


photo link: Brandywine Creek State Park

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Juneteenth Celebrations



Climate Bill Passes House



DMA Defeats Conrad for DIAA Baseball Championship

photo link: Delaware Children's Museum



*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# UPDATED WILMINGTON TOWING CONTRACT LEADS TO SOME SKEPTICISM

BY SAM HAUT

Despite several recently announced changes to Wilmington’s towing contract, one outspoken critic is still worried. Ken Grant, who has been following the issue for the past 10 years, said that he doesn’t have faith that the proposed changes will be implemented.

“They’re not addressing the real issue,” Grant said. “This is what the city does consistently. When they’re facing the kind of legitimate criticism that they’re facing now on this issue, they turn around and say, ‘Oh, we’re announcing a bunch of reforms.’ So you can find the reforms that they announced back in 2019 over all this. Which, again, absolutely positively, none of those reforms were put into place in 2019 or 2020 or 2021.”

Grant said that he also has an issue with the money the city makes from parking tickets and impounding fees.

“While this administration is not doing anything to proactively change anything, it did not initiate all of this stuff,” Grant said. “This goes back more than 20 years. What the city did was decide this was going to be a revenue generator. They were going to use parking tickets and enforcement to make money for the city. That’s when they raised the ticket price to \$40.”

John Rago, deputy chief of staff for the mayor of Wilmington, said people like Grant blow up issues to seem more noteworthy than they are.

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# DELAWARE JUNETEENTH CELEBRATIONS RUN THROUGHOUT MONTH



BY JAREK RUTZ

The First State has a number of events and ceremonies to celebrate and honor a newly-established federal holiday in mid-June. Juneteenth, short for June 19, is a holiday that celebrates June 19, 1865. That day, Union Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his officers arrived in Galveston, TX, to free any remaining slaves. It was two months after the Civil War had ended and more than two years after the **Emancipation Proclamation** was signed by President Abraham Lincoln.

The date became a national holiday in 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making the day America’s 12th federal holiday. A flag raising ceremony kicked off the celebrations Monday at **Route 9 Library and Innovation Center** in Wilmington.

Other Juneteenth events include:

- The **Chase Center** in Wilmington is holding a Juneteenth Gala Sunday, June 11 at 5 p.m. Cost is \$100 per person or \$750 per table of eight. Proceeds go towards the Juneteenth Family Enrichment Program that hosts the Delaware Miss Juneteenth Pageant.
- **Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs** is hosting “Mock Freedom: Delaware’s Black Codes” Saturday, June 17 from 2 to 4 p.m. at **Zwaanendael Park** in Lewes, adjacent to the Zwaanendael Museum. It centers on the discriminatory laws passed in Delaware from the 18th to 20th centuries. Using primary sources and other historic examples, historian Alex Rumm and participants will explore this part of Delaware’s legal history and the lasting ramifications. Admission is free.

- The Juneteenth Freedom Festival and Parade starts at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 17 at **Tubman-Garrett Park** on Rosa Parks Drive in Wilmington. The parade will bring life to the city with local dance groups, drum corps, floats and elected officials participating. Admission is free.
- The **Delaware Art Museum** is hosting “Beyond Juneteenth Ancestors Festival: Afrosymposium & Expo” Sunday, June 18 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event celebrates the ancestral traditions of the enslaved and the accomplishments of their descendants. This year’s festival is focused on the education, healing, protection and adaptation of the human spirit. Admission is free.
- **Cornerstone Fellowship Baptist Church** in Wilmington will have a Juneteenth Observance Monday, June 19 at 5 p.m. Admission is free.
- The 26th Delaware Juneteenth Pageant is Saturday, June 24 at 5 p.m. at **The Grand Opera House**. Every year, starting in January, girls from ages eight through 18 attend six months of workshops that include Juneteenth and African American history, modeling and public speaking, etiquette, spirituality, self-image and essay writing. They also prepare to participate in the pageant where girls aged 15 to 18 compete for the title of Miss Juneteenth. The winner goes on to compete for the national title of Miss Juneteenth.

Is an event from your organization not in this article? Contact Jarek Rutz at (215) 450-9982 or jarek@delawarelive.com to get it added to the list.



photo by Mailchimp / Unsplash

The laptop screen displays the Mailchimp homepage. At the top, the Mailchimp logo is visible on the left, and the text "Sales +1(800) 315-5929 Log in" is on the right. The main headline reads "Outperform your last campaign". Below this is a featured email campaign preview for "BIG ON FLOATS" with a yellow background and a blue "BUY NOW" button. To the right of the preview, the text says "Sell more with email automations" and "Generate more orders with our prebuilt automations: remind abandoned cart shoppers, reengage lost customers, or cross-sell your products. Marketers have seen, on average, 4x more orders with our Customer Journey Builder than with bulk emails." A "Sell more" button is located at the bottom right of this section. On the left side of the screen, a vertical flowchart shows an automation sequence: "Float left in their cart" (with a play button icon), "Wait 1 hour" (with a clock icon), and "Gets reminder email" (with an envelope icon). The reminder email preview shows the text "Don't let this one float away!" and a blue "BUY NOW" button. A small question mark icon is in the bottom right corner of the screen.

*Business*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# CENTRAL DELAWARE CHAMBER SEEKS CHANGES IN PAID LEAVE REGS

BY SAM HAUT

The Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce is asking the Delaware Department of Labor to address concerns that small businesses have with proposed family medical leave regulations. In a letter dated May 31, the chamber asks for an immediate pause on the implementation of the regulations for a minimum of 60 to 90 days because of issues the chamber says will harm many of its 850 members. The letter, signed by Brian Stetina, chairman of the chamber's Board of Directors, included a five-page document detailing specific issues in the proposed regulation.

Those issues ranged from not properly defining an employer or an average weekly wage to wanting a written notice before the division starts penalizing businesses violating the act and making sure all days in the regulation are in business days. Judy Diogo, a consultant and former president of the Central Delaware Chamber, said

in an interview Thursday that the issues the chamber raised involve the negative impact it will have on small businesses.

"There's a lot of criteria there, there are timetables, reports have to be turned in at different intervals... they're talking about notices," Diogo said. "They're talking about the businesses being the one to either approve or deny a leave of absence. Those things are really hard when you have a business...but you don't actually have an HR department...There's just a lot of moving pieces to it."

