

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

photo link: Delaware State Parks

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Mobile Pantries to Feed 4,500



Three Education Town Halls



Inside the Circle—Week 5





# Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



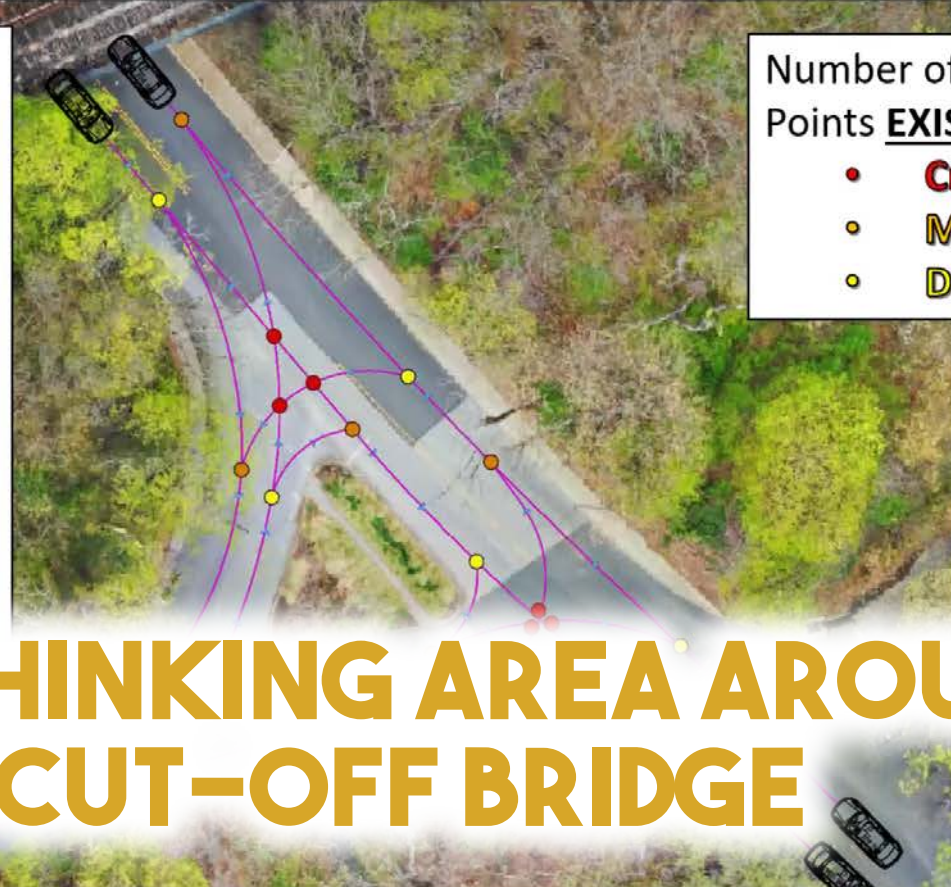
# Community

Types of Conflicts

- **Crossing**  
Angle Collisions
- **Merging**  
Rear End  
Sideswipe
- **Diverging**

Number of Automobile Conflict Points **EXISTING**

- **Crossing: 7**
- **Merging: 7**
- **Diverging: 7**



## DELDOT RETHINKING AREA AROUND AUGUSTINE CUT-OFF BRIDGE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Plans are underway to make roadways around the Augustine Cut-Off bridge over the Brandywine safer and better for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. And slower for drivers.

The Delaware Department of Transportation project extends from Brandywine Hundred down to Lovering Avenue in the northern edge of Wilmington. The most prominent change involves reconfiguring the triangular intersection of Lovering Avenue and N. 18th Street into a more traditional T-shape. Officials also want to eliminate left turns between Augustine Cut-Off and Wawaset Street.

Improvements will be made throughout for bicyclists and pedestrians, such as a protected bike lane across the bridge and a shared roadway to the north.

Officials are also considering an outdoor stairway for

pedestrians between Augustine Cut-Off and N. 18th and addressing “conflicts and safety issues created by illegal parking” on Augustine Cut-Off.

“There is a lot of interesting pedestrian activity in the area,” DelDOT planner Paul Moser said in a presentation showing a slide of a landscape where people have, footfall by footfall, created a dirt path.

The area’s dominant features include Incyte, a pharmaceuticals firm seeking approval from New Castle County to expand on acreage acquired from Wilmington Friends School; the Salesianum School and its Absessinio Stadium; a Wilmington fire station; and scattered retailers, restaurants and other businesses.

Although Wilmington is built on a grid on the southern end of the project area, roads dramatically curve elsewhere, creating intersections with unusual shapes

and dramatic grade changes.

During the presentation, Moser repeatedly brought up two concepts: “connectivity” and “pinch points.” Connectivity refers to the ability of bicyclists and pedestrians to move around safely (or at least, safer than they now move). “Pinch points” refers to places where bike paths and sidewalks end and force bicyclists into the general roadway and pedestrians into detours. The goal is to increase connectivity and reduce pinch points.

Traffic calming for the area is likely to include narrower lanes for vehicles that allow for bicycle paths, barriers between drivers and bicyclists and extended curbs that help protect pedestrians.

### TWO STAGES ON AUGUSTINE CUT-OFF

The first stage reaches only to Cantera Road (that’s lime green on the map). A timetable for a second stage north of Cantera and up to Edgewood Road (purple) has not yet been announced.

Wilmington petitioned DelDOT to rethink the area, where the bridge links the state’s two largest population centers: the city and Brandywine Hundred.

A separate but adjacent project involves federal Transportation Alternatives Program funding to improve Lovering Avenue (yellow on the map).

Officials are seeking input through May 18. They expect to begin design this fall or winter.

Incyte has been awarded a grant to construct a traffic signal at an entrance into its campus (it’s Stone Hill Road on the other side of Augustine Cut-Off). That light, a presentation slide notes, depends on Incyte getting approval to expand and the company’s business plans.







BY BETSY PRICE

As Delaware Theatre Co.'s musical "Man of La Mancha" opens, the writer Miguel de Cervantes is being escorted into a dungeon during the Spanish Inquisition. Above, light shines through a trapdoor. Below, it's clear there are worse depths to this jail.

Cervantes' fellow prisoners set upon him, stealing his possessions, including a manuscript, which they threaten to destroy. Instead, Cervantes, played by Scott Langdon, suggests that they allow him to tell the story, and as Cervantes does, he transforms into Don Quixote as the prisoners transform into other characters.

