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Meet Nick’s Pizza



Bill to Foster Mentoring in Schools



Wrestling Ends Mat Title Droughts



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY SAM HAUT

DoMore24 Delaware raised \$2,371,592 from more than 15,000 donations from across the state and the country. That’s down slightly from last year’s nearly \$2.7 million in donations, but a 25% jump in the number of donors from around 12,000 last year.

Jennifer Saienni, director of nonprofit engagement at Spur Impact, who sponsor the event along with United Way of Delaware, said organizers prefer having more donors even if donations are lower. Those donors were being generous, she said.

“It’s been a tough year for a lot of people,” she said. “They still want to donate, still want to contribute. They know how important the nonprofit sector here is in Delaware. But they’re just able to contribute at a different amount.”

The top DoMore24 donations this year came to OperaDelaware, which received \$98,641, followed by


Barbara K. Brooks Transition House’s \$67,960 and Shepherd’s Office’s \$56,880. Receiving the most number of donations was the Shepherd’s Office with 638, followed by the Everett Theater’s 607 and Barbara K Brooks Transition House’s 540.

While most of the donations came from Delaware, 15,035, about 20% came from outside the state, with Pennsylvania providing the second-most donations at 1,599.

DOMORE24 AND COVID

Since starting in 2020, **Do More 24 Delaware** has raised more than \$7 million for state nonprofits. Saienni believes the COVID-19 pandemic still is having an impact on how much people donate. They have less cash, but appreciate nonprofits more, she said.


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VANILLA ICE, 90S MUSIC TOUR ADDED TO STATE FAIR LINEUP

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware State Fair will chill out this summer when it adds Vanilla Ice and the rest of the I Love the 90s tour to its entertainment lineup. Joining Vanilla Ice will be Rob Base, Color Me Badd, Tone Loc and Young MC for a concert on Sunday, July 22 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets will be \$34 to \$74. and will go on sale Friday, March 10.

Also joining the slate of entertainers is Zach Williams and the band Cain July 25 and Lainey Wilson with Kameron Marlowe on July 26. Williams' tickets will be \$29 to \$64. Wilson's tickets will be \$39 to \$74.

All tickets go on sale March 10.

Vanilla Ice, who is also joined by Rob Base, Color Me Badd, Tone Loc and Young Mc, is part of their I LOVE

THE 90s Tour, with prices ranging from \$34 to \$74, and is on July 22.

Laney Wilson with Kameron Marlowe will have tickets priced between \$39 to \$74 July 26. Also playing that week will be Tyler Hubbard of Florida Georgia State Line and Megan Moroney July 29.

Rapper Nelly will perform Chase McDaniel July 21 and Riley Green will play on July 24. Rounding out the entertainers is **comedian** Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias, who will perform July 20.



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Wilmington Friends  School

photo by fauxels on Pexel



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



DEL. CHAMBER HONORS ODYSSEY, DEL TECH, OTHERS FOR INNOVATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A First State college, high school and career development group have been recognized by the **Delaware State Chamber of Commerce** for their innovative and impactful programming. **Delaware Technical Community College**, **Odyssey Charter School** and **Jobs for Delaware Graduates, Inc.** top the chamber's 2023 Superstars in Education & Training awards, which have been given out by the chamber since 1989.

Each year, an independent training and certificate provider, a higher education program and a Delaware high school are named winners.

Delaware Technical Community College

Del Tech was named a superstar for their **Patient Care Assistant Pathway Program**, created to address the growing needs of the job market. The 600-hour, two-year, program partners Del Tech with school districts across the state to put high school students into a certificate-to-associate track.

It consists of classroom instruction, lab practicum and clinical work, and bringing students to long-term care facilities and other health care agencies. Students can become certified nursing assistants within the first six months of the program, a phlebotomy credential mid-program and a patient care technician credential by the end of year two. Once completed, students are also eligible to earn up to 11 college credits towards a degree program at Delaware Tech.

Odyssey Charter School

The Chamber of Commerce named the Wilmington charter a superstar for its **Food Studies Career and Technical Pathway**. Through the pathway, Odyssey trains students to see food as a reflection of societal values and priorities. It also helps students understand the importance of food as a foundation for individual, community and environmental wellbeing.

Another goal of the pathway is to mold students to see food as an avenue for empowerment, citizenship and social justice. Part of the pathway brings students into a Hydroponic Learning Lab where they are introduced to technology through sustainable urban farming. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Odyssey has donated more than 7,000 pounds of fresh produce and distributed more than 6,000 meal kits for people in need.

Jobs for Delaware Graduates

The Dover nonprofit was named a 2023 superstar for helping youth reach academic and economic success as part of its school-to-work transitional program.

The organization exposes middle and high school students to emerging careers and higher levels of education and training. Programming includes providing students with weekly in-class instruction, credit towards graduation, leadership development, community service and career coaching. It also gives students access to internships, job-shadowing and paid work experiences.

The JDG model has been replicated in 39 states, leaving a footprint across 1,500 communities nationwide. Their national affiliate, Jobs for America's Graduates, is a state-based organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among at-risk students.

Other awards

The Chamber of Commerce also announced the Delaware Skills Center and the Early College School at Delaware State University will receive this year's Award of Excellence. Education, business and nonprofit leaders will join elected officials during the May 8 reception and awards ceremony. It starts at 4:45 p.m. at Wilmington University. For more information or to register, visit www.dscc.com.

photo link: SoDel Concepts



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



MEET NICK'S PIZZA, A POP-UP PARLOR THAT'S A HIT

BY PAM GEORGE

Social media posts that tease “IYKYK” are wink-wink references to insider information—the acronym stands for If You Know You Know. Wilmington foodies are using the hashtag to refer to [Nick’s Pizza](#), a pop-up started by Nick Vouras. The business has no brick-and-mortar restaurant, business phone or website. So, if you want to sample Vouras’s praise-worthy pizzas, you need to know when he’s selling them, how to order them and where to pick them up.

