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# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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photo link: Delaware State Parks

*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# DRIP CAFÉ CELEBRATES 10 YEARS IN HOCKESSIN

BY PAM GEORGE

A lot has happened since April 22, 2013, when Greg Vogeley opened **Drip Café** in Hockessin. He expanded the **Lantana Square Shopping Center** eatery twice and opened a second location in Newark.

“Hockessin is my baby, and Newark is my pride and joy,” he said. He also started roasting his own coffee, and more recently, he signed a lease for a new concept.

That’s not to say it’s been an easy ride. There was a time when Vogeley didn’t have enough to pay all his staff, and not all his ideas panned out the way he expected. But on the cusp of Drip’s 10th anniversary, Vogeley is in a good place, and he plans to celebrate with a custom beer from Dew Point Brewing, the return of classic dishes and a May 3 wine dinner.

It’s a double anniversary in some respects. The hospitality veteran is also marking nearly 25 years in the industry.

## AN EARLY START

Vogeley was 14 when he got a job washing dishes in a Glen Mills, PA, pizza parlor. His older brother had just bought a car and the young teen wanted to start saving so he could buy one, too.

At Clarion (PA) University, the Grateful Dead fan studied the business behind the music industry, including finance. He wrote a business plan for a music club for one class, demonstrating the early start of an entrepreneurial spirit. However, jobs in the music industry weren’t plentiful in the Philadelphia region, and to earn

money, Vogeley sold shank-proof pencils and bullet-proof vests to prisons.

When a series of sales jobs ended, his mother suggested a job with benefits at Starbucks. Vogeley found his calling at the espresso machine and moved to **Brew HaHa!**, where he trained baristas for the rapidly growing chain.

He managed the Panera Bread on Kirkwood Highway but missed the coffee culture and latte lovers. He realized that he wanted to own a coffee shop.

## DRIP CAFÉ ARRIVES

While working at RedFire Grill & Steakhouse, Vogeley wrote a business plan for a food truck, Drip, specializing in coffee. A friend, however, suggested opening in a vacant space in Lantana Square. Vogeley knew it well. It was in the same shopping center as Redfire, and the friend, Ben Cordova, had opened Over Coffee Café in the same space. After Cordova closed the business, he’d rented the equipment to Café Reve, which also closed.

Vogeley jumped at the opportunity, and Drip Café quickly built a following for its coffee and brunch fare.

Jessica Ruff of Wilmington, for instance, comes for the London Fog, a tea latte, and the bacon-flecked pancakes with apples, bacon and salted caramel.

She’s not alone. *People* magazine featured the dish in its pages and Fox 29 traffic reporter Bob Kelly spotlighted the pancakes on his segment “Breakfast with Bob.”

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# SALSTHON SMASHES FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$243,791 TO HELP CHILDREN

BY JAREK RUTZ

Students from three Wilmington catholic schools spent eight hours on the dance floor last weekend to raise \$243,791 for children in need. **Salesianum School**, **Ursuline Academy** and **Padua Academy** shattered their \$175,000 fundraising goal by nearly \$70,000 in this year's SALSTHON.

“At the beginning, I was worried about hitting our number,” said senior Jack Gormley, the student body president at Salesianum. “You see that final number and everyone was just taken back by how much three high schools can raise and how much it’s gonna mean for the kids.”

About 1,000 students across the three schools participate in SALSTHON each year, according to Alison Hildenbrand, a college counselor at Salesianum who

helps organize the event. Each participant needed to raise at least \$250 for a ticket. The event took place from 10 p.m. March 18 to 6 a.m. March 19.

The annual event started 11 years ago and is inspired by Penn State University’s THON, a popular all-night dance marathon for charity that many high schools in the country have adopted. Over the years, SALSTHON has raised \$1,640,000 for local non-profit organizations, including the **Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans**, Child Inc., **B+**, **SL24: Sean’s House**, **St. Patrick’s Center**, **Limen House**, **Nemours Children’s Hospital** and the **Summer Collab**.

All proceeds from this year’s overnight party will go to the **Ronald McDonald House of Delaware**, which helps families whose seriously ill children are getting

care at Nemours nearby. Each family that checks into the house has a private guest room and access to laundry facilities, a fitness center, four playrooms, multiple kitchens, a movie theater and an outdoor playground. They’re also served a hot meal every evening, which is partly what the money will go towards. Not only will the money fund a full year of meals for the foundation, it will also help the house replace a lot of the old furniture in its building.

Fundraising efforts gained traction at the beginning of March when the school held a dunk tank to raise money, in which three of the school’s priests were on the plank. The largest donation was \$10,000, which was solicited from a local foundation by Nicky Vadas, a Salesianum student. Hildenbrand declined to identify it.

“Jack reached out to some area businesses and sought some fundraising support from them, which they hadn’t done in the past,” Hildenbrand said. “There was also more contact with alumni this year, so fundraising efforts were more thoughtful and deliberate with community engagement this year than in the past.”

Hildenbrand said the students will try to surpass this year’s total next year, but that might be hard with only three schools participating.

“We’d like to again be more deliberate about community involvement next year and maybe involve the beneficiary earlier on in the year so that we can form relationships and get going on fundraising as soon as possible,” she said.





# VEOLIA ASKS CUSTOMERS FOR HELP IN FINDING LEAD SERVICE LINES

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Veolia, which provides water to more than 100,000 residents in northern New Castle County, this month started a campaign to locate lead service lines. The **campaign** asks customers to volunteer five to 10 minutes of their time to fill out a **survey** and take and attach a photo of their service line near the meter. The service line is the pipe that runs from the main in the street to individual homes and other buildings.

Veolia's campaign involved texts and emails to customers, and on a few threads on nextdoor.com, the reaction was most negative: It's phishing. It's their job. It's confusing. But it's real, and it's really serious.

The campaign also extends to Veolia's adjacent territory in Bethel Township, PA, and other services areas in surrounding states, a spokesman said.

Lead exposure is a health issue, especially for children. That's why the federal government in 1986 banned lead pipes, fixtures and solder and in 2017 revised the rules on lead and copper. Lead paint was banned in 1978 for the same reason, and lead ink was **banned** in 1985 as well in children's books.

Current government regulations on drinking water set an action level of 15 parts per billion for lead and 1.3 parts per million for copper.