"This community gets formed in this most unlikely of places in the service of telling this story," Langdon said.

# 'MAN OF LA MANCHA'S' DON QUIXOTE: STUCK IN THE MIDDLE WITH YOU

"And the prisoners take ownership of it not only in the telling of it, but also in our production in the playing of it."

One of the DTC-only touches is that characters will also double as musicians, so the audience sees words and music played before them.

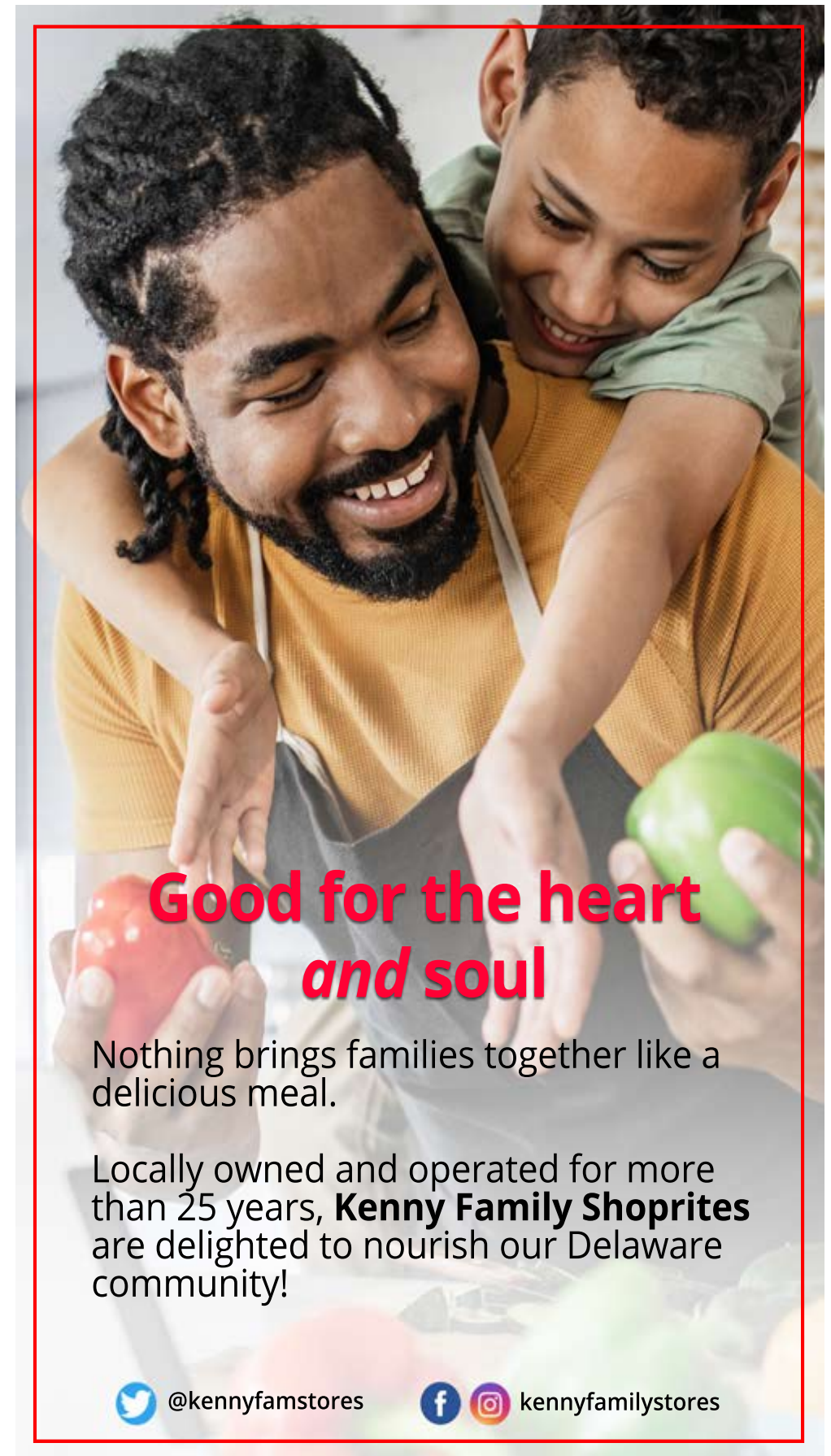
Director Matt Silva, who also is the theater's executive director, sees it as a technique that's connected many of the theater's recent shows such as "The Million Dollar Quartet," "Plaid Tidings" and "One Man, Two Guvnors."

The musical, which soared into popularity in the 1960s, has been a favorite of Silva's ever since he worked on it in high school. He and his father, who died two years ago, formed a special relationship that revolved around it, he says.

Today's world has just as many fractures and partisan relationships as the world of "The Man of La Mancha," he said. Silva believes the show offers some pathways to examine those divisions. So does Langdon.

"There are words that we throw around a lot, words like fascism and authoritarianism, and each side seems to do it to the other side with the feeling they have ownership over the definition," Langdon said. "On the surface, this play is about this system that is suppressing any kind of speech against it."

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# MOBILE PANTRIES TO FEED 4,500 DELAWAREANS IN NEED

BY JAREK RUTZ

As Delaware’s emergency food benefits ended last month, the **Food Bank of Delaware** saw a slight uptick in the number of people it served through its mobile pantries. It’s not sure what to expect this month as Delaware also begins to cut Medicaid rolls because under COVID-19 emergency rules new enrollees didn’t have to provide income verifications and now they must.

“We know that Delawareans were already struggling to make ends meet due to inflation,” said Kim Turner, communication director at the Food Bank of Delaware.

Coupled with the end of pandemic-era SNAP benefits, she said, “We know it’s even harder to get meals on the table.”

Because of that, the nonprofit is prepared to feed 4,500 First Staters this month, which would be 550 more than

last month, through its three pop-up food pantry events.

According to data from the food bank, demand for the food boxes typically dies down in the summer months and rises up again in the winter. For example, in July 2022, the three mobile pantries served 2,791 residents, but in December, 2022, they fed 3,909 people.

Last year, even with fears of inflation, the numbers dropped from March to April. This year, March had 1,358 more customers than March 2022.

Here’s where to find the mobile pantries:

### Sussex County

April 17 at the Crossroad Community Church, 20684 State Forest Road, Georgetown.