This is where IYKYK comes in: Vouras posts the week’s specials and the main menu on his Facebook and Instagram pages. Just type [@Nickspizza302](#) in your browser. Message or text him your order. (His number is on his social media posts.) A note on his Facebook pages says his pizzas will be available this month on March 9, 14 and 30 at Mulrooney’s Tavern in Wilmington. Normal service will resume at the end of the month, the post says.

Starting at the end of the month, pizzas will be available on Nick’s normal schedule: Thursdays at Mulrooney’s and Friday (11 a.m.–6 p.m.), Saturday (10 a.m.–1 p.m.) and Sunday (10 a.m.–1 p.m.) at [Kozy Korner](#) in Wilmington’s Little Italy.

And there’s good reason for that Kozy Korner connection. “I was born there,” he quipped.

NATIVE SON

In reality, Vouras was born in Wilmington, but his

family has owned Kozy Korner since 1922. The original building stood at Delaware Avenue and Washington Street but was demolished in 1984 to make way for a hotel. In 1992, the restaurant reopened at Ninth and Union streets. John Vouras, Nick’s father, now operates the restaurant, and Nick started helping at age 12.

As a teen, Vouras didn’t realize how much he would miss his hometown until he went to California State at Northridge, a Los Angeles neighborhood.

“I missed the food from back home,” he recalled.

Specifically, he missed pizza, which is available on seemingly every corner in Delaware’s largest city.

The homesick student started watching online videos to learn how to make pizza, and when he decided to return to Wilmington, he got a job in a pizza restaurant to learn more about it.

THE RIGHT STUFF

Lacking a pizza oven, Vouras used Kozy Korner’s regular oven for his experiments. The most successful was the Detroit-style pizza, which suited the commercial equipment.

It’s an appropriate choice considering the pizza originated in Buddy’s Rendezvous, a former speakeasy that required a password.

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Food & Dining

PACKING 100,000 MEALS TOOK ABOUT 250 VOLUNTEERS, FIVE HOURS

BY BETSY PRICE

How fast can you package 100,000 meals to be shipped overseas? Pretty quickly, if a Saturday event in Georgetown was any indication.

Two shifts of workers managed to pack about 16,700 quart-size bags Saturday in Georgetown. Each pack will feed six people.

The rapid packing came courtesy of an assembly-line production set up in advance by **Rise Against Hunger** and the **Grace United Methodist Church** of Millsboro's Feeding the 5,000 Multiplied program.

Grace Church organized the event after deciding to open its annual **meal-packing** to the community, both in an effort to feed more people and to foster connections among neighbors. The church donated \$19,000 of the program's \$39,000 to buy the food and supplies

through Rise Against Hunger, a Philadelphia nonprofit. Those supplies had been moved into the cafeteria during Friday's driving rain, said organizer Mike Hall.

"Today, it's a matter of getting people in and then getting started," he said.

An assembly-line-style production had been set up before the 180 first-shift volunteers arrived at Sussex Central High School's cafeteria. The workers were asked to don red hair nets, creating a scene that looked like a crowd of lunch ladies had taken over.

The volunteers included young and old, students working off community service hours and groups from area churches, service clubs and businesses, including Mountaire, which donated \$12,000 to the event.

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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



KENT, SUSSEX CHILD CARE CENTERS MAY GET HIGHER DEL. PAYMENTS

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would force the state to pay Kent and Sussex County child care programs the same fees that it pays New Castle ones seems headed to the Senate floor. No one spoke against [Senate Bill 59](#), sponsored by Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Arden, when it came up Wednesday in the Senate Health & Social Services Committee.

Gay said it’s important for children in Delaware that the bill pass.

“In order to expand child care services statewide, in order to build high quality environments, in order to invest early in our smallest Delawareans, we need to start by shoring up what we currently have,” she said. “Making sure that providers can invest in classrooms, can invest in staff, that we can recruit staff, that we can do that statewide.”

A bipartisan list of legislators, including Republican Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown and

Senate Minority Leader Gerald W. Hocker, R-Oceanview, are cosponsors.

The Senate “walks” its bills around for legislators to sign rather than taking a public vote and in late afternoon reported online that the bill passed with four favorable votes and two on its merits, meaning the voter thought it should be heard but didn’t want to overtly support it. It has been assigned to the Finance Committee, which must pass it before heading to the Senate floor.

The bill focuses on a state program called purchase of care, which helps lower-earning workers pay for child care so they can continue to work.

It comes at a time when child care is a huge topic among employers who say a lack of affordable child care is keeping workers out of the job market. It also comes as the state seeks to increase the quality of child care services.

Several agencies in recent years have pointed out problems with availability of affordable child care, including the fact that the state program has been paying New Castle County child care more than it does Kent and Sussex.

According to a 2021 Delaware Cost of Care Study, the state purchase of care program pays an average of \$7,002 per student in Kent and Sussex counties and \$7,147 in New Castle County.

The bill’s fiscal note says the change would cost the state \$23,821,775 in the 2024 fiscal year, \$22,864,414 in the 2025 fiscal year, and \$24,007,634 in the 2026 fiscal year. It assumes that costs will increase by 5% every year.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS REACT

During the hearing, 16 people spoke in support of the bill, including representatives of the YMCA of Delaware, the Delaware State Education Association and the Little School Kids Cottage.