Testing from the Delaware 2020 routine monitoring shows an average state lead level at 1.6 ppb and an average state copper level at 0.145 ppm. Testing from the Bethel 2019 routine monitoring shows an average lead level at 1 ppb and an average copper level at 0.137 ppm.

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## EPA PUBLIC NOTICE

### Addition of East Basin Road Groundwater to the Superfund National Priorities List

The U.S. Environmental Agency (EPA) is announcing the addition of the East Basin Road Groundwater Site to the National Priorities List (NPL), a list of the sites eligible for long-term cleanup financed under the federal Superfund Program.

The site was proposed to the NPL in September 2022, at which point EPA opened a 60-day comment period on the proposal. During the comment period, EPA provided the opportunity for the public to ask questions. The comments received were in favor of the site being added to the NPL.

As a next step, EPA will conduct additional sampling as part of a remedial investigation to determine the nature and extent of contamination at the site. EPA will also be requesting community input for a Community Involvement Plan for the site.

For more information on the Site, visit:  
<http://epa.gov/superfund/eastbasin>



Or scan QR Code with your smartphone. Please open the camera app on your smartphone. Move your camera so the QR code is in the frame and able to be scanned. Hold the device steady until the camera app can read the code.

**Questions? Contact:**  
Akudo Ejelonu, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator  
(215) 814-5536 or [Ejelonu.akudo@epa.gov](mailto:Ejelonu.akudo@epa.gov)

photo by fauxels on Pexel



*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# DELAWARE LOTTERY TO ALLOW DEBIT CARDS, ADD DRAWING NEXT YEAR

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware Lottery plans to allow patrons of top lottery ticket sellers to use their debit cards to buy tickets over the counter. The lottery also will add a Sunday drawing to two of its popular draw games.

The two moves are expected to help the lottery add another \$2.4 million to the state budget in fiscal year 2024, which starts July 1, and \$6 million in fiscal year 2025. The lottery this year added \$326 million to the state general fund, said Helene Keeley, executive director of the Delaware Lottery,

Since its founding in 1975, the lottery has only allowed cash to be used to buy a ticket over the counter. The lottery did allow debit cards to be used in machines that sell tickets in places such as Wawa and Royal Farms. By this time next year—which would be the third quarter of the state’s fiscal year—the lottery plans to let its top

100 retailers begin taking debit cards—but not credit cards or other forms of cashless payments such as Venmo or Apple Pay.

The Lottery also plans to add a Sunday night drawing to its popular Play 3 and Play 4 games. Right now, the games have a drawing each morning and each evening Monday through Saturday, but only a morning drawing on Sunday.

“People are loyal to certain products. And in all our research in all our surveys that we do, it’s very apparent that people are loyal,” Keeley said. “Our decision to add the Sunday evening draw was based upon research. We’re not just saying, ‘Let’s add this draw and hopefully people who play the evening draw on a regular basis will come along and do that.’”

Draw games bring in more revenue than the national

Powerball and Mega Millions games. The lottery pulled in \$34.6 million for its Play 3 games and \$28.7 million from Play 4 games. It sold \$23.5 million in Powerball tickets, \$11.1 million for the Mega Million, but just \$2.8 million in Lotto America tickets. Keeley said she was not aware of any plans to expand the number of Mega-Millions draws per week, like PowerBall has done.

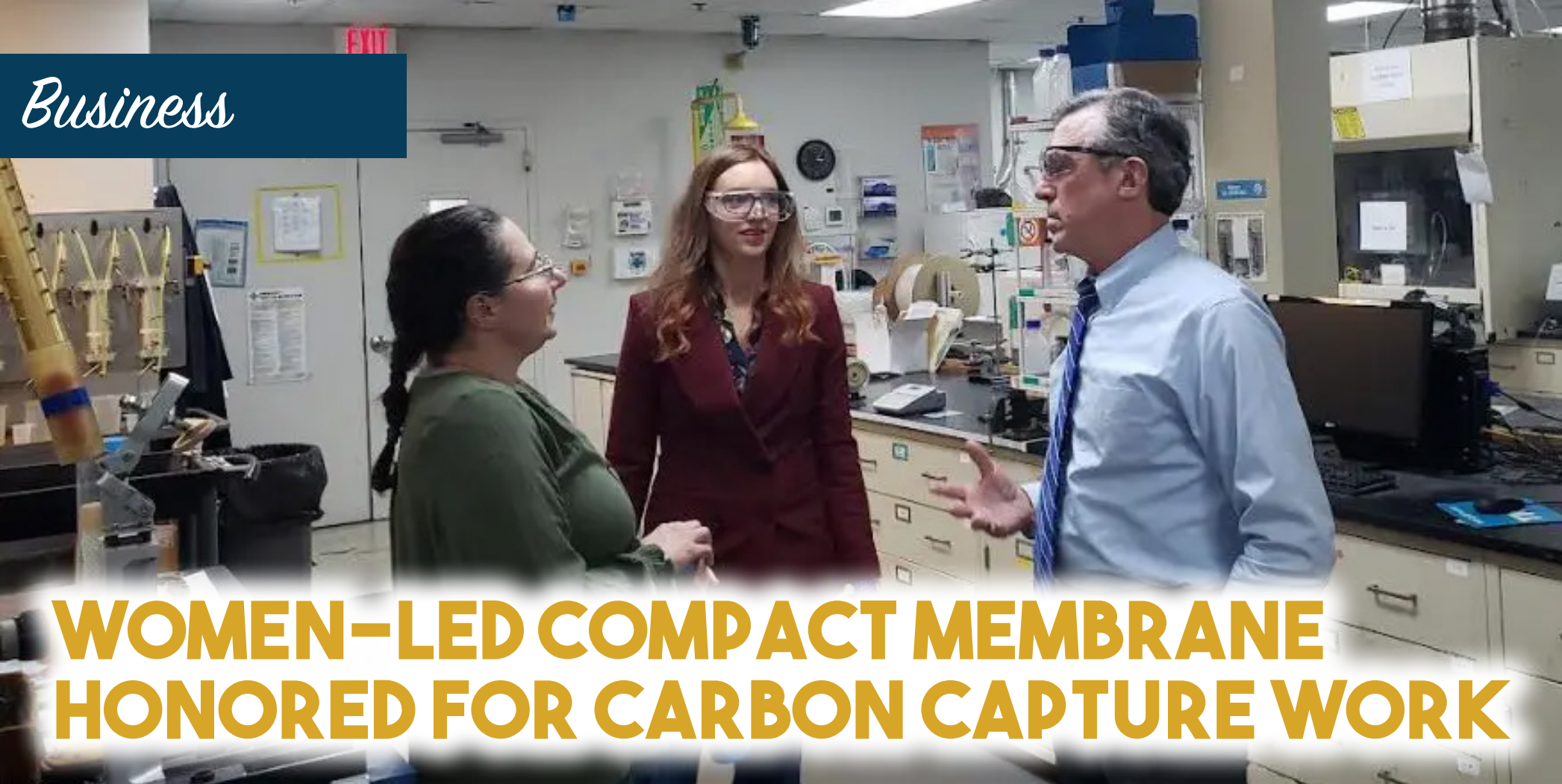
The lottery’s \$825.2 million in revenue in the 2022 fiscal year including \$416.5 million from video slots, followed by draw games at \$119.8 million, instant games at \$110.9 million, the sports lottery at \$109.5 million, table games at \$56.3 million and I-Gaming \$12 million according to its website. The lottery transferred \$284.6 million to the state of Delaware, with \$233 million transferred to the state’s general fund, \$50 to the Department of Agriculture, and \$1.5 million to the Department of Health & Human Services..