Christopher Counihan, the director of the Division of Paid Leave, said that there are some complaints they received from the chamber that they will be taking into consideration when they publish the rules July 1. The regulations take effect 10 days after that.

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# IS PRIMARK HEADING TO CONCORD MALL? HERE'S THE TRUTH

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

“I guess Concord Mall isn’t completely on its way out after all,” the Facebook post read. “The landlord is telling tenants that Primark is going where Sears once was.”

DelawareLive.com called **Concord Mall** to get the truth. “No,” said mall manager Tom Dahlke. Ours was the third that he has received about the rumor, he said. “Completely and absolutely BS.”

“Sears still owns its building, and what happens is up to them,” he said, adding that he believes that Sears would only be interested in selling the building and not renting it. That said, “Primark would not be a bad choice” for the vacant department store. Sears closed its store in 2020.

**Primark** is a clothing retailer that began in Ireland in 1969 as Penneys but it doesn’t use that elsewhere because of JCPenney. It also sells beauty products, home-ware and accessories.

In 2015, it opened its first store in the United States.

“Today we have 17 stores in the US with plenty more in the pipeline,” according to the store’s website. The nearest to Delaware is in King of Prussia, PA.

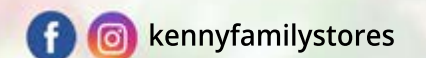
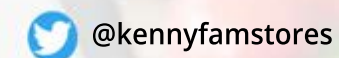
In May, the company announced it’s opening two stores in New York and one in New Jersey.



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# CLEAN HYDROGEN COMPANY WINS REINVENTING DE CONTEST

BY SAM HAUT

A company that would build a plant in Delaware to create clean hydrogen won the 2023 Reinventing Delaware program sponsored by the Pete du Pont Freedom Foundation.

If implemented, a manufacturing plant would use fresh water in an electrolysis process that splits water into hydrogen gas and oxygen gas. The idea championed by Andrew Cottone, CEO of Adesis, a chemistry contract development and research organization, won the group \$15,000 to pursue the idea.

Clean Hydrogen was one of four projects in the running for the title. The three other top ideas include Spotlight Delaware, championed by Allison Levine; zero homelessness, by Jeffrey Ronald and Judson

Malone; and #Move2Delaware, by Linda Parkowski, Shelly Cecchett, Scott Malfitano and Troy Mix.

“While all four ideas will make Delaware better, Clean Hydrogen was clearly the boldest,” said Thère du Pont, board chair of the foundation, named for his father and former Delaware governor.

In order for Cottone to claim the prize money, he must start a company that will develop the idea of clean hydrogen. That could include the first wind-sourced hydrogen electrolysis plant in the country. Byproducts of the process, heavy and semi-heavy water, would also be used in some way.

Cottone and his team are in the process of submitting an application to the US Department of Energy for

consideration for the Mid-Atlantic Clean Hydrogen Hub, a foundation press release said. That hub was created in response to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which will award \$7 billion to establish up to 10 regional clean hydrogen hubs across the country. Efforts were unsuccessful Friday to reach Cottone for comment.

Stephanie Johnnie, executive director of the Pete du Pont Freedom Foundation, said the money that winners receive is less important than the resources provided during the six month competition. All the contestants receive about \$25,000 worth of technical assistance and support, she said.

“This prize money is really just sprinkles on top of the sundae,” she said.

This year’s program started at an October dinner during which 100 people pitched ideas. A winner was chosen from those and a committee was formed to choose finalists. Johnnie said organizers take into consideration feasibility and job creation.

“That’s a big one there...with a manufacturing plant being built in Delaware that’s thousands, hundreds of thousands of jobs,” she said.

The prize money comes from donations from the dinner and from the foundation’s annual Freedom Award dinner.

Spotlight Delaware and zero homelessness have already launched their programs, while #Move2Delaware plans to launch sometime within the next month or two.





photo by Charlie Megginson

LEGISLATIVE HALL

*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



## SENATOR OPPOSES MENTAL HEALTH DAYS FOR STUDENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Republican senator believes Delaware's youth needs to toughen up so they aren't lost in the world when they grow up. Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, said in Wednesday's Senate Education Committee meeting that anxiety is a vital part of a child's development and he was opposed to a bill that would allow students to take mental health days.

**House Bill 3**, sponsored by House Majority Leader Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, provides excused absences for the mental or behavioral health of a student. It also specifies that any student missing two days due to mental health to be referred to a behavioral health specialist.

According to a recent CDC survey, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an existing mental health crisis for students.

"One in five school aged children has a mental health condition and 45% of children may have experienced a

traumatic event," said Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin and chair of the committee. "Each school district and charter school are able to determine the maximum number of excused absences allowable."

Creating more opportunities for students to miss school is a problem when the state is already challenged with rebounding from the pandemic, both in terms of student achievement and absenteeism, Buckson said.

"There are plenty of kids that have real mental conditions," he said, "but when you take a young person who just needs to go through stuff, it's vitally important that in our schools they develop those calluses learned in a hallway or by having to get up and go to school if they don't want to by facing their anxiety."

He recalled the nerves his own daughter had when entering middle school.

"It was a terrifying experience for her...but she went

anyway," he said. "With this type of language, she doesn't have to go now."

Sturgeon said the bill does not add any additional off days and does not eliminate penalties for students who are chronically absent. Rather, it establishes mental health as a legitimate reason for missing a day.

Mental health and physical health are intertwined and very much dependent on one another, she said.

"This isn't about a student who's having a little first day of school jitters or feeling a little sad over a situational event," Sturgeon said. "This is about indeed, anxiety and depression and any other mental health disorder that is truly a diagnosed disorder or maybe not diagnosed yet, but with the help of a behavioral health specialist that they'd be referred to, would be."

Allowing these absences and not challenging students to push through mental health struggles, he said, will result in them "being 18 or 20 and not knowing how to deal with the world."

Buckson also took issue with the fact that students won't have to provide any documentation if they take a mental health day. He said the bill injects students into the world of mental health struggles when they don't need to enter that conversation to begin with.

"Anxiety, like depression, is not a mental condition that needs to be diagnosed," he said. "Strong depression, real depression and real anxiety is, and growing that and adding kids to it that just need to go through [those emotions] will harm them."