Agencies such as the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Clubs are among those who accept purchase of care funds in their child care programs. Georganne Buccine, the vice president of youth development at the YMCA of Delaware, said children should have equal access to child care.

“A child in Kent and Sussex deserves the same support for positive educational outcomes as offered to their counterparts in the north,” Buccine said. “They deserve the same quality care opportunities and experiences, regardless of location and regardless of income or race.”

Taylor Hawk, director of Legislative and Political Strategy for the Delaware State Education Association, said the bill is needed to keep staffing levels high at child care facilities.

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BILL TO FOSTER MENTORING IN SCHOOLS DRAWS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would establish a 15-person task force to focus on mentoring and improving literacy rates for Delaware’s youth unanimously passed the House Education Committee Wednesday.

“We believe that the 18,222 children in charter schools across our state benefit not just from the educators in the building, but from the village that helps educate them,” said Kendall Massett, executive director of the **Delaware Charter Schools Network**. “Mentors are a huge part of that.”

House Joint Resolution 1, sponsored by education committee chairs Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, says the task force will mainstream public school mentoring systems.

“It will look at ways that the state could expand the

number of mentors, and improve the use of information technology to make improvements to recruitment, training and retention of mentors,” Williams said.

This might include a single statewide website for school mentoring and necessary infrastructure that will be needed to run a top-quality mentoring program, she said.

Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, told the committee that he and his wife have been mentoring two young boys. One experienced a rather traumatic divorce, Smith said.

“He comes over three nights a week and we play, we do homework together, we do schoolwork together,” Smith said, “and he’s now a stud baseball player and now he’s able to play on the baseball team because he

got his grades up.”
Smith said the other child has a background similar to himself, with a family consumed by drug addiction.
“I just encourage everybody to step up and look to see in their own groups and their own communities what people are going through,” Smith said. “Give your time when you can.”

If the bill passed, it would include:

- two members of the House of Representatives—one member of the majority party who is appointed by the speaker of the house, and one member of the minority party who is appointed by the House minority leader.
- two members of the Senate—one member of the majority party who is appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, and one member of the minority party who is appointed by the Senate minority leader.
- the governor.
- the secretary of education.
- the secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families.
- the secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security.
- the secretary of the Department of Technology and Information.
- a representative of the governor’s Advisory Council on Exceptional Citizens.
- a representative of the Delaware Association of School Administrators, nominated by the association’s president.

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Government

STATE POLICE MAY GET SPECIAL TAGS TO MARK 100TH ANNIVERSARY

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would create a special license plate for the Delaware State Police to celebrate the division's 100th anniversary was sent to the House floor Wednesday.

House Bill 100, deliberately named for the anniversary, unanimously passed the House Administration Committee.

The plates would be granted only to active Delaware State Police officers at the discretion of the Col. Melissa Zebley, superintendent of the State Police. She is the first woman to head the department.

"Our State Police have enhanced the safety and security of citizens across our entire state for the past 100

years," said House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek South. "I am proud to support this initiative to allow them a special license plate noting and honoring their service."

The bill will require officers to pay a one-time fee of \$10 for the unique plate that will be provided by the Division of Motor Vehicles. Each plate will have the prefix "ST" and will be numbered consecutively beginning with "2."



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BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House of Representatives on Tuesday once again sent a bill to legalize the use of marijuana in the First State to the Senate, this time on a 28 to 13 vote. **House Bill 1** is sponsored yet again by Rep. Edward Osienski, D-Newark, who managed to get a similar bill passed last year, only to see it vetoed by Gov. John Carney and then fail to get enough House votes to override the veto. The bill is part of a two-part package. **House Bill 2-HA 1** would create a pot-growing and selling industry in Delaware.

Osienski has said that he hopes the growing public demand for decriminalization will help encourage Carney to sign the measure into law.

House Bill 1 would remove all penalties for possession of a personal use quantity of marijuana, except for those who are under 21. A personal use quantity would be defined as one ounce or less of leaf marijuana, 12 grams or less of concentrated cannabis, or cannabis products containing 750 milligrams or less of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol. Under current state law, the possession of one ounce or less of marijuana by a person 21 years of age and older carries a civil penalty of \$100. That provision would be eliminated under HB 1. Possession, use or consumption of

MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION BILL PASSES HOUSE, SENT TO SENATE

recreational marijuana by anyone under 21 would still result in a civil penalty. Several Republican reps questioned the wisdom of the move.

MARIJUANA USE QUESTIONS

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, asked Osienski about the impact that marijuana has on infants and fetuses. Osienski said that there are around 88,000 deaths per year due to alcohol but none associated with marijuana. Use among children in high school decreased from 2020 to 2021.

Briggs King pointed out that use of cannabis is associated with an increased risk of car accidents and that there's a danger of kids eating cannabis gummies because they look like candy.

Rep. Jeff Hilovsky, R-Millsboro, said that the bill would lead to increased costs for police and that more people could be disqualified from drug tests.

Osienski answered that many members of law enforcement already have some experience in the specific kind of marijuana testing that would be required. He points out that legalizing marijuana will free up around 12,000 civil charges that the state would otherwise have to investigate and prosecute.