Revenues in this past fiscal year are higher in absolute terms than they’ve been going back at least 20 years, during which revenues fluctuated between \$600 and \$700 million. The 2019 fiscal year was the second highest in terms of absolute revenue, with the lottery making \$782.7 million, followed by \$770.7 million in 2021, \$755.1 million in 2007, 742.2 million in 2011, and \$674 million in 2002.

One interesting aspect of the lottery showed up in last week’s meeting of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Committee: Lottery fatigue. Record jackpots like July 2022’s \$1.3 billion Mega Millions ticket and November 2022’s \$2.04 billion Powerball ticket add to the state coffers.

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# WOMEN-LED COMPACT MEMBRANE HONORED FOR CARBON CAPTURE WORK

BY SAM HAUT

The two women representing Compact Membrane Systems became accustomed to being treated differently than their male counterparts. CEO Erica Nemser and Christine Parrish, the business development lead, were asked “a lot of basic, stupid questions, because the assumption of what you know is zero” when they first started making calls together, Parrish said. It was incredibly insulting for Nemser and frustrating for them both.

“You only have 30 minutes of useful time because they spent the first 30 minutes pressure testing to see whether or not you were dumb,” she said.

That’s changed in the last five years.

“There’s a lot more respect because the industry is

changing,” Parrish said. “It doesn’t look the way it did 10 years ago and you’re starting to see a difference.”

Compact Membrane Systems was one of two women-led businesses that Gov. John Carney visited March 23 to highlight women’s business during Women’s History Month. The other was JennyGems in Georgetown.

At Compact Membrane, the governor gave the company a proclamation honoring them for their leadership in carbon capture technology.

Nemser was unable to attend, but Parrish and Ken Loprete, the vice president of product development, greeted Carney and gave him a tour of the company lab where products are made.

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photo link: SoDel Concepts



# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# WILMINGTON CHEFS JOIN TO CREATE JAMES BEARD SUNDAY SUPPER

BY PAM GEORGE

In many households, Sunday supper means gathering with loved ones and a table full of comfort food. But beginning at 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 23, Wilmington's finest chefs will kick the beloved family-style meal up a notch at Sunday Supper Wilmington in **The Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar**, located at 1313 N. Market St.

Part of the James Beard Foundation's **Friends of James Beard Benefit** series, the event is being organized by the **It's Time Wilmington** campaign and sponsored by **Johnson Commercial Real Estate**, which developed the 12,000-square-foot food hall.

Joining The Chancery Market will be Antimo DiMeo from **Bardea Food & Drink** and **Bardea Steak**, Tyler Aiken from **Le Cavalier**, Michael DiBianca from **Ciro Food & Drink** and **Ciro 40 Acres** and Joe DeLago from **The Quoin**.

"It is a culmination of the city's diverse downtown

restaurant scene, from high-end dining to casual," explained Katie Zamarra, spokesperson for It's Time, which promotes Wilmington's offerings and people.

The James Beard Foundation is named for one of America's first celebrity chefs. James Beard was a cook-book author, TV personality and teacher, and the foundation's mission is to support and promote the people behind America's food scene. For instance, consider the prestigious James Beard Foundation Awards, which recognize movers and shakers nationwide. DiMeo and DiBianca have both been nominated in the past.

"Chef DiBianca is a three-time semifinalist for the James Beard Mid-Atlantic Chef of the Year, so it is something near and dear to him to give back to the organization that helps to harvest and recognize excellence in the restaurant industry," said Venu Gaddamidi, co-owner of **Ciro**.

## JAMES BEARD DINNER

The April 23 event is not the first time a James Beard Foundation benefit has been held in a food hall.

"Suppers have been featured in prominent city food halls such as New York's Chelsea Market, D.C.'s Union Market and Atlanta's Ponce City Market," Zamarra explained. It makes for an unusual menu.

"The cuisine is aimed at highlighting the strengths of each restaurant," Akin said.

The reception will feature hors d'oeuvres from **Fuku**—owned by celebrity chef David Chang—and **Market Street Burger and Dog**, both Chancery Market Food Hall restaurants. **The Juice Joint**, also in the food hall, will provide the juice for a signature cocktail. (There will also be sparkling wine and a local brewery's beer.)

The Chancery Market vendor Justin Womack of **Oath 84** will handle the appetizer course, while Nikita Thomas of **Rooted AF**, a vegan restaurant, will do the salad. Well-known area chef and The Chancery Market vendor Dan Butler of **Toscana Pizza e Panini** will prepare pasta.

The main proteins will be handled by DiMeo, who will make braised American Iberico pork cheek, and Tyle Aiken of **Le Cavalier**, who will prepare veal rougette Mourvèdre with verjus, olives, grapes and marjoram. DiBianca of **Ciro** and **Kati Roll Wala**, a vendor in The Chancery Market, will present the sides.

Guests will then enjoy dessert from Joe DeLago of **The Quoin Restaurant** and coffee from **Espresso** coffee bar, owned by the mother-daughter team Diane Losado and Angie Hernandez.