### Kent County

April 19 at the Dover Motor Speedway, 1131 North



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Dupont Highway, Dover. Attendees can enter through the Leipsic Road entrance and follow signs.

### New Castle County

Friday, April 21 starting at 10 a.m. at Delaware Technical Community College, 400 Stanton Christiana Road, Newark. Service is first-come, first-served. Register [HERE](#). Pre-registration is recommended, but on-site registration is available.

Those requesting food need to bring proof of their Delaware residency, whether that be a state-issued ID, utility bill, Delaware SNAP benefits care or something else with an address.







# UNUSED PRESCRIPTION MEDS? HERE'S HOW TO SAFELY TRASH THEM

BY JAREK RUTZ

First Staters looking to dispose of their prescription drugs in a safe, responsible and convenient way can do so on Saturday, April 22 at 22 different locations throughout the state. Along with proper disposal, the National Drug Enforcement Administration Prescription Drug Take Back Day is meant to educate the public about the potential for abuse of medications.

The country is battling an epidemic of people addicted to opioids. Delaware is third in the nation for most overdose deaths, according to the CDC. It trails West Virginia and Kentucky. Many of those addictions are related to prescription drugs.

Another goal of the day is to reduce the risk of unused prescription medications in someone's home being diverted for misuse. Many times, a family member or friend will find prescription medicine in a home cabinet and steal it for personal use.

“With the proper disposal of unused or expired prescription drugs, you’re ensuring that these medications don’t find their way into the wrong hands,” said **Col. Wayne McFadden** of the Delaware River & Bay Authority’s Police Department in a statement.

He pointed out that no questions or requests for identification will be made by law enforcement personnel present, and he urged Delawareans to add this to their list of spring cleaning.

The Division of Public Health handles Delaware’s participating in the national take-back days, which take place twice a year. This will be Delaware’s 24th time participating. Since 2010, about 100,000 pounds of medication has been collected nationally.

For those participating, medications must be in a container such as a pill bottle, box, blister pack or zipped plastic bag, without any labeled personal information.

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# HOPEFULS START TRYOUTS FOR STATE PARKS LIFEGUARD JOBS

BY RACHEL SWICK MAVITY

Delaware State Parks Beach Patrol Capt. Bailey Noel wants to have all four park-managed beaches open this summer. But he needs to recruit 20 to 30 new beach patrol lifeguards to do that. Last year, the Tower Road beach had to be closed most weekends outside of holidays because he didn't have the staff to guard the beach.

Noel estimates he needs 14 guards per shift for Cape Henlopen State Park, four to eight for Fenwick Island, four to eight for Tower Road and 10-12 for the Indian River Inlet beach. Guards work five to six days per week. Full beach patrol guards earn \$18.75 and those who are under 16 or who are not full guards—called lifeguard assistants—earn \$16.25.

"I am very optimistic this year because we have had a good turnout for our tryouts so far," Noel said. "If those

trying out don't pass all of the tests the first time, they are able to come back out for another tryout to try again."

Potential candidates have to swim 500 yards, freestyle stroke only, in 10 minutes; run one mile along the beach in 10 minutes; and then submit to an interview. Applicants can try out several times to improve speeds.

"I've been training since February for this," said Chris McCrae, 22, of Marydel. He is a firefighter who wanted to expand his skills by joining beach patrol.

"I like helping people and a friend of mine is on beach patrol, so he suggested I come out for tryouts," McCrae said. "I hope to be on the beach patrol and have a good summer helping people out."

Noel grew up on the beaches and started with the

beach patrol when he was 20. He left at point, but by the second summer without being on the stand, he knew he had to go back.

"It gets in your blood," he says with a chuckle. "I am in love with it because I get to be at the beach and I get to help people."

Beach Patrol Crew Chief Ethan McIntosh agreed. This will be McIntosh's third season with beach patrol and his first as crew chief at Cape Henlopen.

"We have seen a big shortage lately and that puts stress on the rest of us because we might have to work longer shifts or more days each week," he said. "It especially affects us at the end of the season."

McIntosh, who lives in Magnolia and commutes to Cape Henlopen each morning during the summer, says housing is one of the biggest hurdles faced by beach patrol members. While Delaware State Parks offers some housing, they try to reserve it for guards coming from out of state. Delaware residents may have to find an apartment with friends near the beach or commute, as McIntosh does.

Most of those trying out on April 16 lived in the area or had family with whom they could live.

## LIFEGUARD HOPEFULS

David McCurry, 20, is from Calvert County, MD, but spends summers in Dewey Beach with his grandfather. This is his first year trying out for the beach patrol.

"I usually am a server but I am kind of tired of that," he said. "I'm active and like to be outside, so I thought beach patrol would be good for me and more fulfilling."

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



photo by Spencer Davis / Unsplash



# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





# DOGFISH HEAD'S BEER AND SPIRIT FESTIVAL COMING MAY 5-7

BY JAREK RUTZ

Craft beer lovers will have a field day—well, field weekend—as Dogfish Head hosts its annual beer festival May 5-7 in Sussex County. The event, dubbed the “**Weekend of Compelling Ales**” will feature the local brewery’s unique ales and spirits along with delectable food pairings.

The weekend will start with a kick-off party, a walking and tasting experience, and brunch. It will also feature the debut of the Summer’s Cauldron, a new Limoncello-style gin, which was created in a partnership with New Hampshire’s **Fabrizia Spirits**. The newly-released unfiltered gin is 46% ABV and distilled with Sicilian lemons from Fabrizia’s own lemon grove in Italy, along with juniper, lemon drop hops, lavender, and pink and Timur peppercorns.

Cocktail expert and television personality Mia Mastroianni, who appears on the reality show *Bar Rescue*, will be mixing up some new cocktail recipes for attendees to try.

Here’s the schedule of events:

## **Kick-off party at Rehoboth restaurants**

The weekend starts at 7 p.m. Friday, May 5, with an all-you-can-eat meal and drink menu at **Brewings & Eats** and at **Chesapeake & Maine**.

Brewings & Eats will have a slider bar, build-your-own-pasta bowl and pub fare options. Chesapeake &

Maine will be the place to be for seafood lovers, with dishes like seafood paella and raw bar offerings. Both restaurants will have plenty of dessert options served in the courtyard between the two restaurants, which are located at 316 & 320 Rehoboth Avenue in Rehoboth. Tickets are \$100 per person and can be purchased **HERE**.