Richard Henderson, former president of the Medical Society of Delaware testified that he had concerns about the bill because of the lack of studies done on the impact of marijuana on the development of children. Henderson said that the concentration of THC in marijuana today is three times what it was 30 years ago and that three longitudinal studies show that marijuana use has a detrimental impact on brain development. Osienski asked Henderson what level of exposure would lead to the type of brain damage mentioned in the studies and Henderson said he isn't sure.

Helping propel House Bill 1 out of the House were Rep. William Bush, D-Cheswold, who voted against the bill in 2022 but voted for it this time around, and Rep. Stephanie Bolden, D-Wilmington, who had been absent during voting in 2022, but voted yes Tuesday.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill to stop nepotism in Wilmington City Council posts is headed to the full council next month.

Wilmington Councilman James Spadola introduced the legislation Monday night in the council’s Finance & Economic Development Committee. The ordinance would prohibit members of the council from hiring close relatives of current council members.

“We should set up good guardrails for the employees and the system to operate, to prevent issues,” Spadola told the committee, “and so the public knows that we’re being good stewards of the taxpayer dollar.”

The legislation was passed and is expected to be on the full council’s April 6 agenda.

“Anybody who’s currently on council staff, if they had a family member become elected into office, this would not affect them,” Spadola said. “It does not include cousins, so anybody’s cousin could get hired on council staff after passing this.”

The ordinance defines a close relative as a person’s domestic partner or parents, spouse, children, siblings by blood (whole or half), adoption or marriage.

WILM. CITY COUNCIL NEPOTISM LAW DRAWS DEBATE, MOVES ON

NEPOTISM ON THE CITY COUNCIL?

Spadola said that he isn’t aware of any nepotism issues in the City Council, but he’s seen those issues at the state level, although he didn’t provide any examples Monday.

Committee member Zanthia Oliver pointed out one of the issues with convicted and ousted state auditor Kathleen McGuinness was that she hired her daughter.

“Sometimes, we as council members get involved with other issues that don’t pertain to us,” she said. “I don’t know if I know of, or even ever heard of anyone that has been hired that have been immediate family to someone on City Council.”

The ordinance is illogical because it legislates an issue that is not taking place, Oliver said. She said she was torn about the bill because many times children aspire to go into the business that their parents went into, whether it be law, politics, construction or another field. She pointed to a number of family-owned Delaware businesses that include generations of family members.

Oliver said she doesn’t want to “stop someone who may have a dream, because that’s all they’ve ever seen their family members do.”

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FORMER WILM. POLICE CORPORAL CONVICTED OF MISCONDUCT, LYING

BY SAM HAUT

A former Wilmington police officer has been convicted of misconduct and making false statements to law enforcement. James MacColl, who was a corporal, was charged in March 2021 after a shooting on Feb. 2, 2019, according to a press release from the Delaware Department of Justice.

MacColl responded to a 911 call of an armed carjacking, where he shot Yahim Harris twice in the upper left torso, according to court records. During a use of force investigation, a ballistics analysis said the bullets fired by MacColl didn't match the barrel of his service weapon. The service weapon would have had five distinct markings, but the bullet had six. The Department of Justice concluded that MacColl was justified in shooting Harris, but noted the discrepancy.

MacColl initially said he did not change the gun barrel and did not explain how the discrepancy occurred. But in January 2020, he admitted changing the five-twist barrel on his service weapon to an after-market six-twist in 2017. Due to MacColl's "total lack of candor," prosecutors were forced to drop the then-pending charges against Harris for the alleged carjacking, the press release said.

MacColl will be sentenced later. The maximum sentence he could receive would be three years, said Mat Marshall, public information officer for the Department of Justice.

"At the absolute minimum, we should be able to expect honesty from those we trust to enforce the law,"



Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings said in the press release.

This was MacColl's second use of force **investigation**. His actions were reviewed following the shooting of Jeremy McDole on Sept. 23, 2015. McDole was a 28-year-old African American paraplegic who was shot and killed by police in Wilmington as he sat in his wheelchair. Neither MacColl, nor three other officers, have been charged in that shooting. They were answering a call about a man with a gun.

TOWN
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STATE DETAILS PLANS FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION IN COUNTY HEARINGS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Kent County farm owner Jane Warren is anxious to have internet service at her home, but there's no way to do that now.

"We cannot function because everything is done online," she said during a Delaware Department of Technology and Information public hearing March 1 about state efforts to expand broadband access.

The department has until August to develop a five-year plan to increase internet access in unserved and underserved areas of the state and Wednesday night's hearing was the first of three, one in each county, to hear what people want.

Warren said the only way she now can use the internet now is to drive to a nearby hotspot.

"And when I was still working...it was expensive and half a mile away in the middle of nowhere," she said.

Jason Clarke, Delaware's chief information officer, told the Joint Finance Committee last month that the department expects a budget of \$158 million to fund the installation of broadband technology in the state's internet deserts. Work to expand the network already has begun in all three counties, thanks to state American Rescue Plan Act money, he said.

While many in rural and underserved areas have complained for decades about the lack of internet access, schools going to a virtual mode during the pandemic threw the issue into a harsh spotlight. Many children didn't have access to broadband service or the devices they needed to attend classes and that one issue helped focus efforts to get them help.

The expansion's target will be unserved and underserved locations, low income and affordable housing

communities, and community anchor institutions like libraries, hospitals and community centers, said Tammy Shelton, broadband manager for the department.

The speed of internet service will be one way the state determines who is and who is not receiving adequate access. The Department considers those who cannot get internet speeds of at least 25/3 megabytes per second (mbps)—a measure of how much information can be moved in that time—to be unserved, and those that get speeds between 25/3 mbps and 100 mbps to be underserved. They'll focus on community anchor institutions that have internet speeds below 1 gigabyte/second (gbps).