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*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



## RESCUE DOG ON ITS WAY TO BE NAMED OFFICIAL STATE ANIMAL

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware General Assembly did not go to the dogs Wednesday. The dogs came to them. Four lucky pooches who were up for adoption or had been adopted from shelters, sat through part of a Senate hearing and then part of a Senate Session as [Senate Bill 37](#), which would make the rescue dog the official state animal, passed in committee and then on the Senate floor.

Along the way, Sen. Trey Pardee, D-Dover, left his perch at the table after talking about a casino bill in the Senate Elections and Government Affairs Committee to sit in the doorway, where he pulled a puppy into his lap, and then pet a larger dog that wanted its fair share of attention.

It all led to an amusing scene as Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger sat surrounded by dogs as he testified in favor of Pardee's [Senate Bill 64](#). That bill would allow casinos to reduce license fees by investing in their facilities.

Sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-Stanton/Newport, SB 37 stops the practice of naming a new state animal every two years in favor of declaring the rescue dog the one and only state animal for all eternity.

Walsh, who pointed out both in the committee and on the Senate floor, that he had worn his doggie tie and doggie socks, said the bill that first designated the rescue dog as the official state animal had expired in 2019.

### RESCUE DOG DEFINITION

The owner of a rescue dog named Maisie, Walsh explained that rescue dogs were not animals who rescued humans, but dogs that found themselves at shelters and needed homes. The senator said he is a board member of the Delaware SPCA, which has merged with the Delaware Humane Society to become the [Humane Animal Partners](#).

"These are loving animals that have done nothing," he said. "You know they deserve a loving home."

Less than an hour later in the Senate, after the doggies had sat through the several appointments and a resolution honoring Vietnam veterans on the 50th anniversary of the day that the American military left Vietnam, Walsh was back at the microphone pleading his case.

"I would highly recommend that you visit one because it warms your heart and it breaks your heart at the same time," he told the Senate.

Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, had a word of warning for Walsh.

"I want the sponsor to know that if I go home with a dog today, I'm going to very upset with him, and I wanted to be added as a sponsor for the bill," she said.

The bill passed unanimously and is headed to the House for a committee hearing.

Also Tuesday:

- Pardee's casino bill was reported out of committee with one favorable vote and four on its merit, moments after the committee and moments before the full Senate meeting. Senate committees do not vote in public and the public has to keep looking on the bill tracker to see what happened.

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# SENATE BILL WILL DEFINE 911 DISPATCHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

BY BETSY PRICE

A bill that defines 911 dispatchers as first responders drew no opposition Wednesday in the Senate Corrections and Public Safety Committee. The remarkably short **Senate Bill 36**, sponsored by Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos, D-Elsmere, was also the first bill to be heard in the new committee.

It is expected to pass, but the results won't be known until the vote is posted later Wednesday on the state's bill tracker. Senate committees, whose members are fond of saying they support transparency in government, do not vote in public.

The bill will change state code to say add that a 911 dispatcher means "a first responder working in any 911 dispatch center who is responsible for responding to calls for emergency and non-emergency assistance and dispatching law enforcement, fire-fighting, rescue or emergency medical units."

The move appears to bind dispatchers to confidentiality of communications by first responders for critical incident stress management services, as it recognizes their importance as the first contact for callers experiencing an emergency. Committee members hailed the move. Sen. Dave Wilson, R-Milford/Bridgeville, said it was long overdue.

"They're so professional, you know," he said.

Brandy Cahall, a 911 dispatcher for Delaware State Police for 18 years and a representative of Community Workers of American Union, said one reason to see dispatchers as first responders is because of the amount of technology that must be mastered to handle calls.

"It's definitely a job, more of a career than anything," she said.

## DISPATCHERS RESPOND

Saul Polish, who is starting his 29th year as a 911 dis-

patcher with the New Castle County office, said he expected to make a career of the job when he started.

"Looking back today, I never knew what the possibilities of that career was going to be," he told the committee. "It warms my heart to hear all the positive things that are being said today." It also bothered him that it took so long for dispatchers to get the recognition and respect, he said.

Dispatchers started to push the definition adding them to the list of first responders in 2021, he said. Dispatchers are still trying to win that first-responder recognition from federal and international sources, he said.

"We are more than just clerical," he said. The industry does constant training and even offers a 40-hour introductory course so that someone thinking about applying for a job knows exactly what they are getting into.

"So I just want to say that I thank you for this opportunity," he said.

Jeffrey Miller, chief of the New Castle County Emergency Communications Division, also known as 911, noted that state law requires all medical calls to be handled by a nationally accredited and certified 911 center trained in the use of priority dispatch medical protocols. The state's three largest centers are all nationally accredited in the call-taking process for medical, he said. Other centers are working toward that.

Rules consider a taxi cab dispatcher to be in the protected class of employees, he pointed out, "but they do not consider our personnel to be protected class as they are not first responders."





## BILL WILL GIVE ADDICTS NEW NEEDLES WITHOUT TURNING IN OLD

BY SAM HAUT

A bill heard Wednesday in the Senate Health & Social Services committee would alter the state's needle exchange program to allow people to get clean new needles without exchanging them for dirty needles.

**Senate Bill 52**, sponsored by Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-Bear, would change the Sterile Needle and Syringe Exchange Program into the Sterile Needle and Syringe Service Program, allowing people to receive needles on an as needed basis instead of a trade. It seems likely to pass because Democrats have a supermajority in the Senate and the bill's 17 cosponsors are all Democrats. Senate committees do not vote in public and results are not known until they are posted hours later on the state bill tracker.

The topic generated a lot of discussion.

Dr. Lynn Morrison, CEO of Brandywine Counseling & Community Services, said as an expert witness that the move would help reduce the transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV in their communities.

During committee discussion, Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, said he believes the bill might be a step too far and would prefer instead of giving people 10 or 20 needles that it's limited to 10. The program is based on the hope that addicts will come in one day and ask for help instead of needles, he said.

"And when you give 20, you contribute to a likelihood that they're gonna take a longer time to come back," he said. "That's just based on what I've read. The key to this success is the connection that you have."

Morrison responded that it would be more helpful if there isn't a limit on the amount of needles people can receive.

"What we're trying to accomplish is an as-needed basis and if you're capping it at a number, then you're not meeting a need," Morrison said. "You're continuing to put a limitation on someone's capability to get what they need. And the need is not so that we won't see you, it's so that it will last you until we see you again."