The bill passed, though, and is headed to the Senate floor.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

# RETIREE SUBCOMMITTEE TO VOTE THIS SUMMER ON INSURANCE

BY SAM HAUT

*A previous version of this story said the committee will vote to endorse a retiree health insurance option on June 26. It will not. It plans to vote at some point during the summer.*

A subcommittee devoted to finding a solution to insurance for state retirees that balances cost to the state and to the retiree talked about a new option Monday. The subcommittee is expected to vote throughout the summer on which option and which model under that option they want the full State Employment Benefits Committee to consider.

The subcommittee was created earlier this year after retirees revolted when they were told last year that their health insurance would be shifted to a Medicare advantage plan that was more restrictive than the generous health plan they had. The retirees sued and a state court

ruled that the move violated what they had been promised for post employment benefits.

The insurance problems revolve around projections that show the state cannot afford to keep paying for the current plan for all current and expected retirees. Under traditional accounting, the state should be collecting now for insurance that will be paid later, but it's way behind. There is an \$8.3 billion shortfall in collections for future retirees as of July 1, 2022, and it is estimated that the shortfall will increase to \$20.7 billion by 2042 if nothing is done to close the gap.

Among the options the subcommittee has considered is changing who is eligible and when they are eligible. That could include reducing coverage for spouses, increasing the minimum retirement age, adjusting the amount of benefits offered based on length of service, and removing people who quit before retiring.

The committee also talked about two options related to creating a health reimbursement account. The account would start with \$5,100 that would automatically increase by 2% or 4% each year. A retiree would use that money to buy their own insurance and pay health costs.

For each of the options, there were three different groups they can apply those options to: people hired after Jan. 1, 2015, people hired after Jan. 1, 2025, and people who retire after Jan. 1, 2025. Previously, Cheiron, a consulting firm that advises the benefits committee, had only presented the committee with two models for each of the options, but had not included people hired after Jan. 1, 2025.

When that was added, it reduced the unfunded liability the least compared to the other models. Reducing coverage based on years of service for people hired after Jan. 1, 2015 would reduce the state's liability by \$3.8 billion. Doing it for those who retire after Jan. 1, 2025 would reduce it by \$4.6 billion. If that change were applied to people hired after Jan. 1, 2025, it would only reduce the liability by \$3 billion.

Removing people who stopped working for the state before retiring would reduce the state's liability by \$1.6 billion if applied to people who were hired after Jan. 1, 2015; \$1.2 billion if applied to people hired after Jan. 2025; and \$1.5 billion if applied to people who retire after Jan. 1, 2025.

Reducing the coverage of spouses by 50% for people who were hired after Jan. 1, 2015 would reduce the state's liability by \$1.8 billion; for people hired after Jan. 1, 2025, it would reduce the liability by \$1.1 billion; and for people who retire after Jan. 1, 2025, it would reduce the liability by \$2.7 billion.

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# PANEL: KEEP STATE BUDGET BENCHMARK, MAKE IT PART OF CODE

The idea for a benchmark first was suggested by Republicans and spread. After efforts to pass a law creating it failed, Gov. John Carney in 2018 issued an executive order asking the advisory council to create a benchmark and also establish a budget stabilization fund to smooth out any rough financial years.

The benchmark and the budget stabilization fund helped the state in 2020 when COVID-19 blindsided the economy.

Since then budget surpluses, aided by federal COVID money, have helped the state not only fund a lot of one-time projects, but also allowed the state to put money into the stabilization fund that's now near \$1 billion.

Fiscal year 2024 is not expected to have huge surpluses, but revenues are expected to grow more in 2025. Even with surpluses from the last three years, though, the General Assembly Joint Finance Committee plans to take some money out of the fund, partly because the state was hit with some bigger than expected expenses.

Carney's recommended \$5.5 billion budget for fiscal year 2024, which starts July 1, was designed to rise 7.1% instead of the benchmarked 6.2% recommended under the benchmark because of an expected surplus.

Those expenses included the state needing to put more money into Medicaid as federal COVID programs wind down. In addition, more money was needed to pay health care costs of state retirees who sued to stop the state from shifting them to a Medicaid Advantage

program instead of the generous plan they were—and still are—on.

Advisor council member Ed Ratledge said he felt like the benchmark hadn't really been tested in up and down cycles, but Delaware's Secretary of Finance Rick Geisinger argued that it was tested by COVID.

"We really haven't been through a full cycle on this where we've seen stuff bottom again," Ratledge said. He said he liked to look back 10 years and project ahead 10 years.

Geisinger said COVID hit when the benchmark was still relatively young.

"We had not yet built up the Budget Stabilization funds to the level that it is today," Geisinger said. "But we were able to make a withdrawal that allowed us to grow the budget in the year of COVID or otherwise we probably couldn't grow that budget."

Carney's executive order requires DEFAC to make recommendations about the benchmark every five years, including the methodology it uses. This will be the council's first five-year report. Houghton said he thought it was important to put the benchmark and budget stabilization fund into law and give it "a statutory infrastructure."

Because it's now simply an executive order, a new governor could dismantle it, he noted.

"I don't think that they would," he said. "I just think this is prudent fiscal policy."

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## BY BETSY PRICE

A state review panel will recommend that Delaware not only keep a budget benchmark appropriation that limits the growth of the state budget, but also put it into law. The [Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council's Benchmark Evaluation and Review Panel](#) also agreed to suggest that incoming legislators undergo training in how the state budget works.

DEFAC chairman Michael Houghton told the panel that the benchmark "has been working pretty well over the last five years." The benchmark uses projections of personal income growth, population growth and inflation to limit the growth of the state budget each year.



# INCREASED FINES FOR HANDICAPPED PARKING

to \$50,000 for any parking space that is changed without a permit from the relevant municipality or county or is changed but doesn't comply with the standards the bill requires for handicap parking spaces.

The parking space has to comply with rules that say the space needs to have a sign at least 12 inches wide and 18 inches tall, that must be clearly visible to a person parking in the space and be a minimum of 60 inches above the ground. A sign isn't required if a lot has four or fewer parking spaces or if parking spaces are assigned to people of an apartment complex.

Neal, who uses a wheelchair, said the spots aren't always accessible.