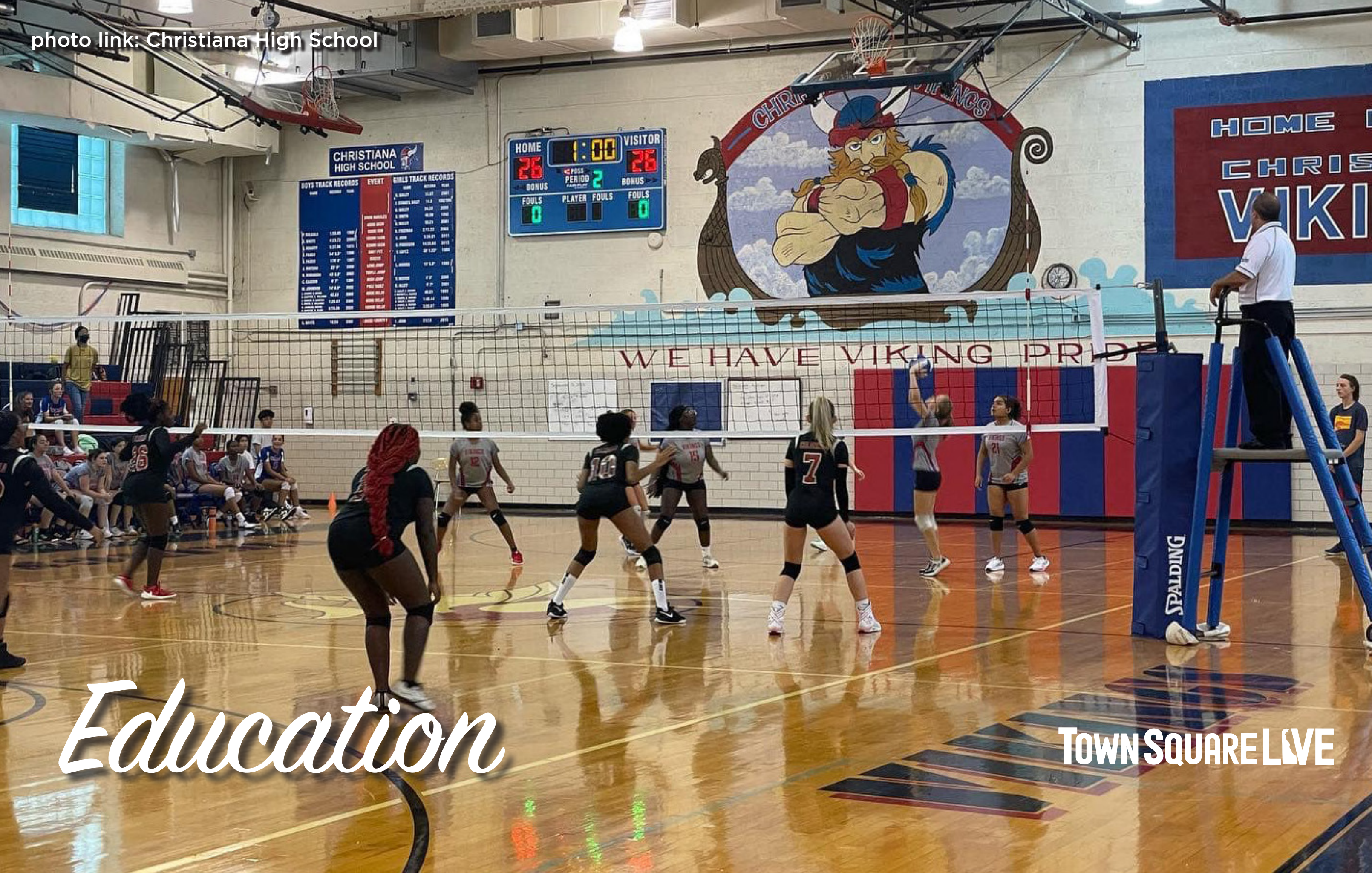
Delaware's state threshold for what it considered adequate broadband is 100/100 mbps. That is said to be adequate for a family of four who are streaming movies on their own devices, participating in video meetings, and playing multiyear online games.

Two Kent County residents said that they were spoiled in other states because they had multiple internet providers, and when they moved into rural Delaware, they realized they had limited options.

The Department will prioritize expanding internet access for:

- Rural residents
- Low-income individuals
- Veterans
- Individuals over the age of 60
- Individuals with disabilities
- English learners and individuals with low levels of literacy
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Incarcerated individuals

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



GEORGETOWN MIDDLE'S INTERVENTION SCORECARDS HELP 200 STUDENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Jessica Mariner can see how her seventh-grade son Karson has made academic and behavioral strides in the two months he's been participating in **Georgetown Middle School's** intervention program.

"He used to give up right away and call himself dumb, and I would never know if he had homework unless I asked him," Mariner said. "He flourishes off of positive reinforcement, and he now comes home with a mission to complete his homework every night."

The Indian River School District started its Behavior Tiered Intervention Support three years ago. At the start of the 2021-22 school year, it opened a student success suite for the kids who were in the program. Georgetown Middle School Principal David Hudson said it took about a year for teachers and students to buy into the program run by Tabitha Cortijo.

She already has worked with 193 students this year, up a few students from the previous year.

"My favorite part of this job is relationship building, which is the biggest part of these interventions," Cortijo said. "A lot of the students I work with have trust issues, and they have certain behaviors because they're not able to maybe talk about things or work on it themselves, or they just haven't had a trusting adult to help them."