The bill's fiscal note estimates it would cost \$100,000 in the 2024 fiscal year, \$103,000 in the 2025 fiscal year and \$106,090 in the 2026 fiscal year. This is based on an estimated 1,150,000 additional needles that must be purchased at a median of nine cents each.

Buckson said he's seen statistics showing that letting people get as many needles as they want will lead to more needles in the community. Morrison said that the research she has seen doesn't show an increase in the amount of needles in a community where programs have allowed people to get needles on an as-needed basis compared to a needle exchange.

Delaware's needle exchange program was created in 2004 by former Sen. Margaret Rose Henry.

Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, suggested the program could go further, which Morrison said could include safe injection sites, drop boxes for needles and changing the law on having needles. Part of the reason that people don't properly dispose of needles, Morrison said, is because they are worried police might charge them.

Buckson hoped that if the bill makes it to the Senate floor, everyone will be more familiar with some of the research on why these programs don't work.

Several people spoke in favor of the bill, including James Dowling, the administrator for the Delaware Division of Public Health HIV Prevention Program; Tyler Berl, executive director of the Delaware HIV Consortium; and Sarah Stones, the chair of the Delaware Drug Overdose Fatality Review Commission.

Perennial General Assembly public commenter Robert Overmiller said he was against the bill because people can buy needles at a pharmacy.



# BILL TO GIVE LOW-WAGE WORKERS LOWER TAXES MOVES ON

BY SAM HAUT

A House finance committee released a bill that ultimately will allow low-wage earners to keep more of their money, a move that will cost the state 10s of millions every year. **House Bill 89**, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would do three things:

- Increase the amount of refunded tax from 4.5% to 7.5% for low-wage earners who meet the federal Earned Income Tax Credit requirements.
- Raise the income floor for those who qualify for that tax credit to \$11,828 for individuals and \$20,349 for filing jointly from \$9,378 and \$15,449, respectively.
- Increase the state’s standard deduction amount from \$3,250 for individuals and \$6,500 for people filing jointly to \$5,700 for individuals and \$11,400 for people filing jointly, starting with the 2024 tax season. That will allow more people to file taxes using the standard deduction rather than the more complicated itemized tax form.

The move suits both the progressive Democrat push to help lower-wage workers in a variety of ways and the Republican determination to lower taxes on workers, which consistently fails in the Democrat-majority General Assembly.

Secretary of Finance Richard Geisenberger said in response that his department has gone live with an integrated personal income tax system, so there won’t be issues with House Bill 89.

In the fiscal note for the bill, the Controller General’s office predicts that it will cost the state \$24.9 million in lost revenue in the 2024 fiscal year, \$55.7 million in the 2025 fiscal year, and \$57.2 million in the 2026 fiscal year.

Rep. Jeffrey Spiegelman, R-Townsend/Hartley, said that House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, couldn’t attend the meeting but asked Spiegelman to point out that the bill is similar to bills Republicans have been proposing in recent years that didn’t get bipartisan

support. Ramone would have liked those bills to receive bipartisan support, Spiegelman said. Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington, said that Spiegelman could sign on as a bill backer if he wanted to, and Spiegelman said he might.

The bill already has 11 additional sponsors and co-sponsors, including 10 Democrats and one Republican, Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker. The bill has been assigned to the House appropriations Committee.

Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Greenville, pointed out in the House Revenue and Finance Committee Tuesday that previous tax bills have had issues with getting technology working in a timely manner. Geisenberger said in response that his department has gone live with an integrated personal income tax system, so there won’t be issues with House Bill 89.

Also Tuesday, **House Bill 67** was tabled. It would exempt someone from paying a realty transfer tax if they already had paid the tax on another property deal within the past year. The bill was sponsored by Rep. Bryan Shupe, R-Milford. Shupe is the CEO of Delaware LIVE.

Rebecca Goldsmith, deputy Secretary of Finance, opposed the bill, saying a decrease in revenue generated by this tax without another offset would create a “long-term revenue decline”.

The realty transfer tax generated around \$304 million for the general fund last year, and is expected to generate \$240 million this year. The decline reflects a slowdown in the housing and commercial property market after several years of record sales. The bill had five cosponsors, all of whom are Republicans.

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# MARIJUANA BILLS FLY THROUGH SENATE, HEAD TO CARNEY. AGAIN.

BY SAM HAUT

Bills that would legalize marijuana and set up a state-monitored legal sale industry passed the Delaware Senate and are headed to the governor. Only one Republican voted for **House Bill 1**, which would legalize marijuana use in Delaware. It passed 16 to 4.

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, partially attributed his vote to his libertarian values of letting his neighbor relax in their own way.

“The libertarian in me says if I can have two drinks at night after dinner, why can’t my neighbor use marijuana in their home under their own decision and capabilities?” Buckson said.

The Senate sponsor of the bill, Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, spoke about the benefits of legalizing marijuana in Delaware, including the revenue it would generate,

the impact it would have on mass incarceration and the war on drugs, and the decrease in traffic accidents and abuse of other drugs.

Republicans led the opposition. Sen. Bryant Richardson, R-Laurel, poke at length about the dangers of marijuana, from the impact it has on violent crime, traffic accidents, illegal consumption, other drug uses and the prevalence of connections to the MS-13 gang.

Paradee said that he doesn’t believe marijuana has the negative effects that Richardson claims it has, and that when people do alcohol, they are more likely to go out, creating problems, and when they do marijuana, they are more likely to stay inside and relax.

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# COURTS TO HOLD FIRST SAFE SURRENDER DAY IN OVER A DECADE

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware courts will host a special day in May to let those with warrants or other charges have their cases heard quickly and clear their records. Safe Surrender Day will take place May 12 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington.

It's being billed as a chance for those with warrants or other charges to have their case heard in a more favorable environment, not as a way out of the charges.

The last time an **event** like this was held in Delaware was in 2009 when 1,073 people surrendered for various charges, including sex offenses, escaping the police, robbery, weapon charges, drug charges and felony assaults. A total of 4,131 warrants were cleared at that event.

Roger Roof, management analyst at the Delaware Justice of the Peace Court, said that they tried to do this

event in 2017 but didn't have enough funding. They planned to try again in 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic squashed it. Roof said the 2009 event lasted three days, but the costs associated with doing it will limit it to one day and the courts expect 600 and 700 people to attend.