"The University of Delaware did a study of dozens of parking lots across the state and it showed that 63% of our parking lots do not pass current ADA standards," Neal said. "You don't always look at the accessible parking spots...but upon becoming chronically ill and disabled, I started recognizing just how difficult it was for me to access just the most basic parts of society."

Rep. Charles Postles, R-Milford, said he felt the \$50,000 civil penalty was too steep and asked who decides how much of the \$50,000 civil penalty to charge.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY SAM HAUT

A bill that would increase the number of handicapped parking spaces, update guidelines for them and increase fines for illegally parking in them is headed to the House floor. The House Health & Human Development on Wednesday OK'd [House Bill 175](#), sponsored by Rep. Deshanna Neal, D-Elsmere, is designed to force sites to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The bill increases the fine for unlawfully parking in handicap parking spaces from \$200 to \$250 for the first offense and increases the fine to \$500 for any subsequent offenses. There would also be a civil penalty of up



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# CLIMATE BILL PASSES HOUSE AFTER VOTE ON TWO AMENDMENTS

BY SAM HAUT

Rep. Rich Collins on Tuesday begged House Democrats to join him in opposing a bill that set greenhouse gas emission limits in Delaware.

“I have begged you to stand up one time and not just take this direction that apparently is so overwhelmingly powerful in this chamber,” the Millsboro Republican said. “And I know I’ve lost. I tell you it’s more than a loss on the bills, folks. This is a lifetime goal. And I’ve lost. And if that gives you satisfaction, more power to you.”

Democrats not only ignored him, but two of his fellow Republicans—Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, and Kevin Hensely, R-Middletown—joined Democrats in passing the bill 27 to 13.

**House Bill 99**, sponsored by Rep. Deb Heffernan, D-Bellefonte, would require net greenhouse gas emissions in Delaware to be 50% of the 2005 levels by 2030 and have net zero emissions by 2050.

There were two amendments to the bill, one by Heffernan and the other by Collins. Heffernan’s amendment, which passed unanimously by voice vote, would:

- Have the state consider labor and energy costs in reaching the climate goal.
- Requires DNREC to adopt rules at least 18 months before the effective days of new regulations on emission reductions.
- Changes the name of the Scientific Committee on Climate Scenarios to technical climate advisors.
- Requires the names of the technical climate advisors to be posted publicly.
- Sends the climate action plan to more people than are now scheduled to get it.
- Forces the climate action plan to also include ways to offset emissions.



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Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, said the term technical climate officers is vague. Heffernan said in response that the technical advisors won’t have any authority, but will only be used as expert opinions for how the state could meet the bill’s climate goal.

Collins’ amendment, which failed 25 to 15, would have removed several lines from the bill that allow agencies in the state to act upon the recommendations by DNREC to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Collins also complained that Democrats were talking over him. Speaker of the House Pete Schwartzkopf called Collins out of order, and Collins apologized.

Heffernan said the bill itself doesn’t do anything by itself, but gets the state to reach net zero emissions through whatever methods necessary work for Delaware.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DISCUSSES PLANS FOR HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

BY SAM HAUT

Legislative Hall may get a Holocaust memorial, according to discussions in the week's Joint Legislative Council. The council, made up of the Democratic and Republican leadership in the Senate and House of Representatives, also agreed to re-establish the Legislative Building Committee so it can oversee a \$23 million expansion of Leg Hall, including a new wing and a parking garage. The Legislative Council oversees two legislative agencies, the Division of Research and the Office of the Controller General.

Dick Carter, chair of the Delaware Heritage Commission and director of communications for the Delaware State Senate, said it was the idea of 12-year-old Elliana Levine to create a memorial for the Holocaust on the grounds of the state capitol.

Elliana, the daughter of Melanie Ross Levin, director of the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy, has been looking for a way to memorialize the genocide of six million European Jews and the role of Delawareans

in that history, Carter said. Carter said the memorial would include pictures of Delawareans who lived through the Holocaust and panels that would give details about the Holocaust. Carter said he isn't sure at this time how much the Holocaust memorial would cost, but did mention they have considered getting funding from a private source.

A similar memorial in Delaware relating to the Supreme Court's decision on the Brown v. Board of Education currently in progress will cost around \$60,000, Carter said. The Holocaust memorial could be placed where the current 9/11 memorial bench is located, near the west front of Legislative Hall.

Speaker of the House Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, asked Carter where the 9/11 memorial bench would be relocated, and Carter said there's a sidewalk that runs across the west front of Legislative Hall where they could move the bench.

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photo credit: Jarek Rutz



*Education*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# SCHOOL OFFICERS, CONSTRUCTION NEEDS FOCUS OF HOUSE COMMITTEE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Bills dealing with school construction, junior ROTC, Department of Education background checks and school resource officers were sent to the House ready list Wednesday by the Education Committee.

**House Bill 169**, sponsored by Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton and committee chair, requires the secretary of education—currently Mark Holodick—to publish and deliver a report to the General Assembly detailing requests for certificates of necessity that are not included in the proposed capital budget.

Certificates of necessity are funding requests by districts, usually for capital projects and deferred maintenance that districts lack the local funds to complete. Sometimes, the certificate of necessity includes a smaller percentage of local share that must be voted by district residents through a referendum. Certificates include reasons why they need the money and must be approved by the state.

The report must include reasons for any rejection and a ranking of the rejected projects by need. It also would include a breakdown of the current and previous five years of state spending via certificate of necessities, as well as priority level (1, 2 or 3) of all approved and rejected applications.

“This legislation will provide an opportunity for more transparency for the members of the Bond Committee along with the members of the General Assembly,” Williams said. “With a billion dollars in deferred maintenance across school districts, this legislation will allow for more information about the current status of buildings throughout our state.”

John Marinucci, executive director of the **Delaware School Boards Association**, said he supports the bill and appreciates the legislature’s effort to ensure transparency with funding.

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**House Bill 163**, also sponsored by Williams, authorizes the Department of Education to issue an initial or continuing license to a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Instructor who has been certified by the US Department of Defense. Williams said this would help the state get more JROTC instructors.

JROTC is a federal program that prepares high school students for leadership roles while making them aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges as American citizens. Many go on to join the National Guard or to college on a ROTC scholarship that includes a stint in the military after graduation.

CLICK TO READ MORE

# LEARNING COLLAB PICKS TWO FINALISTS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative has narrowed the search for an executive director to two finalists after months of appealing for applications and then sifting through more than 100 candidates.