## **Walking and Tasting Experience at Milton Tasting Room and Kitchen**

From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 6, attendees can have a unique self-guided walking and tasting experience. Guests can explore the Dogfish Head’s Milton Brewery & Distillery, which includes 12 unique stations where they will be greeted with sample pours of beers, spirits or cocktails and some quick bites paired with them. Tickets are \$65 and can be bought **HERE**.

Each patron is guaranteed 12 rare beer and spirit samples with 12 food samples, a souvenir glass and a tasting card. The event takes place at 6 Cannery Village Center in Milton.

Designated driver tickets are \$35 and can be purchased **HERE**. The DD tickets include 12 food pairings, the glass, and 12 non-alcoholic beverages.

Once registered, patrons will be given a designated time slot for the walk-and-taste experience.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)





photo by Charlie Megginson

LEGISLATIVE HALL

*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





## DRAFT BILL WOULD STRIKE ALL REFERENCES TO GENDER IN STATE LAW

BY SAM HAUT

A legislative council voted Wednesday to create a bill that would allow all references to gender to be removed from Delaware law. The Joint Legislative Council, a bipartisan committee, unanimously approved a draft bill that would remove terms like he, she, his, hers with a noun that does not express gender.

For example, in [Title 14, Section 170](#), a student identification number is defined as “the unique identification number assigned to each student in the State under which his or her student records are maintained.” The his or her in that section would be changed to just say the student.

The process is referred to as creating a gender silent Delaware Code, and is being discussed or happening

across the country. Proponents say it makes laws clearer and less wordy.

While the bill itself hasn’t yet been released, Carolyn Meier, a Delaware code editor, said that if passed, it would require editing of state code as well as require removing references to gender in all future bills.

As volumes of the Delaware code are replaced, Meier said, they would be checked to make sure they were gender silent.

“Even if we’ve got bills that have already been released and are under discussion, if they are passed after this bill, they will be made gender silent by the revisors during their editing process,” she said. Ultimately, the entire code will be rewritten. “It’s just a matter of time,”

Meier said.

Mark Cutrona, director of the Division of Research, said that the code was originally changed to be gender neutral in 1995. That meant adding the word she in places where code said he. When looking through the code recently, he said researchers found about 50 sections of the code that weren’t gender neutral.

Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, mentioned that one part of the bill would change “his debt” to “the debt,” and Cutrona said that change also helps with clarity.

“Part of the problem with using he or she sometimes is that it becomes unclear which actor the he or she is referring to,” Cutrona said. “And in that case we could not figure it out, and so we went extra neutral and just said the debt.”

House Minority Leader Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, asked about how the bill came about.

Cutrona said that the research department noticed that there were places in the code that were not gender neutral or silent and decided to ask for the law. He said Delaware Code Revisors Dan Wolcott and Jamie Sharp, who were appointed by the legislature, agreed with it. The current law dictates what revisors are and aren’t allowed to change when editing a bill.

Meier said that few states have made the decision to move to gender silent language, but many more are at least discussing it.

Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, said the bill will help with clarity and it will be good to update language that just says he.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# DELAWARE SPORTSMEN TAKE AIM AT HANDGUN PERMITTING BILL

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association took to **social media** Monday to condemn a bill that would create a permitting process for getting a handgun.

“We knew it would be coming back and it’s finally here,” the Facebook post said.

“In the wake of the violent criminal actions of the last few weeks in Delaware, our single partly overlords have decided that the best course of action is not to hold criminals accountable, but to make it harder for citizens to defend themselves, even though police cannot be everywhere and are not required to protect citizens.”

The bill, which hasn’t yet been filed in the General Assembly, is expected to be sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Lockman, D-Wilmington, and House Majority Whip Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle South.

It requires someone planning to buy a handgun to have a permit, unless they are a qualified law-enforcement officer, retired law-enforcement officer, or already have a concealed weapons permit.

The Sportsmen’s Association, which is Delaware’s National Rifle Association affiliate, said the permitting process would add significant costs and create delays for getting a concealed carry permit. The association pledged to fight the bill in the legislature and in the courts, just as it is battling last year’s **ban** of high capacity magazines and assault rifles.

Efforts were unsuccessful Monday to reach Lockman or Minor-Brown for comment.

Drew Volturo, the deputy chief of staff for Communications for the House Democratic Caucus, said because the bill originates in the Senate, any comments on the bill should come from the Senate.

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# WILL CARNEY LET MARIJUANA BILLS BECOME LAW WITHOUT SIGNING?

BY BETSY PRICE

The state representative who has been pushing the legalization of marijuana for years sent out a press release April 14 that broadly hints Gov. John Carney will allow that to happen without signing two bills that hit his desk this week. Both [House Bill 1](#) and [House Bill 2](#) passed the General Assembly in March.

HB 1 would legalize the possession of marijuana and HB 2 would create and regulate a legal recreational marijuana industry for adult users. Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, refers to the bills collectively as the Delaware Marijuana Control Act.

In his press release, he pointed out under Delaware law, the governor has 10 days, not including Sunday, from the time his office takes receipt of the bill to either sign the bill into law, veto the bill or take no action and allow it to become law without a signature.

HB 1 was sent to the governor on April 11, which means the tenth day would be Saturday, April 22, Osienski's email said. HB 2 was delivered on Friday, April 14, which means the tenth day would be Wednesday, April 26, the email pointed out.

Carney until now has adamantly refused to endorse any bill that would have legalized marijuana. He vetoed a legalization bill last year. But he's been at odds with the rest of his Democratic Party and, if surveys can be believed, with the majority of the public, many of whom actively support or are unopposed to legalizing marijuana.

Democrats have a supermajority in the state Senate and a simple majority in the State House. Those groups repeatedly have voted in increasing numbers for the bills, with a few Republican mixed in here and there.

## MARIJUANA OPPOSITION

The Delaware State Trooper Association and Sen. Bryant Richardson, R-Laurel, both have asked Carney publicly to veto the bill.

Carney's office confirmed the bills had arrived and said there would be no additional updates Friday on future action. Efforts were not immediately successful to get a comment Friday from the governor's office.

Osienski had said in January when he reintroduced the bills after they failed again last year that he hoped things would be different with Carney, who vetoed a legalization bill last year.

This year, however, the governor's office asked for amendments, which were approved, in the marijuana industry bill. Many took that to mean there was some support in Carney's office.