Over a dozen judges and courtrooms will be set aside to help clear people charged with any failure to appear, failure to pay or outstanding warrants. Those who have previously failed to appear may have a new court date scheduled and those with violent felony charges may be arrested, though they will all be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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**Open House**

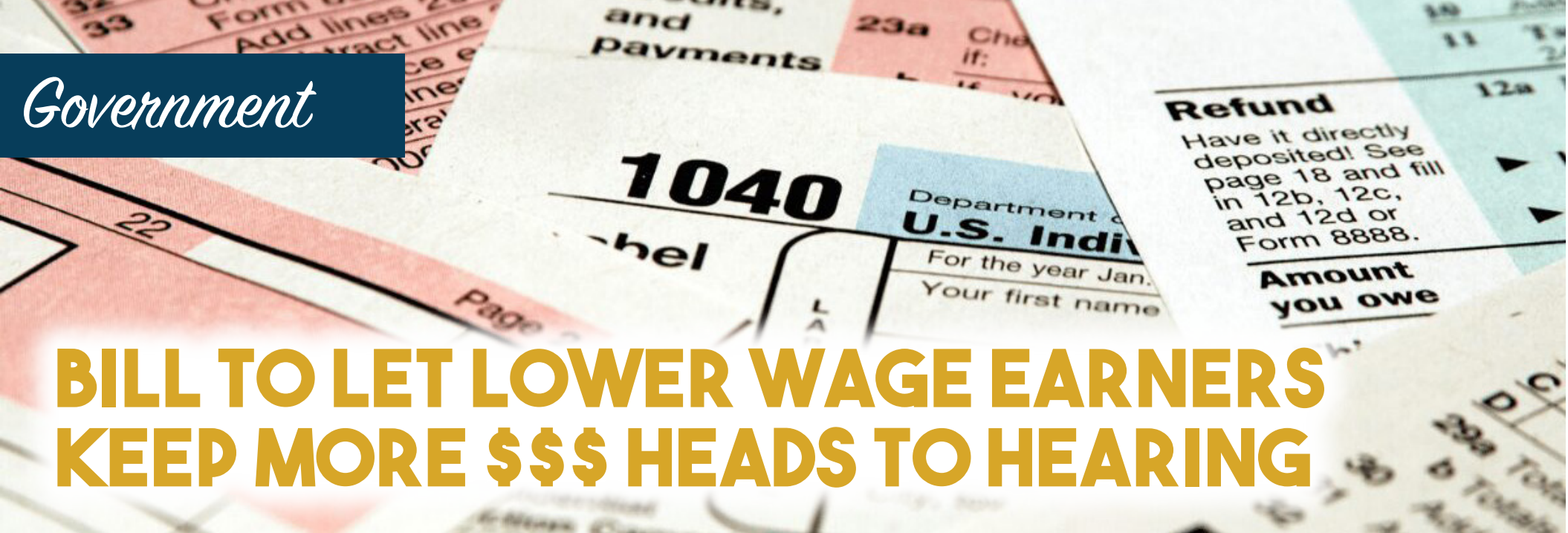
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# BILL TO LET LOWER WAGE EARNERS KEEP MORE \$\$\$ HEADS TO HEARING

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would allow more lower wage earners to keep more of their pay is set to be heard Tuesday in the House Revenue & Finance committee. **House Bill 89**, introduced by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would increase the amount of refunded tax for those who meet the federal Earned Income Tax Credit from 4.5% to 7.5%. It would raise the floor of those who qualify for that tax credit from \$9,378 for individuals and \$15,449 for filing jointly to \$11,828 for individuals and \$20,349 for filing jointly.

The bill would increase the state's standard deduction amount from \$3,250 for individuals and \$6,500 for people filing jointly to \$5,700 for individuals and \$11,400 for people filing jointly, starting with the 2024 tax season. It is headed to the House Revenue & Finance committee.

House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, said that he supports the effort to change the tax code, but wishes that the Democrats would take more Republican suggestions.

"I actually have a bill out there that simplifies the tax code, still not even filed," Ramone said. "It's just in preparation and this just emulates it. So I don't know where a lot of the ideas come from, but it's kind of funny when you're working on something and then you see something real close."


The bill reflects promises that Gov. John Carney made when proposing his budget for fiscal year 2024.


"The standard deduction increase is designed to catch up to years of inflation and will provide welcome relief to many middle-income Delaware families," Baumbach said. "It will also simplify the tax reporting for many families."

Ramone said he's a realist and knows the bill can get passed without Republican support. He plans to add amendments to see if he can get some of what he wants into the bill that gets to the governor's desk. He didn't detail those plans.

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## 60 ATTEND GOP'S BELLEFONTE TOWN HALL ABOUT ELECTRIC VEHICLES

BY SAM HAUT

*NOTE: This has been edited to correct information in speakers' presentations.*

Most of the 60 people who showed up at the March 23 Delaware GOP town hall about a state electric vehicle mandate were clearly and adamantly opposed to it. A few, apparently members of the **Sierra Club**, which encouraged people to attend, spoke out in favor.

One agitated woman who described herself as retired drew applause when she pointed out that the battery mining industry uses slave labor and asked Garvin why they are trying to enrich China, which creates a large number of electric vehicle batteries.

In response, moderator Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, reminded audiences to be respectful and use “inside voices so we don’t erupt here.”

Another woman supported the EV mandate, saying she thinks it will help Delaware move into the future and that people would still be able to drive gas vehicles even if the mandate is put in place.

The proposed mandate would require 35% of all new cars sold in Delaware to be zero-emission vehicles, like electric cars and plug-in hybrids, by 2025, and have all new cars sold be zero-emission vehicles by 2035.