**Dr. Laura Burgos** and **Dr. Edward Ryans** are the finalists for the job, said council member Alethea Smith-Tucker during the June 1 meeting of the collaborative’s governing council meeting.

The **Wilmington Learning Collaborative** is a state agency created in November 2022 to focus on children in nine city elementary schools across Brandywine, Red Clay and Christina school districts.

The executive director will implement the programs the collaborative endorses. The collaborative is expected to try novel ways to empower city students and families, as well as on-the-ground workers, by giving them a voice

in policy making to improve student achievement metrics like test scores, absenteeism and graduation rates. The collaborative also hopes to connect families with social services to address issues such as homelessness, poverty and hunger that can affect education.

Burgos, who lives in Wilmington, has experience in public, nonprofit and private education.

She holds three degrees: a 2000 bachelors in telecommunications from Penn State University; a 2003 master’s in elementary education and teaching from Brooklyn College; and a 2018 doctorate in education leadership from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education. She also earned an advanced certificate in educational administration and supervision from Hunter College in New York in 2007.

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# HERE'S HOW MUCH COVID MONEY DISTRICTS, CHARTERS HAVE SPENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Districts and charters have until Sept. 30, 2024, to spend more than half a billion dollars that was provided for COVID-19 pandemic relief. Delaware received \$637,239,246 in the \$122 billion federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or ESSER Funds. Distributed in three separate rounds, ESSER Funds which were allocated across three separate rounds and part of the American Rescue Plan Act, better known as ARPA.

The first round of funds were distributed in March 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act, and Delaware received \$43,492,752. The second round of funding—part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations, or CRRSA Act—was allocated in December 2020, with Delaware receiving \$182,885,104. In March 2021, the third round gave Delaware \$410,733,965.

Data on how much each district and charter received as well as how they divided the funds and how much money they have remaining, can be found in a portal on the [Department of Education's](#) online [ESSER Financial Transparency Report](#).

Laurisa Schutt, executive director of advocacy group [First State Educate](#), critiqued the fact that it takes half a dozen clicks on the department's website and some practice using the portal for the public to be able to get to the information on how schools spent the enormous amount of money.

Schools divide the funds into a plethora of categories, such as learning loss, technology, mental health, facility repairs, air quality, equitable services, summer learning, sanitation, professional development and more.

The Delaware Department of Education and state schools are waiting for word about whether the federal

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debt deal will affect them. One part of the agreement requires the country clawing back about \$30 billion in unspent money from a COVID relief bill signed by Biden. It's unclear if that includes education money, said a DOE spokeswoman.

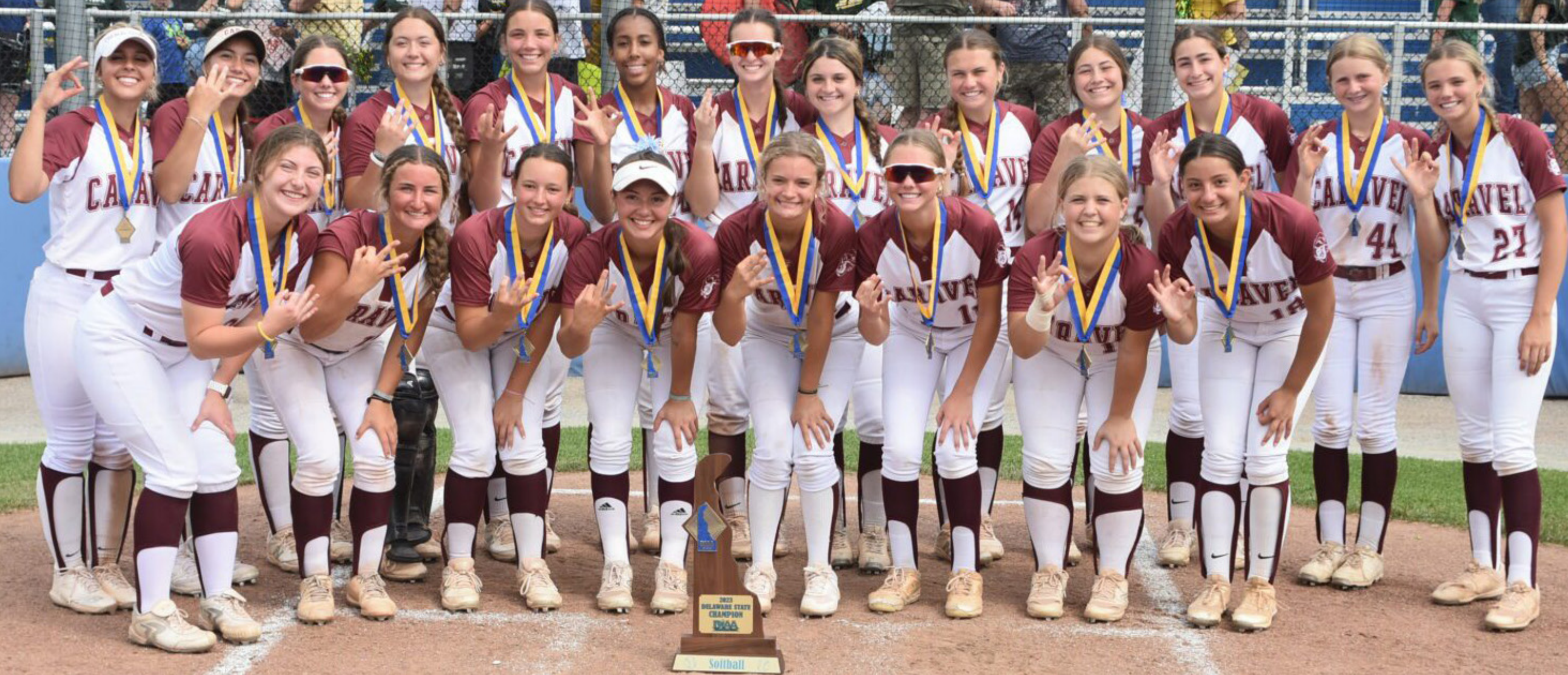
Here's the percentage districts and charters spent of their total pandemic relief allocation, as well as the money they have left to spend:

### Districts

Appoquinimink: 91% of \$13,275,882.90 spent; \$1,145,525.13 remaining. Largest expenditures were \$4.9 million on learning loss and \$3.2 million on educational technology.