"We have been on a long, multi-year journey with the Marijuana Control Act," Osienski said in the press release. "We have had countless hearings, debates, stakeholder engagement and deliberations. We have incorporated numerous suggestions and changes from interested parties—including the governor's office—throughout this process to arrive at what I believe is the best possible plan for legalizing and regulating adult recreational marijuana.

"I am hopeful that the governor will take all of this into account as he considers these bills and that he will acknowledge the desires of an overwhelming majority of Delaware residents."







# BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEES EXAMINE RISING COSTS OF HEALTH CARE

BY SAM HAUT

Two state health subcommittees focused Monday on the rising cost and utilization of health care. Those costs are the basis of predictions about how many healthcare services employees and retirees will use and are used to determine insurance premiums and more.

At a joint **SEBC** Financial and Health Policy & Planning Subcommittee meeting Monday, Chris Giovannello of Willis Towers Watson said expenses are rising about 8% per member year over year. He compared costs between March 2021–February 2022 with March 2022–February 2023.

During that period, for admission rates, maternity represented the largest number of hospital admissions at 39%, or 22.2 per 1,000 admissions, a 4% hike from the previous year. Surgical admissions, though, saw the biggest increase in numbers. They were up 13.4% to 10.5

per 1,000 admissions, up from 9.3 in the previous year. The overall length of stay declined, Giovannello said.

Utilization of mental health outpatient services increased the most at 9.7%, from 2,283.7 per 1,000 to 2,504.1. That was followed by emergency room visits at 9.1%, from 1,912.2 per 1,000 to 2,085.4, and laboratory services at 6.8%, from 7,198.8 per 1,000 to 7,688.4.

Most routine prescription drugs, 89.6%, come from retail drug stores, compared to 8.7% for mail order drugs, and 1.7% for specialty drugs.

Giovannello said cost increases are due to both price increases, due in part to the pandemic and inflation, and increases in utilization, and that they will discuss what is driving those increases later in the spring or early summer.

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# SITTING JUDGE, GOVERNMENT LAWYER NOMINATED FOR SUPREME COURT

BY BETSY PRICE

A Delaware Superior Court judge and a Wilmington lawyer who specializes in working with municipalities and governments have been nominated by Gov. John Carney to fill seats on the Delaware Supreme Court.

Judge Abigail LeGrow and N. Christopher Griffiths will require confirmation by the Delaware Senate before taking the seat held by Justice Tamika R. Montgomery-Reeves, who was appointed to a federal appeals court, and the seat that will be vacated by retiring Justice James T. Vaughn Jr.

Griffiths is the second Black lawyer nominated to the state’s Supreme Court, noted [Citizens for Judicial Fairness](#), which has spent millions advocating for judges of color for Delaware’s courts. Montgomery-Reeves was the first.

While Delaware has had courts for hundreds of years, the Supreme Court was established in 1951.

Citizens for Judicial Fairness, which grew out of a contentious Chancery Court judgment, has complained that the racial makeup of the courts do not match the state’s demographics.

Keandra McDole, activist and Citizens for Judicial Fairness spokesperson, called Griffiths’ nomination “a victory for all of us who have organized for courts that look like us rather than the all-white courts of old.”

“There is no question that our hard work and dedicated advocacy across Delaware since these vacancies

opened was instrumental in compelling Gov. Carney to do the right thing and make this appointment,” she said. “But we need more and this nomination is merely a first step.

“The Chancery Court remains all-white and Black justices continue to be drastically underrepresented in our state’s top courts. We will not rest until the judiciary in our state actually looks like the people of our state.”

While it’s true that there is no Black Chancery judge, the court includes Master in Chancery Loren Mitchell, who was appointed in December 2022.

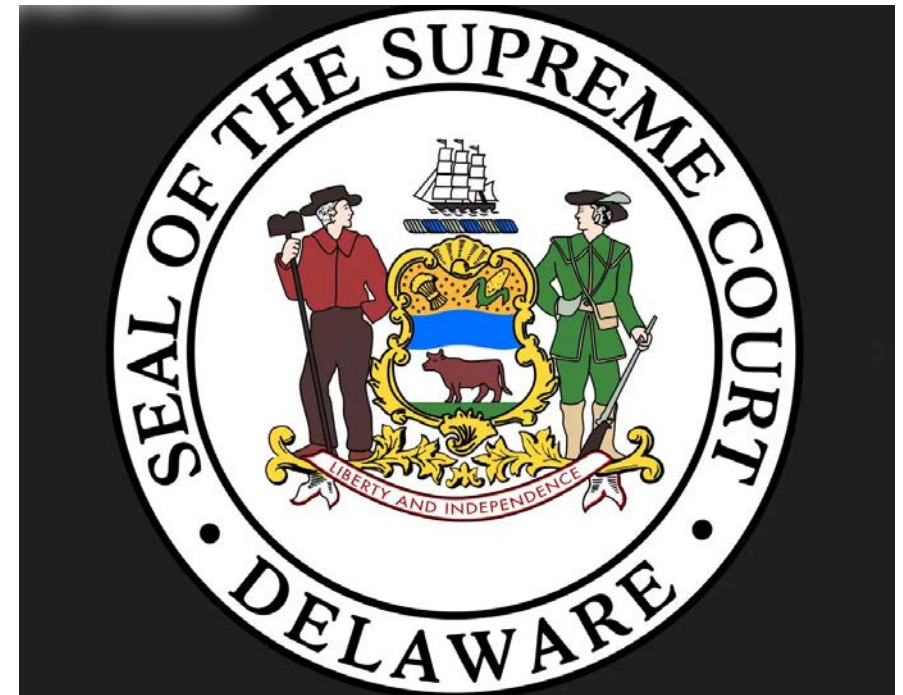
LeGrow was appointed by Governor Markell and began serving in February 2016. Prior to that, she appointed a Master in Chancery on the Delaware Court of Chancery by then-Chancellor Leo E. Strine Jr.

She received her law degree from the Pennsylvania State University Dickinson School of Law and her bachelor’s degree in political science from Susquehanna University.

Griffiths is a partner at Connolly Gallagher LLP focusing on administrative and government law; corporate and commercial litigation; bankruptcy law; and general litigation according to his biography.

Before entering private practice, Griffiths served as a wealth manager for the Wilmington Trust Co. and the Vanguard Group.

He received his law degree from Villanova University



School of Law. He also is a graduate of the University of Delaware and Salesianum School.

Griffiths sits on the boards of the Boys & Girls Club of Delaware; Children & Families First of Delaware; Ministry of Caring; Sacred Heart Village; and the Wilmington Library.