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A. BARRY	14.20	A. BARRY	14.20
A. BARRY	16.20	A. BARRY	16.20
A. BARRY	18.20	A. BARRY	18.20
A. BARRY	20.20	A. BARRY	20.20
A. BARRY	22.20	A. BARRY	22.20
A. BARRY	24.20	A. BARRY	24.20
A. BARRY	26.20	A. BARRY	26.20
A. BARRY	28.20	A. BARRY	28.20
A. BARRY	30.20	A. BARRY	30.20
A. BARRY	32.20	A. BARRY	32.20
A. BARRY	34.20	A. BARRY	34.20
A. BARRY	36.20	A. BARRY	36.20
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A. BARRY	52.20	A. BARRY	52.20
A. BARRY	54.20	A. BARRY	54.20
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A. BARRY	88.20	A. BARRY	88.20
A. BARRY	90.20	A. BARRY	90.20
A. BARRY	92.20	A. BARRY	92.20
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A. BARRY	98.20	A. BARRY	98.20
A. BARRY	100.20	A. BARRY	100.20

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# NEW CASTLE VO-TECH TO GET \$113,016 FROM JUUL LAWSUIT

BY JAREK RUTZ

New Castle County Vocational Technical District will receive \$113,016 as part of Delaware’s \$8 million share of the settlement of a national lawsuit against **JUUL Labs**, an electric cigarette company.

Delaware school districts in recent months have been holding executive meetings to discuss the settlement, but declining to say anything about it in public. The suit was settled in September 2022. New Castle County Vo-Tech’s board may have been the first in the state to publicly announce its portion of the settlement when it did so Monday night.

“We can expect to receive about \$82,000 after court costs and legal fees,” said Sean Sokolowski, the district’s business director. “By agreeing to the settlement, the dis-

trict would be releasing all claims in this matter, but the attorney has reviewed the documents and recommends that we agree to this.”

JUUL Labs and 34 states and territories reached an agreement after a two-year investigation into the company’s marketing and sales practices, which were said to prey on children and teenagers.

Delaware will receive between \$7.8 million and \$8.5 million. The amount each district receives seems to be based on district enrollment, although no district has released the actual formula publicly. The number of elementary school students seems to count more than the number of middle school and high school students. The majority of Vo-Tech students are in high school.



Jose Matthews, a board member for **Red Clay Consolidated School District**, said boards are limited in their ability to comment. Other than New Castle County Vo-Tech, no district board has spent more than a minute or two discussing it in public session, usually to report the board agreeing to what their attorneys recommended.

“The board could have rejected the agreement and submitted a lawsuit of their own,” Matthews said, “but it would have been at the expense of taxpayers and a hefty expense that taxpayers shouldn’t have to bear, not to mention the risk of losing tax payer money and irreplaceable school funding.”

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# EDUCATIONAL GROUPS SEEK MILLIONS FOR CAPITAL NEEDS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Department of Education, Delaware State University and the University of Delaware requested millions of dollars from the state March 24 for critical and minor capital projects. Leaders from the three bodies presented their requests to the Joint Capital Improvement Committee. Also known as the Bond Committee, it's made up of six state representatives and six state senators who are responsible for writing the annual Bond Bill, which supports capital projects.

Here's what was requested:

**DOE: \$216,081,500**

"Given existing funding pressures we did not approve any requests for new projects in the fiscal year 2024 capital budget," said Secretary of Education Mark Holodick. "That doesn't mean there aren't needs in our districts and schools, as many of you probably know from the schools in your own communities."

Many districts have pressing needs, he said, but as the Department of Education developed its budget request this year, the top priority was the \$188.8 million necessary for previously authorized projects to ensure their progress toward completion.

The department is also prioritizing \$15 million for minor capital improvement and equipment as well as architectural barrier removal. These priorities left no room for new projects, Holodick said.

"We understand the disappointment of some of our district colleagues and recognize the challenges they're facing and we hope that in future budget years, our request will be able to include some, if not many of those needs," he said.

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## ONLY TWO OF FOUR APPO SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES ATTEND Q&A

BY JAREK RUTZ

Appoquinimink school board candidates answered questions about transgender bathrooms, equity and inclusion, goals for the board and more March 22. The district’s school board hosted a question-and-answer session to allow families in the district to get to know candidates. Two of the four attended: Tim Johns, a pastor, and Ray Petkevis, a realtor. The other two candidates, Madeline Locke, a former IT professional and realtor, and Tashiba Graham did not participate. Shawn Rohe, who filed March 1 to run, withdrew from the race Monday.

Appo appears to be the first district in the state to hold a forum for school board candidates in the May 9 election. [First State Action Fund](#), an advocacy group that to change education by empowering Delawareans, plans a series of forums. See the schedule below.

Appo School Board President Michelle Wall and board member Richard Forsten led the questioning, which focused on the candidate’s background, previous

participation in the district, opinions on hot-button issues and goals for the school board. Here’s what the two had to say:

### *Tim Johns*

A graduate of the University of Louisville and a Middletown resident, Johns is a pastor at [Heavens Gate Ministries](#) in Newark. He thinks success as a board member relies on having a familiarity of what teachers go through and the needs of students and their families.

When asked what books made an impression on him as a youth, he said “Curious George.”

“At heart I’m a dreamer, and an adventurer, and you could accomplish anything by thinking and putting effort into what you believe,” he said. “That has been a mainstay of my development as a child and even as a young adult.”

What he loves most about Appo is the family and close-knit relationships formed within it.

He said “not all people are good people,” and that as a

Black man he’s experienced some uncomfortable and negative interactions with parents.

“It didn’t make me feel any negativity to the district overall, but that’s just the way it goes with life,” he said.

Johns said he’s a firm believer that people have to become the change they want to see.

“Everybody is responsible for being the example, and I think it begins with us as individuals,” he said. “On the board I would just be my authentic self, be who I am supposed to be and that will speak for itself, that will influence the masses...authenticity is the key.”

In the aftermath of several school incidents involving guns and physical altercations this year, Johns said he wants to focus on making schools safer.

“We need to have more collaboration with the local police and the school district and the schools,” he said. “If we do that, there are things that the police know that the teachers don’t know and there’s things that teachers know that the school doesn’t know.”

With collaboration, he said, the district can come up with a comprehensive plan to prevent incidents and better handle potential dangers. He pointed out that a lot of the safety challenges arise because of the district’s continued growth.

“I serve as the chaplain of the Smyrna Prison, and we were coming up with a concept to interview some inmates to get a video out there to high schools to show kids what could happen if you go the wrong way,” he said.