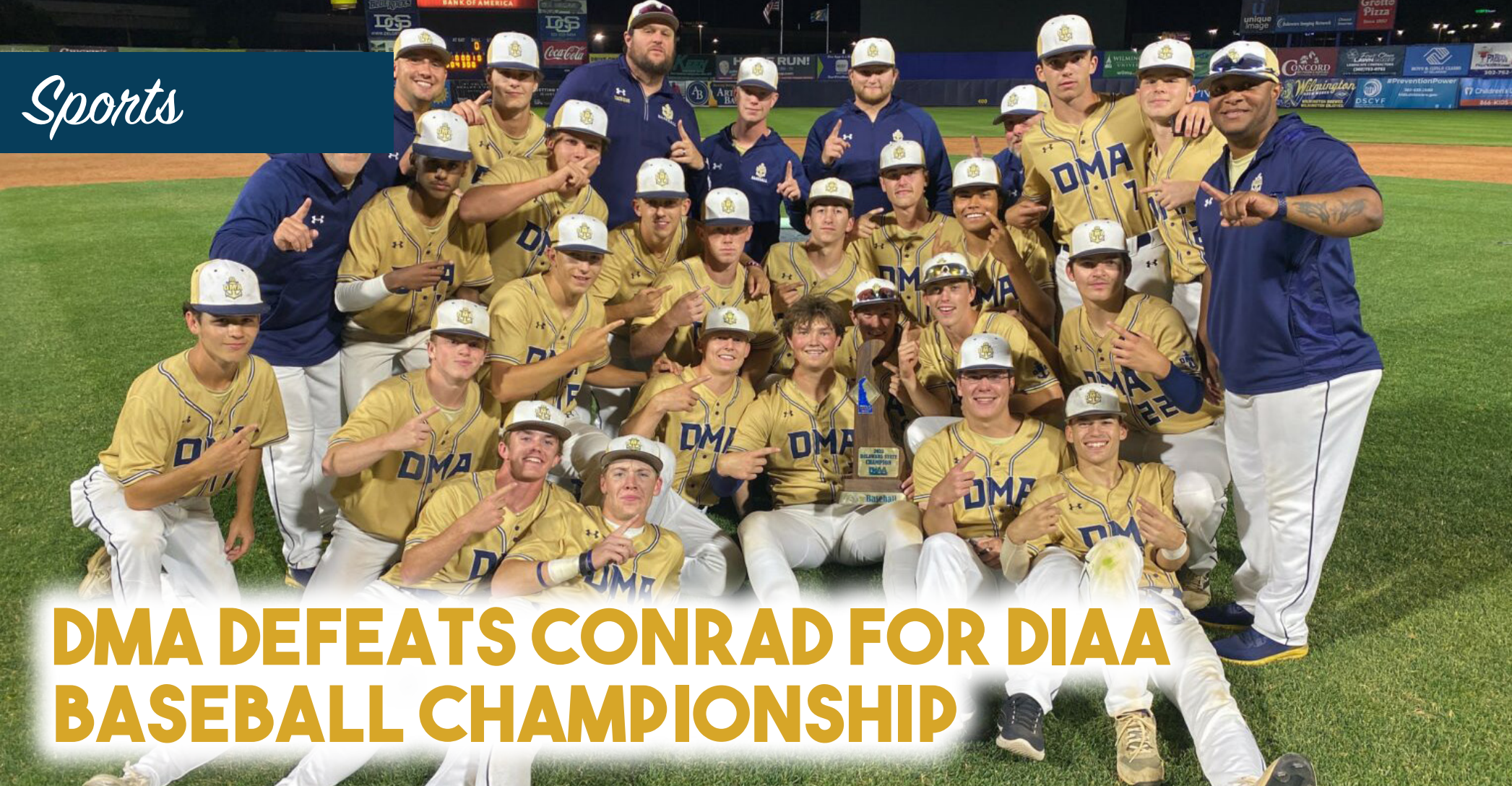
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*Sports*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# DMA DEFEATS CONRAD FOR DIAA BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Delaware Military Seahawks (DMA) defeated the Conrad Red Wolves Saturday night under the Frawley Stadium lights. These two teams are super familiar with each other since they are separated by less than a mile. Since the two schools were essentially built or reopened it created an instant rivalry. You could tell them by the huge crowd last night at Frawley.

DMA had two big innings that helped carry them to the win on the offensive side, but they got great pitching from Drew Simpson on the mound that helped lead to the victory. Simpson threw a complete game, only allowing two hits and one run over seven innings. He had great defense behind him all night that helped keep the Red

Wolves off the basepath. He ended up striking out five batters and walked three, only allowing one earned run.

Offensively, DMA used two big innings which started in the third. After a couple of Conrad errors that loaded the bases for the Seahawks, Tyler August drove a single into center that knocked in Tyler Leech and Nate Golden, giving DMA a 2-0 lead. Simpson followed August with a double that scored Nate Diaz while moving pinch runner Dylan Delcollo to third. Jackson Dorsey then hit a deep fly ball that allowed Delcollo to tag up, giving the Seahawks a 4-0 lead.

The very next inning the Seahawks struck again. Leech was able to reach on an error, followed by a single

from Sean Bogan. Golden moved both runners up with a groundout that put the two runners in scoring position. Diaz then hit a line drive into left field that scored both Leech and Bogan. Conrad then walked August. Simpson again delivered with a fielder's choice to shortstop Matt O'Connor whose only out was to get Simpson which allowed Diaz to score, giving the Seahawks a 7-0 lead.

Conrad did get a run of its own in the top of the sixth inning when Soloman Abdullah doubled to knock in the only run for the Red Wolves.

Simpson and August led DMA with two hits apiece and two RBI each. Diaz added a hit and two RBI also for the Seahawks. Abdullah was the only Red Wolf to get hits (two) off of Simpson; he also had the only RBI.