“I believe both Judge LeGrow and Chris Griffiths have the experience, knowledge and commitment to public service necessary to serve on the Supreme Court,” Carney said in a statement. “Judge LeGrow brings experience from various Delaware courts, and Chris brings extensive litigation expertise. I want to thank these two qualified nominees for their willingness to serve the people of the State of Delaware, and I look forward to the Senate considering their nominations.”







# VETERANS CEMETERIES WANT PERMISSION TO MOVE BENCHES AT WILL

BY SAM HAUT

Donated benches at the **Veterans cemeteries** in New Castle and Sussex Counties can't be moved without permission from the General Assembly. That's become an issue at the Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery in New Castle County, which has grown since benches were put there and now are not evenly distributed through the cemetery.

Miranda Mal, communications officer with the Delaware Office of Veterans Services, said many people visiting the cemetery have mobility issues and would benefit from not having to walk long distances.

Eugene Bradley, a commission member, who mostly deals with the Sussex cemetery, said he doesn't believe they have had any issues with benches there. They are mostly installed along the roadway and spaced about 50 feet apart. Bradley said that the commission is not sure which benches New Castle County cemetery may want to move.

Benches are often donated by families and located

near a loved one's gravesite, he said. "That was one of the issues," he said.

Delaware code says that "no plaque or memorial will be removed or relocated for any purpose without the approval of the co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Committee on the Capital Improvement Program."

Now the Commission of Veterans Affairs is considering adding to its legislative agenda a proposed law that would give the cemeteries autonomy over where benches are placed.

### VETERAN MEMORIALS

Mal said there are only three reasons items such as benches, trees, markers, flags, quilts or artwork, are moved. Those include providing better access, health and safety reasons or making them more aesthetically pleasing.

The cemetery is no longer accepting donations of benches, but will still take donations of either brass leaf plates or paving stones.



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*Education*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





# EDUCATION TOWN HALL FOCUSES ON WOKE AGENDAS, PARENTAL RIGHTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Speakers at a town hall Tuesday night said Delaware’s education system is in crisis, Delaware’s students are being indoctrinated by the woke agenda and that America is falling behind in international comparisons. About 30 people attended the Save Our Schools Town Hall in Dover sponsored by **Citizens for Delaware Schools**. It is the first of three offering conservative views on education designed to help residents make an informed decision when they go to the polls for the May 9 school board elections.

Elana Fishbein of the national nonprofit **No Left Turn in Education** is an immigrant from Israel who said in the meeting that America is the shining city on a hill because people’s rights and freedoms are protected by the constitution. People risk their lives to enter the United States “because they know they have rights in the country, and they are protected.”

One of those is allowing parents to be the primary authority in their children’s education, an idea she thinks has been lost.

### PARENTAL RIGHTS

Fishbein joked that she “interrogates” her son when he gets home from school, going class by class and asking him what he learned. When she hasn’t been okay with aspects of his classes, she’s called the school administration to exempt her child. She encouraged the crowd to do the same.

Once, her son came home and told her that his teacher was talking about transgender people. She was sure he’d never heard that word at home.

“I know that an eight-year old is still figuring out their own identity and their brain is still developing and they’re not really understanding what’s going on with their life,” she said.

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# WANT SCHOOL TAX EXEMPTION IN WILM? ALL FOUR DISTRICTS MUST OK IT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Brandywine School District exempted a Wilmington church and office building from having to pay school property taxes, even though they are not in the district. Both properties are part of **Christina School District**, but the state’s tax code requires Christina, **Brandywine**, **Colonial** and **Red Clay** district school boards all must approve the abatement request in order for the owners to get it.

However, since Christina will be financially impacted the most and its board approved both abatement requests, it’s expected the other districts will follow suit.

Before Wilmington split into four districts in 1981, the tax rate was 48.6 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. (For comparison: Caesar Rodney School District is now seeking to **bump taxes** up to 52.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value.)

The first location, 314 South Jackson Street in Wilmington, is owned by The Neighborhood Group, and the second, 250 Executive Drive in Newark, is a Pencader Corporate Center.

## THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

The church is seeking the tax exemption because it is a religious institution. New Castle County’s Office of Finance, Division of Assessment and New Castle County Office of Law did not grant The Neighborhood Group a religious property tax exemption until Aug. 26, 2022, due to COVID-19 delays.

The agencies determined the exemption would go into effect on July 1, 2023. Because of the delay, the property owners overpaid taxes for the 2021-2022 school year.

The county cannot do anything with school taxes, however, without the approval of the local school boards,

according to Jill Floore, chief financial officer at Brandywine. Brandywine’s board voted to approve the tax refund request as a credit towards future taxes. The total impact for Brandywine School District is \$805.73 which is reflective of the taxes paid in error from for the tax year 2021-2022.

## THE PENCADER CORPORATE CENTER

For the corporate center in Newark, New Castle County assessed the property value incorrectly, and after Christina initially rejected the corporation’s request for a tax refund, Delaware’s Superior Court **ruled** in February that the district is indeed viable for providing the refund. The court order details that in total, the property on Executive Drive is seeking \$70,000 for overpayments.

Brandywine’s board approved the tax refund request as a credit towards future taxes. The approval will cost the district \$3,477.55, which reflects taxes paid in error from 2006-2019. Christina will take a bigger hit, with the corporate office’s abatement costing it \$57,725.11 in tax revenue.

Christina’s school board approved the both abatements in its March 14 meeting. Colonial’s board voted on the matter in its meeting Tuesday, and Red Clay’s board will vote in its meeting Wednesday at 7 p.m. If Colonial’s board approves the corporation’s abatement request, it will cost them \$3,164.78, and Red Clay \$4,877.05.

It was not discussed at Brandywine’s board meeting Monday how much the church’s abatement will cost Colonial and Red Clay.





# SCHOOL PAY COMMITTEE SETS RAISES FOR SECRETARIES, CUSTODIANS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Public Education Compensation Committee voted Monday on recommendations for how to raise pay for school employees other than teachers, but including secretaries and custodial positions. The specific group is cited under Delaware Code [Sections 1308 and 1311](#).

The committee agreed to condense the five secretarial positions—clerk, secretary, senior secretary, financial secretary and administrative secretary—into three, which would be administrative assistant I, administrative assistant II and administrative assistant III.