Mariner, a single mother, said her son never had a male role model. Karson also has a learning disability that can't be treated because all the medications for it cause his blood pressure to rise, his mom said.

"He's pretty great socially but he sometimes struggles academically and he gets frustrated easily and shuts down quickly and stops believing in himself," Mariner said.

In January, at Karson's individualized education program meeting, which outlines how the school will try to help Karson achieve his goals, Mariner decided it was time to have her son join the intervention program.



“We saw a boost in website referrals from Delaware LIVE during our admission season.”

- URSULINE ACADEMY

Karson refused to go to his first intervention meeting, but after talking to Cortijo, something clicked, Mariner said. Now her son looks forward to filling out his scorecard and achieving his intervention goals.

"Miss C's energy and attitude is so uplifting to the students and what she has to offer is rewarding for not just my son but other kids," Mariner said. "It keeps them motivated, and as a parent who's not with him for seven hours a day, that's so important."

Every day, Cortijo meets with about 15 students, either individually or in group settings.

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SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE LISTINGS DELAYED BY BACKGROUND CHECKS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The deadline for people to file to run for the May 9 school board elections has passed, but it may take weeks until the final list of candidates is published.

The problem: A 2021 [law](#) that requires school board candidates to complete a criminal background check and a child registry check. These must be completed before candidates' names can be posted on the Department of Elections' [website](#).

"New Castle County in particular has up to a four-week delay in turning around those background checks," said Laurisa Schutt, executive director of [First State Educate](#), a local advocacy group that wants to catalyze radical change in education by activating the power of Delawareans. Rather than listing "pending" for candidates who are waiting on checks to be completed, the state's elections page omits them.

"Now the public has no idea who is actually running," Schutt said. Efforts were not successful Friday afternoon

to get a comment from the Delaware Department of Elections. First State Educate knows of 10 candidates whose names have not yet shown up among election filings.

School board seats' four-year terms are staggered so all members aren't running at once. Last year, 42 people ran for school district board seats. On Friday, only 26 candidates were listed. Even for the incumbents who are re-registering, there is a \$79 filing fee which includes the background check.

"That isn't communicated," Schutt said. That's added to confusion, she said.

There's also not enough places to have a background check done, Schutt said. New Castle County especially has very few centers that provide backgrounding, which could be a deterrent for people to run, she said.

The final list of candidates probably won't be available for several weeks, Schutt predicted.

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Charter School

STATE BOARD: CHARTER HEAD CERTIFICATION MUST MATCH DISTRICTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A state board has recommended changing the certification and licensure requirements for Delaware charter school leaders to match those of school district leaders. The move by the Professional Standards Board must be passed by the state School Board before going into effect.

The suggested change has angered charter school leaders and officials. Several wrote to the board prior to Thursday night's vote to argue that the cookie-cutter approach is the antithesis of why charter schools exist: to provide a flexible institution that tries to educate students in fresh and different ways.

At least one charter school mom wrote in to applaud the move, saying she was shocked to discover that the same credentials were not already required.

"All Delaware charter schools are led by highly qualified administrators," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#) on Friday.

The leaders bring transferable skills from various professional fields, with different life and educational experiences, she said, which allows them to approach education with a new and innovative perspective.

"This is what makes charter schools so effective, allowing them to meet the original intent of the charter school law, increasing student achievement with research based innovative approaches to education," she said.

For certification, charter school leaders may either:

- Enroll in a traditional or alternative route to certification program that leads to traditional administrator certification and complete the program within three years.
- Earn approval for a digital portfolio submitted to an external vendor who will review work samples to measure competency and alignment to professional standards for educational leaders.

The portfolio is akin to meeting a rubric for administrators, and if individual leaders need help completing it, the Department of Education will provide professional learning to assist.

It would also require charter leaders to upload evidence to demonstrate competence in all of the standards as it relates to their work in the school. This option is only for charter leaders employed before June 30.

There's no difference between a charter school administrator and a district administrator when it comes to licensing certification for all leaders hired after June 30, the board pointed out several times. Leaders who are not currently licensed must complete up to three years of related professional leadership or management experience to fulfill the student teaching/internship requirement.

Massett previously said that charter school leaders do not have the same role as district school leaders, and it doesn't make sense to require the same certifications and licenses. She noted that they have to be excellent marketers to raise funds and drive enrollment, which are responsibilities district leaders don't have.

"Given the success of many of our charters, perhaps the state should be reviewing all administrative requirements," she said, "so that districts might also benefit from a wider selection of proven leaders in various fields."



HODGSON'S MAISS HUSSEIN WINS 2023 POETRY OUT LOUD CONTEST

BY JAREK RUTZ

Maiss Hussein took home this year's Delaware Poetry Out Loud crown March 2 with her recitation of Tarfia Faizullah's "The Poem You've Been Waiting For."

"The most exciting part of this night was seeing how everyone expresses their emotions so differently," she said. "You can look at the same poem and somebody's looking at it so differently."

It's important to keep an open mind, since people can interpret literature and perform poetry in unique ways based on their experiences, she said.

Hussein beat 11 other finalists from Delaware high schools at the state finals Thursday night at the Smyrna Opera House. She'll head to Washington, D.C., May 8-10 for the National Poetry Out Loud Finals with \$50,000 in awards on the line.

The junior from **Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School** also took home \$200 and earned her school \$500 to spend on poetry materials.