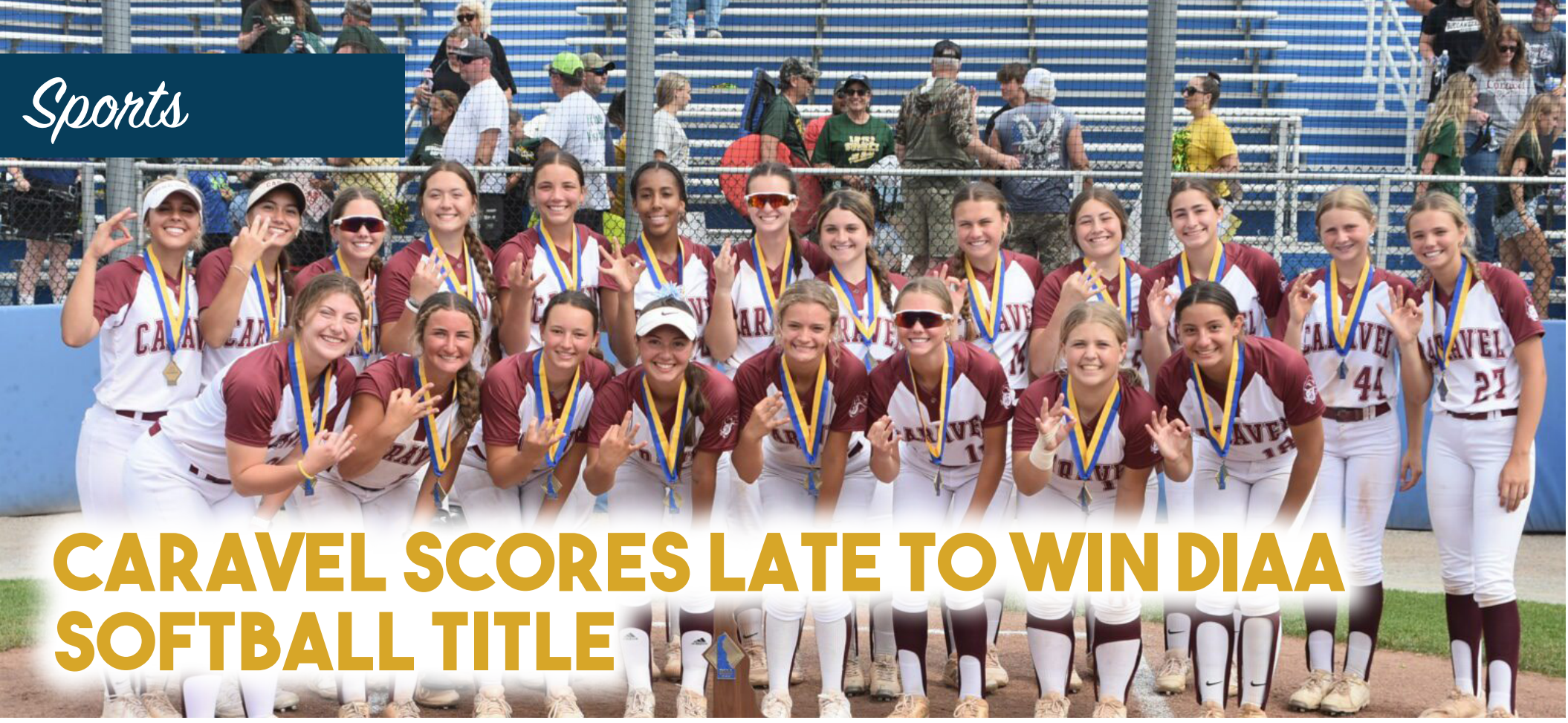


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# CARAVEL SCORES LATE TO WIN DIAA SOFTBALL TITLE

BY GLENN FRAZER

What started out as a pitcher's duel ended up a 7-0 state championship for the Caravel Buccaneers Saturday at the University of Delaware softball field. Through four innings, Indian River's Kinsley Hall was "perfect", retiring all 12 batters she faced. Kasey Xenidis of Caravel was pretty special too, keeping the Indians off the scoreboard, allowing three hits in her five innings of work in a scoreless title game. However, Randy Johnson's Bucs made some adjustments the second time through the order that led to a two-run fifth inning and a five-run sixth frame to secure the school's third consecutive championship.

Zayda Rocke got the Bucs started in the fifth with a one-out flare to right-center to break up the perfect game. Morgan Moxley followed with a "bloop" to

shallow center and Zayda's sister, Leila Rocke, brought them both home with the third single of the inning. Those two runs would prove to be all that starter Xenidis and relief pitcher Morgan Maxwell would need, as they blanked the Indians on four hits. Caravel would add five runs in the bottom of the sixth on singles by Veronica Diomede, Brooke Holdsworth and Zayda Rocke, then Leila Rocke doubled followed by a triple off the bat of Brooklyn Richardson to the right field fence.

Indian River put runners on in each of the first three innings as Macy Blades singled with two outs in the first, Kinsley Hall smacked a one-out single up the middle in the second, and Katie McHale led off the third with a hit but the best IR could do was strand a runner at third base. Fourth year head coach Sara Powell and

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her team advanced to the state championship game for only the second time in school history (they won it all in 1998). The Indians were the only team in the tournament to hold the explosive Buccaneer offense to single digits in runs (seven) on eight hits.

The Rocke sisters paced Caravel with two hits each. Leila's double and Richardson's triple were the only extra base hits in the game.

The Bucs secured the program's record 13th state title and the fifth under Randy Johnson. Caravel had a two-year, 31-game win streak against "in state" competition until they lost to IR 3-2 in the final regular season game on May 17.





# SALESIANUM RUNS LEAD TO STATE LACROSSE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY JASON WINCHELL

It would take all your fingers and toes to count the number of times Salesianum has been in the DIAA lacrosse state championship game (18, to be exact), but few have gone the way of the one the Sals played Saturday at Dover High School against perennial rival Cape Henlopen. The Sals, the top-seeded team in the bracket, found themselves down by a pair, 10-8, after the Vikings' Joseph Coveleski scored in the first minute of the fourth, but there was a long way to go, and Salesianum knew it.

Never mind the turnover after the Sals won the faceoff. They got the ball back and embarked on a patient possession, which paid dividends when Luca Pompeii skipped a shot past Cape goalie Mason Trench with 9:09 to go. That seemed to provide a spark for the Sals, and for their faithful who—along with the Cape

crowd— filled the grandstand at Dover Stadium.

