover Windows and Doors, and his wife homeschools two of their four kids.

PLANNING THE PRIVATE SCHOOL

He expects the doors to open this fall for the 2023-2024 school year with about a dozen students. According to Stefanie Yoder, tuition will be \$7,400 per student, but will decrease by \$1,000 per student.

There will initially be an elementary school studio for ages six to 11. Yoder hopes to expand after that, adding a spark studio for ages three to five next year.

Students will not be in grades, an FAQ says. “We believe that children learn best when working with

those younger and older than themselves rather than split up into groups based solely on age.”

Headwaters Acton will add a middle school and a “launchpad”—Acton’s terminology for high school—once the inaugural class of students reach those grade levels. Once it’s fully built out, Yoder is hoping for an enrollment of around 100 students.

“But that’s going to take several years,” he said.

The school’s mission statement is that it believes every child who enters the studio is a genius and they are on a hero’s mission to find their calling to change the world.

“That sounds disingenuous since obviously, every child does not have a 150 IQ,” he said, “but genius in the sense of them being able to operate independently, identifying a problem and applying whatever imagination and skills they have to solve that problem. That’s how we view genius.”

He said the model for an Acton Academy allows students’ skillsets to shine much more than traditional schools.

“They’re going to identify the problems that they see in the world and they’re going to have the competence and the tool set to be able to address those problems and change the world,” he said.

Here’s what the school website claims is unique about their model: The overarching theme of the school is freedom, Yoder said.

“They’re going to learn to appreciate educational freedom, religious freedom, economic freedom,” he said. “We’re going to work that into everything but the key is it’s learner-driven, so we seek to remove adult responsibility and hand off everything to them as quickly as possible.”

SALSTHON DANCE MARATHON AIMS TO RAISE \$175K FOR SICK KIDS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Students at **Salesianum**, **Ursuline** and **Padua** will dance their hearts out from dusk to dawn in March as they attempt to raise \$175,000 for children in need. SALSTHON is an annual event inspired by Penn State University's THON, which has become so popular that many high schools in the country have some version of the all-night dance marathon.

The student councils from each Wilmington school organize the event, which lasts from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. This year's SALSTHON will be on March 18-19 in the Salesianum gym. On top of the eight hours of dancing, students will have the opportunity to sink their teachers in a dunk tank, hop around in bouncy houses and play dodgeball.

"Having other things to do just makes it easier to stay up all night and have friends to hang out with so it doesn't get tiring and boring," said senior Jack Gormley, the student body president at Salesianum.

Since SALSTHON's inception 10 years ago, the schools have raised more than \$1.4 million for local charities, including the Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans, Child Inc., B+ Foundation, Sean's House, St. Patrick's Center, Limen House, Nemours Children's Hospital and the Summer Collab.

This year, their fundraising efforts will go to the **Ronald McDonald House of Delaware**, which helps families whose seriously ill children are getting care at Nemours nearby.

"We go through the process of interviewing different nonprofits to see which ones we think can use this money the best and also use it in a way that represents our three schools and our love for helping the community," Gormley said.

Each participant must raise at least \$250 to get a ticket to the event, but students often raise more.

About 1,000 students across the three schools partici-



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pate in SALSTHON each year, according to Alison Hildenbrand, a college counselor at Salesianum who helps organize the event.

For the next two months, students will raise funds through various outlets like direct solicitations, sponsoring "dress down" days, social events and athletic tournaments.

Last year's event raised \$283,000 for the **B+ Foundation**. The money raised this year will help the Ronald McDonald House provide meals to nearly 2,000 families that the foundation serves each year. It will also help replace old furniture at the house.

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photo by Glenn Frazer



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

MAXWELL FOOTBALL CLUB HONORS 2022 DELAWARE WINNER ROBBY TATTERSALL

BY GLENN FRAZER

The 38th annual Tri-State Mini Max Awards banquet was held Sunday at the Drexelbrook Catering Events Center in Drexel Hill, PA.

For the first year, the Pennsylvania and New Jersey winners were joined by the Delaware high school players. This is the eighth year that the First State players were honored by the MFC. A senior football player was honored by each of the high schools in Delaware with the exception of Odessa, which will not have a senior class until next season. The criteria for being named a mini max recipient include not only outstanding ability on the field, but also the achievements in the classroom as well as community involvement.