The 12 state finalists performed memorized poems in two rounds. Five finalists were chosen for the final round, where they performed a third poem. Contestants were judged on their physical presence, eye contact and body language, pace, rhythm, punctuation, dramatic appropriateness, articulation and evidence of understanding.

The contestants had advanced through school competitions, choosing works from an anthology of more than 1,200 poems. Competitions started in October, with about 200 students across the state participating.

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Health

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



WEIGHT-LOSS DRUGS TO BE ADDED TO STATE INSURANCE PLANS

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware will cover new weight loss medications for state employees. The Delaware State Employee Benefit Committee unanimously approved a plan that would include the drugs as well part of a program that includes utilization management and behavior modification programs. It was unclear when the move would take effect.

Adding the drugs to state employee and retiree health plans will cost an extra \$1.8 million, as opposed to simply approving the use of the drugs, which would cost an extra \$2.8 million, the committee was told Monday.

The drugs, under the brand names of Victoza, Saxenda, Ozempic, Rybelsus, Wegovy and Tirzepatide, have become a nationwide sensation. Many started as drugs to help diabetics lower their blood sugar, but were so effective and popular that they have been approved for weight loss alone.

The utilization management programs will require previous participation in a weight management program as well as use of a reduced calorie diet and exercise.

Obesity rates have increased in the U.S. during the pandemic and more than 40% of **adults** in the U.S. are obese, the committee was told.

At last month's meeting, public commenters asked the state to approve the drugs. If not, some said, at least take them off the list of banned prescription drugs. That would allow people to negotiate with their insurers. Several other states, including New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, currently provide coverage for weight loss medication, while Florida is undergoing a pilot program for medication.

A Blue Cross Blue Shield federal employee benefit program that includes coverage of weight loss medications went into effect at the beginning of this year.

State insurance officials showed the committee links to studies funded by drug manufacturer Novo Nordisk and said they thought the state needed more long-term studies. One of those studies showed that there was an average savings of \$157.41 to \$185.41 per member per month from people that lost between 5% and 20% of their total weight.

Another study showed the cost of obesity through disability, workers compensation and absenteeism, which showed a cost savings of \$17,196 per year if someone went from a 40 or greater BMI to a normal weight.

In other action, the committee approved insurance premium increases in plan copays. One would increase copay costs for various hospital visits to encourage people to use the most appropriate sites for programs. Another would increase the copay for certain medications.

The hospital increases include a \$25 to \$75 increase for outpatient surgery and a \$5 to \$25 increase for high-tech imaging.

The medication increases will add \$2 to the cost of a 30-day supply of generic drugs, \$4 for formulary drugs and \$10 for non-formulary. The costs would be doubled for a 90-day supply.



photo by Ben Fulton



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



TOWER HILL, ST. MARK'S AND LAKE FOREST END MAT TITLE DROUGHTS

Cape Henlopen's Luke Bender missed last season with an injury, but came back this year and won the 157-pound weight class with a 14-4 major decision over Cam Cataldi of Caesar Rodney for his second state title. Two matches later teammate C.J. Fritchman captured the 175-pound weight class defeating Caravel's Matt Duarte 5-2.

The ending title droughts theme continued at 165 pounds when Luke Spoor of St. Mark's won a 6-1 decision over Anthony Lucian of Tower Hill. Spoor, a sophomore, followed in his father Stan Spoor's footsteps as a state champion. Spoor became the 92nd St. Mark's state champion.

Sanford's lone entry in the tournament Justin Griffith made his fifth state final appearance and won his third state championship pinning Cape Henlopen's Alex Taylor in 1:52 for the 190 pound title.

"I had a mindset change after Ironman, I went from having pressure on me to it's just a match, have some fun, score some points so I went out there and tried to be aggressive," Griffith said.

Salesianum crowned two champions in Max Agresti and Cam Davis Jr. Agresti finished a perfect 47-0 season defeating Tyler August 8-2 in the battle of defending state champions at 215 pounds. It was Agresti's second state title. Davis won a thrilling 3-1 decision over Caesar Rodney's Trevor Copes at 126 pounds in a match that kept the fans on the edge of their seats for the entire six minutes.

Tower Hill eighth grader Dominic Lucian joined Duffy atop the podium Saturday night. Lucian won the 106-pound weight class with an 8-2 decision over St. Mark's Clif Bakhsh. Malachi Stratton was the lone champion for Sussex Central at 113 pounds defeating Tye Bellarin of Red Lion 9-3. It was the second state title for Stratton, a sophomore for the Golden Knights.

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BY NICK HALLIDAY

The have nots became the haves at the 67th Annual DIAA Individual State Wrestling Championships Saturday night at Cape Henlopen High School. Tower Hill ended the longest drought crowning its first two state champions since Bill Rankin won the 130-pound weight class for the Hillers in 1972.

Tower Hill junior Jack Duffy won a dramatic 6-5 decision to start off the final round at 144 pounds holding off a late takedown attempt at the buzzer by Caravel's Jamar Wells.

"Last year I went in with no belief that I could win, just happy to make it to the finals as the seventh seed. This year I was like I didn't want to get to the finals and go through the same exact thing I went through, sad, upset that I didn't put my full effort into winning that match," Duffy said.

Next up it was Lake Forest crowning its first champ since 2015 when Nurrideen Ahmad-Statts won the 150-pound weight class defeating Cape Henlopen's Andrew Schaen 7-2. Ahmad-Statts became the 11th Spartan to win a state title.