A faceoff win led to another long Sals possession. They missed on a few attempts, but with 7:42 on the clock, Ryan Cunningham bounced in a goal to tie the score. It was set up by Noah Driggs, who positioned himself behind the net and found Cunningham cutting in front. This was Driggs' first game of the season after being cleared following a knee injury.

A dropped pass by the Vikings gave the ball back to the Sals with six and a half minutes remaining. Feeding off the crowd and their recent success, they went to work. Rowyn Nurry and Cunningham worked out of the X position, and Cunningham saw Chase Black coming in from Trench's left. Black's low laser found the net, and the Sals had the lead for the first time since five minutes into the third quarter.

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# MIDDLETOWN DEFEATS APPO FOR DI GIRLS' SOCCER TITLE

BY JASON WINCHELL

Gabby Riley scored three times and that was more than enough for her Middletown Cavaliers girls' soccer team, who went on to a 4-2 victory over Appoquinimink in the DIAA Division I state championship match on Friday night at Delaware State University. It was the second title for the Cavs, who also won in 2017.

Middletown, the top seed, took down district rival Appo, who was the second seed. MHS finished the season 15-2-1, including a 1-0 win over the Jaguars in overtime on May 3.

The Jaguars scored first in front of a large crowd at Alumni Stadium on a comfortable night. In the 25th minute, Sydney Donovan let go of a seed from about 30 yards, finding the upper 90 that was out of reach of Middletown keeper Ava Ripanti.

It didn't take long for the Cavaliers to equalize and Lily Holcroft's goal in the 27th got them going. Holcroft took advantage of a corner kick, getting a shot past Jags goalkeeper Isabella Mazzone.

Both teams played plenty of low-scoring games throughout the 2023 season, but this would not be one of them. In fact, Middletown needed just two more minutes to take the lead. Riley got her first, sending a left-footed shot into the far side. It was more Riley in the 33rd, and again hitting the far post on the other side to make it 3-1.

The Cavaliers' defense kept the Jaguars away from Ripanti for the rest of the first half, but they had some opportunities in the second on corner kicks. A shot early on hit the underside of the crossbar but stayed out,



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and the Cavs breathed a sigh of relief. Ten minutes after that, however, another Appo corner was directed off the head of Josie Parson and under the crossbar, cutting the deficit to one. But Middletown was determined to keep the Jaguars out of the middle of the field in front of Ripanti. They limited the Jags' chances, and Riley added some insurance in the 72nd, getting her hat trick. Appoquinimink was not able to threaten again.

Appo ended up 14-4 overall, reaching its first final.





# ARCHMERE DOMINATES IN GIRLS' SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The No. 4 seed Archmere Auks upset the top two seeds to win the 2023 DIAA DII girls' soccer state championship. After upsetting the No. 1 seed Caravel on May 31, the Auks kept on their magical run as they beat the No. 2 seed Saint Mark's for their first state championship title in girls soccer.

Archmere won its first state championship for girls soccer with a 6-1 victory over the reigning champs Saint Mark's in dominant fashion. The Auks scored the first three goals of the game before Saint Mark's got on the board.

Emma Gioffre scored the first goal off a nice kick from about 15 yards out that went right over the hand of the Saint Mark's goalkeeper Marissa Cirillo in the top left corner. A few minutes later, Marina Mahon sent a great

centering pass in front of the goal as Julianna Witherell headed in for the goal. Witherell then scored her second goal as she found herself in front of the net as a loose ball found her foot knocking it in the back of the net.

Saint Mark's then answered with a goal of its own. Hailey Short was on the receiving end of a great through ball that hit her in stride as she shot it right past the Archmere goalkeeper Gabriela Fernandez.

Archmere then went on another three-goal run to take the commanding 6-1 lead which would prove to be the final score and the last of the scoring for the game.

Gioffre set up a free kick right outside the 18-yard box. Saint Mark's keeper Cirillo was able to block the shot, but the rebound bounced right in front of her.

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# 2023 BLUE GOLD BASEBALL GAME AND ROSTERS ANNOUNCED

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Blue Gold All Star baseball game was set for June 7, at 6 p.m. at Frawley Stadium. The game was live streamed [HERE](#). During the game, the All State Awards for first team, second team and honorable mention were given out at the start of the game. See below for the rosters for both teams including coaches. Notable players to look for:

- Jaryn Sample: Sussex Tech 1st Team All State
- T. J. Morris: Sussex Central 1st Team All State
- James Breen: St. Georges 2nd Team All State
- Donovan Brooks: St. Georges 2nd Team All State
- Nick Cox: Cape Henlopen 2nd Team All State
- Kayden Shockley: Laurel Honorable Mention
- Bobby Stewart: St. Georges Honorable Mention
- Timothy Hitchcock: Cape Henlopen Honorable Mention
- Ben Cordrey: Indian River Honorable Mention
- Chase Fleming (1B/P): Appoquinimink Honorable Mention
- Jacob Macey: Smyrna Honorable Mention
- Roman Keith: Indian River Honorable Mention
- Andrew Callaway: Delmar Honorable Mention

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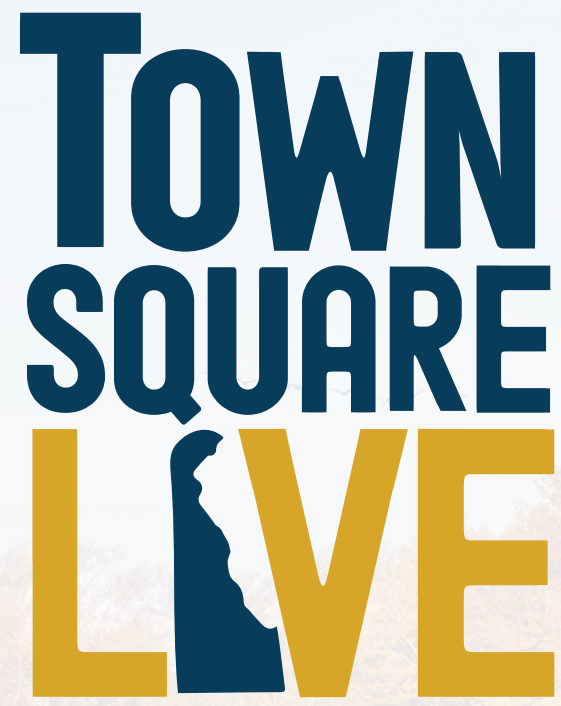
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