Ed Aiken is the chairperson for the Delaware chapter and he told us, “this year was one of the toughest years ever for selecting a single winner from the state as there were so many excellent young men to choose from.”



The Maxwell Football Club selected Wilmington Friends’ Robby Tattersall as the 2022 overall winner. Tattersall helped lead the Quakers to the school’s first state championship since 1984 when his grandfather (Bob Tattersall) coached the team. Bob was an associate coach this past season, as he helped his son Rob secure a title in Class 2A. Robby was named first team 2A all-state as a quarterback and defensive end and will continue his academic and athletic career at Yale University.

The past Delaware winners include Nolan Henderson, Will Knight and his brother Wayne Knight all from Smyrna. Colby Reeder from Salesianum was the very first Delawarean to be honored in 2015. The others are Brock Keeler of Woodbridge, C. J. Henry from Hodgson and Ethan Potter from Caravel.



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TATNALL, SALESIANUM TAKE DIAA INDOOR TRACK TITLES

BY GLENN FRAZER

The 2022-23 Delaware high school indoor track and field season came to a close Saturday in Landover, MD.

The true 200 meter oval at Prince George’s Sports and Learning Complex was the perfect site as the Tatnall girls and Salesianum boys secured the team titles. Tatnall accumulated 131 points to finish ahead of Padua with 107 points, while Smyrna and Saint Mark’s tied for third place with 39 points each. The Sals recorded 98 points to win the boys championship. Alexis I. duPont took second with 58 points and Cape Henlopen was a close third with 57.

One of the closest races of the day was the girls’ 4x800m relay as Padua and Conrad battled neck-and-neck until the Pandas pulled away down the final

straight to win in a time of 9:41.96, just three seconds ahead of the Conrad team (9:44.78). The winning foursome for Padua were: Anna Bockius, Katherine Bockius, Alessandra DeAscanis and Teresina DeAscanis. The Conrad team consisted of Jordan Blanck, Karen Tanner, Mallory Holloway and Alyssia Napier.

Not to be outdone, the boys’ 4x800 race was equally exciting as the Caesar Rodney team of Maddox Downs, Patrick Craig, Evan Easton and Ian Cain ran a “blistering” 8:23.25, four and a half seconds faster than Archmere Academy. The Auks’ time of 8:28.00 was turned in by Julain Facciolo, Nicholas Donelson, Camilo Alvarez and Richie Angiullo.

Salesianum edged Sussex Central in the 4x200 relay

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with a time of 1:31.05 to the Golden Knights’ time of 1:31.07. The Spartans from Saint Mark’s took first in the girls’ 4x200 relay.

In the sprint events, Juliana Balon from Padua won the 55m dash while Tatnall’s Adrianna Montgomery finished first in the 55m hurdles. On the boys’ side, Yougandy Mauricette from Sussex Tech won the 55m hurdles and Sussex Central’s Timothy Wright took first in the 55m dash.

Cape Henlopen swept the top three spots in the pole vault with Bailey Fletcher (13’) taking first, Edward Houck (12’) was second and their teammate Brady Mauro (11’-6’) vaulted into the third position.

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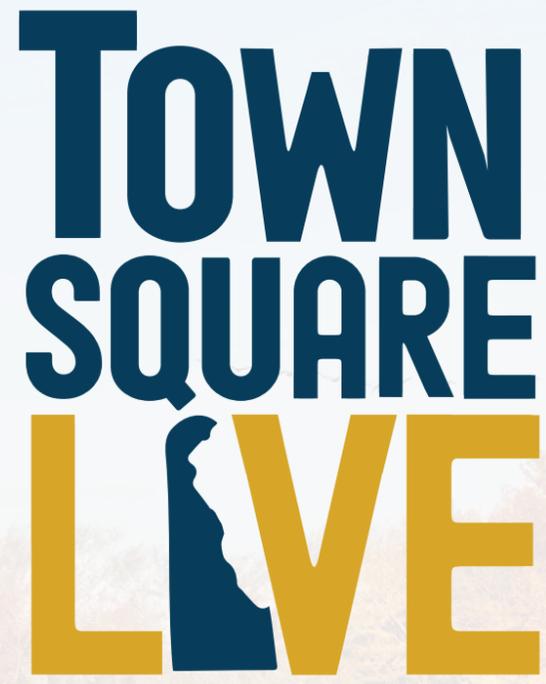
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