Their salaries would rise through a one-time, 2% increase with \$500 flat increase. That will be in addition to the 3% raise for all education jobs included in the fiscal year 2024 state budget, which takes effect July 1.

Monday's recommendations will affect 839 employees throughout Delaware.

The 15-person committee was formed at the beginning of this school year to make recommendations to

the state on how to raise pay in the education system to better compete regionally for teachers. Last month, in light of the ongoing national teacher shortage, the group voted to bring teacher's starting salary to \$60,000 via a four-year plan. That model will give teachers a 2% salary increase and a flat dollar increase of \$1,875 to the base salary for teachers, nurses and administrators each year until it reaches \$60,000 by the 2027-2028 school year.

Gov. John Carney and the Joint Finance Committee will have to review the committee's recommendations.

"We don't want people to feel like this committee's recommendation represents a promise," said Chuck Longfellow, chief financial officer at [Christina School District](#). "This committee is not in a position to make this promise to allocate this money, others are."

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## TEST SCORES, DISCIPLINE FOCUS OF SAVE OUR SCHOOLS TOWN HALLS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Town halls set for all three counties will focus on education issues such as academic performance, parental rights, discipline and violence in schools. Sponsored by **Citizens for Delaware Schools**, the town halls set for Wednesday and Thursday will feature Tanya Hettler, director of the Caesar Rodney Institute's Center for Education Excellence, and Elana Fishbein of the national nonprofit **No Left Turn in Education**.

The timing of the "S.O.S. (Save our Schools) Town Halls" were chosen to help people make an informed vote before the May 9 school board elections, the event flyer said.

Citizens for Delaware Schools is a group of concerned Delaware citizens who aim to educate the public about the alarming decline of public education and rise in behavior problems in the classroom. It grew out of Hettler's group, **Caesar Rodney Institute**—a conservative Delaware think tank.

Fishbein's No Left Turn in Education wants to bring back American values through the fundamental discipline of empowering and engaging students while giving parents more power in their child's schooling.

Fishbein and Hettler are expected to talk about key issues like academic performance, parental involvement and rights, funding concerns, discipline and violence in schools, the lack of teachers, licensure requirements and more.

The speakers will also explain why it's important to vote in May 9's school board elections as they try to increase the voter turnout, which is typically less than 10%. The focus on the vote cost the events one of their speakers.

Julia Zammith, policy and advocacy manager at Rodel, an organization focused on educational equity and excellence, planned to talk about a specific funding mechanism, but withdrew.

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# CAESAR RODNEY RESIDENTS DIVIDED ON APRIL 22 TAX HIKE VOTE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Residents of **Caesar Rodney School District** seem to be divided on April 22's tax referendum that would increase school property taxes by 27.7%, or about \$200 a year on average. The district says the money is needed to help pay for utilities, maintenance, building budgets and staffing.

"No way I want my taxes to go up," said 74-year old Sharon Barilla. She doesn't have any children or grandchildren in the district, so she said the increased revenue for the district would not benefit her at all.

Kris Roeske, a 34-year old resident of Camden, said he and his wife Laura support the tax increase because they have little children who will later enter schooling, potentially in Caesar Rodney schools.

"If they have outdated facilities and that sort of thing, I wouldn't be against an extra few hundred a year to help maintain the buildings that our kids are at," he said.

The average taxpayer, who owns a house with an assessed value of \$40,300, would have their taxes increased by \$211.58 in 2024 and another \$36.11 in 2025 and 2026, said Caesar Rodney Superintendent Christine Alois.

Alois said the district's expenses are outpacing its revenue since its growth in enrollment in recent years. Caesar Rodney has grown to 8,290 students, 324 more than it had in 2021. It must raise taxes to receive an \$11,037,200 state Certificate of Necessity grant. Under the terms of that grant, the district has to raise \$4,508,152 to match the state contribution for a total of \$15,545,352 to help the district with its identified needs.

Woodrow Gravenor, 77, is against the tax hikes. He said schools need to improve on disciplining their students and making sure parents are actively engaged with what their children are being taught.

"There's transparency issues, and we need to solve that and discipline before giving them more money," he said.



Dee Fields, a 54-year-old resident of Wyoming, said she plans to vote yes on the ballot.

"I just think it's really needed," she said, "For all the growth that we've had coming in, and you know, the schools are overcrowded, and I think it's good and we need to do it for our youth."

A referendum allows residents of a school district, through a ballot process, to vote to approve or reject changes to the district operating expense tax and debt service tax. The district's school board triggered the vote when it unanimously approved the referendum in its Feb. 28 meeting.

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# COURT SAYS HOLODICK MUST RULE ON CHARTER SCHOOL PAYMENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Delaware Superior Court judge has ruled that the state secretary of education must verify or deny invoices for special needs services for students sent from charter schools to districts. The **opinion** said there was not enough information for him to order the state to pay the \$4 million for which the **Delaware Charter Schools Network** and 11 charters sued Education Secretary Mark Holodick.

Ultimately, the March 23 ruling means that Holodick must rule on invoices sent more than a year, either clearing them for payment out of district property school tax revenue or telling the charters why they won't be paid.

"The Court agrees that Section 509(f) unambiguously entitles charter schools to submit bills for tuition charges in order to fund any services that are 'appropriately financed' pursuant to Chapter 6, and specifically, Section 604," said the opinion by Judge **Noel Eason Primos**.

Section 509(f) says that a charter school student's district of residence is required to pay for special services

that a child requires. It means that if a student who lives in Christina School District attends a charter school in Wilmington, the Wilmington school could bill Christina for the services.

Holodick and Department of Education officials declined to comment.

Kendall Massett, executive director of the Delaware Charter Schools Network, was happy with the court's ruling.

"Our charter schools are pleased that the court found they have an unambiguous right to access tuition tax dollars, and are pursuing their students' rightful share of those dollars," she said.

Submitted bills don't guarantee that charters get paid, however. Holodick has authority to reject them with justifiable cause.

"The secretary must act—either verify the bills as submitted or tell the charter schools why not," Massett said.

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## CAESAR RODNEY TEACHING ELEMENTARY STUDENTS GUN SAFETY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Here's a little known curriculum item: **Caesar Rodney School District** has been teaching firearm safety to all students in pre-K through fifth grade since 2019. Gun safety is only one section of the five-to-six lesson unit on basic safety that also touches on sexual consent, fire safety, unsafe environments, abuse, pet care and more.