Johns believes in equity over equality, and that every child’s needs should be met. Appo needs to be flexible to understand that everybody learns at different paces and provide solutions for each level that the child is on, he said.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



photo by Ben Fulton



*Sports*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# INSIDE THE CIRCLE – 2023 SOFTBALL SEASON PREVIEW

BY GLENN FRAZER

Welcome to another season of softball in the Diamond (no pun intended) State. There have been a few early season games postponed due to the weather but hopefully it will warm up for some much-anticipated action. This season we have plenty of talented pitchers up and down the state and here is a list of a few to keep an eye on:

Madge Layfield, Sussex Central; Kylee Hill, Laurel; Peyton Shields, Caesar Rodney; Kasey Xenidis, Caravel; Kinsley Hall, Indian River; Savannah Laird, Appo; Carly Maxton, St. Mark's; Emily Trzonkowski, DMA; Angelina Edwards, Red Lion; Reese Founds, Middletown; Carah Sumpter, Lake; Cimone Edge, Smyrna; and a newcomer at Delmarva Christian, Kaylan Yoder.

Yoder recorded 16 strikeouts and allowed only two hits in a 3-1 win over Smyrna last week. She also had two hits at the plate. In some other notable early games,

Milford and Smyrna combined for 23 hits in a 5-4 win for the Buccaneers. Sussex Central won a "pitchers' duel" 2-1 over Polytech, as Layfield and the Panthers' Mara Everton were exceptional. Laurel and Kylee Hill blanked Rising Sun, MD, three to nothing. The visitors from Maryland finished second in Class 1A last year. The Spartans of St. Marks won a thrilling 10-inning game against Middletown, as Carly Maxton "fanned" 20 batters, allowing just one hit to get the win in a 1-0 final. Cavalier pitcher Reese Founds struck out 13 and had the lone hit off her counterpart (Maxton). Finally, the Jags from Appo won their home opener Monday, 13-0 over Archmere, as Savannah Laird and Ayla McCathern combined on a no-hitter. All of these awesome performances took place in just the first week of the season!

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# SALESIANUM NAMES GENE DELLE DONNE AS HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

“I am fired up to get to work building a staff and continuing the great connections and relations with our players!”

Delle Donne played high school football at Salesianum, where he lettered in four seasons for the Sals and was named Gatorade Player of the Year in 2004. Delle Donne told us all he remembered as a kid was going to games at Baynard Stadium. “And all I wanted to do was wear that gold helmet,” he said.

After graduating in 2005, Delle Donne went on to play two seasons at Middle Tennessee State University.

Gene most recently has served as Salesianum’s offensive coordinator and assistant varsity football coach. His responsibilities include handling practice and game-day install, team management and overseeing college recruiting for prospects in the program. He also serves as the school’s director of Community Relations, assisting with marketing, admissions and fundraising activities.

When asked what Salesianum means to him he said, “Other than my family, it’s Salesianum.”



## BY NICK HALLIDAY

In a press conference Thursday afternoon at Salesianum Eugene “Gene” Delle Donne was introduced as the new head football coach for the Sals. Gene is taking over for Bill DiNardo who stepped down as head football coach this season. Delle Donne becomes the 13th head football coach at Salesianum.

“My family and I couldn’t be more excited to be in this position,” Delle Donne told Delaware LIVE Sports. “Salesianum has always remained a huge part of our life.”

He thanked the Salesianum administration for its trust and faith in his ability “to help lead these young men and create a championship mindset on and off the field.”

“We will create a culture where excellence is expected,” he said. “Our student-athletes will have all the resources needed to succeed as successful football players, students and young men.”

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# SALESIANUM, UD ALUM TROY REEDER TO SIGN DEAL WITH VIKINGS

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

Troy Reeder has found a new home for the first time since he entered the league as an undrafted free agent in 2019. The Minnesota Vikings announced Wednesday that they had come to terms with the former Salesianum and Delaware linebacker on a one-year deal. Reeder (28) will now leave L.A., the place he called home for the last three seasons, and join a familiar face in the Midwest.

There will now be a reunion with his former Salesianum teammate and Viking offensive tackle Brian O'Neill. The two had successful careers alongside each other in high school at Salesianum in Wilmington and even came back together last off-season and held a foot-

ball clinic at the Chase Fieldhouse. After the Vikings and Rams game back in 2021, the two swapped jerseys.

Reeder highlighted his enthusiasm to be joining both former coach Kevin O'Connell and former teammate Brian O'Neill when we spoke after the signing. "I'm just very excited to be joining such a great organization. Teaming up with Coach O'Connell and my good friend Brian O'Neill," Reeder said. "Eager to go compete for a championship."

Reeder spent the first three seasons of his career with the Los Angeles Rams. He appeared in all 16 games as a rookie and started in eight of them. In 2020-21, he played



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over 550 defensive snaps and started in two playoff games. In 2021, Reeder played a career-high 864 defensive snaps and started 10 of 17 regular season games, as well as three postseason games on his way to a Super Bowl win in 2021. He spent last season reuniting with his former defensive coordinator Brandon Staley and joined the Los Angeles Chargers, where he mainly played special teams but also saw 63 defensive snaps.

Congratulations to Troy and his wife Mary on the birth of their son Beau Daniel Reeder on Feb. 15!



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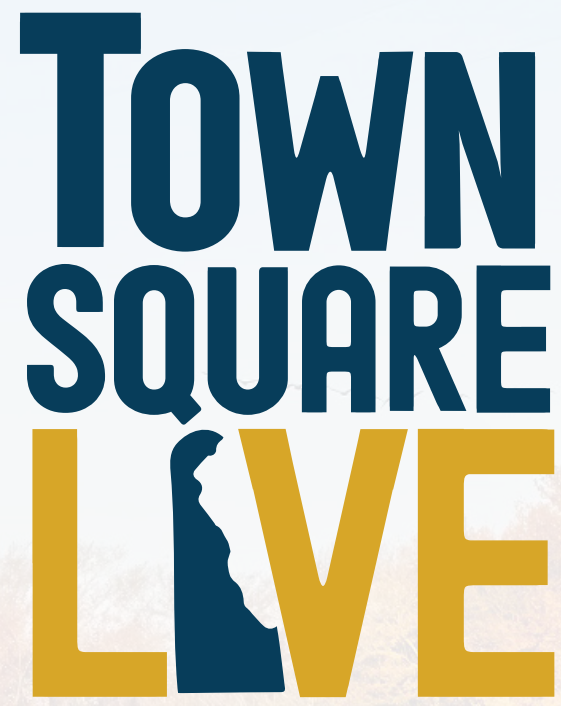
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