BY GLENN FRAZER

The No. 1 seeded Middletown Cavaliers trailed early but fought back to take a 15-10 lead after one quarter and would hold the advantage until the final buzzer in a 57-42 quarterfinal win at home Saturday. No. 8 seed Sanford came out firing, going up 10-6 midway through the opening period thanks to two “three-point” shots by senior Sean Forrest. The Cavaliers countered with a 9-0 run ignited by Jaiden McGhee’s two long-range buckets and one from Amir Hite.

The defenses controlled the second quarter but the two teams remained dialed in from beyond the arc as Jordan Spencer and Chris Stanford connected for the Warriors, while Marcus Edmund and McGhee drained “downtown” makes for the Cavs. It was a low-scoring quarter as Sanford cut Middletown’s lead to 21-18 at the half.

Middletown tightened up ball pressure in the second half, according to head coach Azeez Ali. That allowed

TOP SEED MIDDLETOWN ADVANCES TO FINAL FOUR AT THE BOB

the Cavaliers to go up by nine on yet another three-point-er by McGhee. That lead would increase to 11 points after two free throws by Amir Cunningham and a great pass from Amir Hite to Edmund for a layup. Middletown took a 35-26 lead into the final eight minutes and the closest the Warriors would get was 42-35 with 3:30 to go, as Dayon Polk drained a “three” to pull his team to within seven points. Undaunted, the Cavs would finish out the win from the free throw line as Sanford was forced to foul in the final two minutes. Middletown converted 21 of 32 foul shots (66%) with the two Amir’s being very efficient. Hite made five of six from the line while Cunningham calmly nailed seven of eight.

Sanford completes its season with a record of 15-6, losing only two of its last 12 games. Tommy Vaughn, Jr. led the Warriors with 14 points, while senior Polk added nine and fellow senior Forrest scored six points.

The Cavaliers will face the fifth seed Salesianum in the semifinals as the Sals eliminated Tower Hill 45-43 in the closest quarterfinal of the day. The Cavaliers’ only “in-state” loss was to the Sals 51-32 in late January.

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SEAFORD GRABS EARLY LEAD AND COASTS

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Seaford boys basketball team put together a highlight reel of plays in the opening 12 minutes of their second round playoff game against Dover March 2 night. Seniors Brent Ricketts and Makel Hubbard both brought the sold-out crowd to its feet with slam dunks as part of a 16-0 Blue Jays run to end the opening quarter. Leading 23-5 after the first eight minutes, Seaford continued its dominance into the second quarter by outscoring the Senators 18-11 for the largest lead of the night at 44-19 with 2:41 left in the half. Dover was able to close the half on an 8-2 run to trail 46-27 at the break.

The Senators stayed with Seaford for most of the second half, slicing the deficit to 12 points at 60-48 with Denim Perkins finding Noah Allen on a “back door” pass from the top of the circle. Following an empty possession by Seaford, Dover had a chance to cut the lead under double digits, but Aviyon Matthews stripped the ball from Nasir Pierce and completed a “layup-and-one” to push the advantage back to 15 points and the Senators would not get any closer.

With 3:45 left in the game, Dover’s Jaheim Harrell shoved Ricketts from behind, drawing a technical foul.

While the officials gathered at center court, a fight broke out in the stands behind the basket in Ben Sirman Gymnasium. Although security acted quickly to break up the incident, both teams were directed to their respective locker rooms. Moments later, the public address announcer spoke to the crowd and asked that everyone to leave the building and head to their vehicles. Officials, representatives from the DIAA, coaches and athletic directors gathered and decided to resume the contest in front of a “near-empty” gym with Seaford up 69-53. The officials informed us, Harrell was ejected from the game after a “double-flagrant” foul. The Dover senior (in my estimation, one of the state’s best) saw his high school career come to a close after surpassing the 1,000 point plateau earlier this season.

The game resumed without incident as Seaford advanced to the quarterfinals with an 81-61 win, and hosted William Penn Saturday.

The Blue Jays were led by Hubbard’s 20 point effort. Ricketts added 16 including a spectacular one-handed jam in the second half. The defending first team all state selection (Ricketts) proved worthy of a repeat. The Jays improved to 21-1 with the win and extended their winning streak to 14 games. A win today (Saturday) would give Seaford a return trip to the Bob Carpenter Center and the Final 4.

Perkins scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half to lead Dover, while Harrell finished with 15 points. The Senators completed their season with a mark of 15-7.



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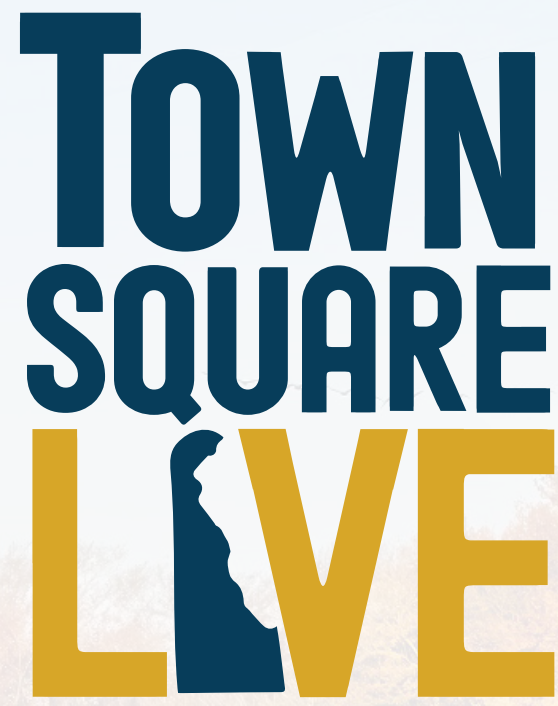
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