"It was not intended to be a gun safety curriculum," said Jennifer Martin, supervisor of health and wellness at Caesar Rodney. "It's just a part of a larger safety curriculum that we're required to roll out and guns just happened to be a piece of it."

The children never handle a gun.

"It talks about never, never touching fire, never, never touching a gun, never never touching a dog that you have not asked permission to touch, so it's very general at first," she said. "Then it gets more into specifics with personal body safety which is under Erin's Law."

The curriculum, which was vetted by the state's Department of Education under **Erin's Law**, is called the **Child Protection Unit**. That unit is part of the **Second Step Program**, a national instructional initiative that aims to help students build social-emotional skills, like nurturing positive relationships, managing emotions, and setting goals, so they can succeed in school and in life.

Delaware is one of 28 states to adopt Erin's Law, which requires all publicly-funded schools in Delaware to train employees and educate students about personal body safety, sexual abuse and how to maintain appropriate interactions between children and adults, including coaches and volunteers.

The district sends out letters to the families of its 3,800 pre-K to fifth grade students each year before the safety classes begin. It's required by Erin's Law and describes the three skills that students will learn, which are:

- **Personal safety:** Students will learn important safety rules, such as safety with guns, sharp tools, and fire, and when riding on wheels or in cars. They will also learn ways to help them decide if something is safe or not.
- **Touching safety:** Students will learn about safe, unsafe, and unwanted touches as well as rules about touching private body parts. They'll also learn to say "no" to unsafe or unwanted touches, and to tell an adult if someone breaks rules about touching private body parts.
- **Assertiveness:** These lessons will also give students a chance to practice asking an adult for help, telling an adult about an unsafe situation and being assertive to get out of those unsafe situations.

The note sparked a lot of attention and discussion on the **Women's Defense Coalition** Facebook page. Many members were not aware of the classes.

"This will be an excellent program especially for young ladies, teaching them how to properly handle a firearm and protect themselves," said Justin Jones, a Milton resident. "Things happen and police can't always be there in time. If this education stops just one rape or abuse case then it's worth it."

Stephanie Snead commented that if the parents aren't going to teach about boundaries and safety, someone should. "I agree, if it's done correctly, this could be beneficial," she said. "Sometimes going back to the basics is key."

Jackie Veal Cates, a resident of Milford, is adamantly against gun safety being taught in schools.

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*Sports*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





# INSIDE THE CIRCLE – TOP 10 WEEK 5

BY GLENN FRAZER

Tough news for Caesar Rodney and outstanding pitcher Peyton Shields. She suffered an apparent knee injury late in the game against Middletown on the April 11. Shields had a 1-0 lead when she left the game. The Cavaliers rallied to win 2-1 as Reese Founds recorded 17 strikeouts. Peyton told me she will see a specialist and have some tests performed. All of us at 302 Sports and Delaware Live hope the tests will be in her favor, and that she can return to top form soon.

As we approach the midway point in the season, here is the current Top 10 for Delaware Live-302 Sports:

- 1) Delmarva Christian (7-0): Hosted unbeaten Appo April 18 on 302 Sports
- 2) St. Marks (6-0): Visited Archmere April 17
- 3) Sussex Central (6-1): Big game Saturday (April 22) versus Middletown
- 4) Caravel (2-1): Impressive 7-2 win over Smyrna on April 11. Hosts Delmarva Christian April 25.
- 5) Appo (6-0): 2-1 win at IR April 15. Visited (7-0) Delmarva Christian April 18 on 302 Sports.
- 6) Milford (6-1): Has Mount, Polytech and William Penn this week.
- 7) Smyrna (5-3): Lost to Caravel April 11. Took on IR April 18 and plays DMA Saturday, April 22.
- 8) Laurel (7-2): Busy week with Sussex Tech, Woodbridge, and Saint Mark's Saturday (April 22)
- 9) Middletown (4-1): Faces Polytech and Dover before Saturday game with Sussex Central.

10) Indian River (4-3): Only losses to Delmarva Christian, Central and Appo.

Others receiving consideration are DMA (3-2), Padua (3-2), CR (4-3), Red Lion (3-1).

Kasey Xenidis pitched a gem on our Delaware Live "GOTW" Tuesday, April 11, as she held Smyrna to two runs on just two hits. Haley Grygo hit back-to-back triples and also belted a home run. She was named our Player-of-the-Game.

We also had a chance to see Woodbridge and Cape Henlopen in an offensive display April 13 in Lewes. The Blue Raiders held an 8-4 lead through four innings before Cape roared back, scoring six runs in the sixth for a 12-9 victory. Abi Marsh recorded the win in relief.

This week we'll be at top-ranked and undefeated Delmarva Christian, as the Royals host the unbeaten and fifth-ranked Appo Jags. That game was scheduled for April 18. Two of the best pitchers in the state will be on display with Kaylan Yoder of the Royals and Savannah Laird for the Jags. Our coverage will begin around 4 p.m. Later in the week (Thursday) we'll get a look at Madge Layfield and the Sussex Central Golden Knights as they visit Cape Henlopen. Softball action provided by Delaware Live—powered by 302 Sports.





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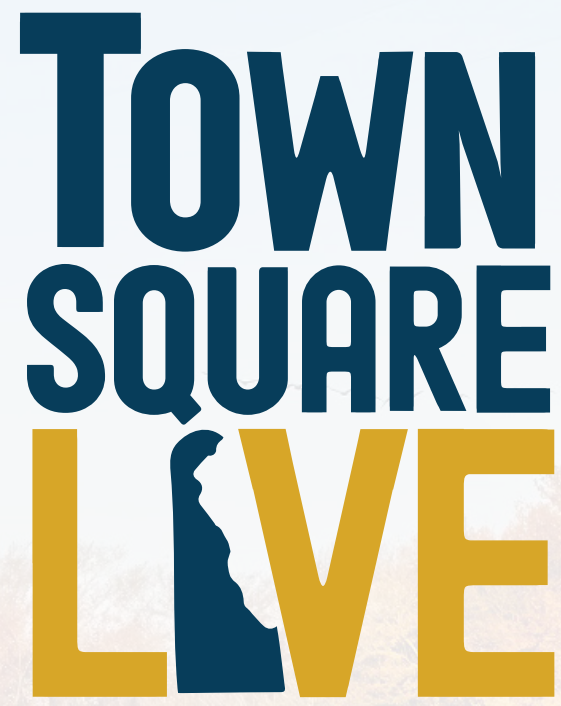


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