

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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photo link: Brandywine Creek State Park



Contents

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Community | 3 |
| Business | 11 |
| Food & Dining | 13 |
| Government | 16 |
| Education..... | 19 |
| Sports | 25 |
| Stay Connected | 29 |



Tatnall Grad Creates Bags for Pickleball



Vehicle Inspections to Use More Onboard Diagnostics



Conrad's Games a Favorite Experience

photo link: Longwood Gardens



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



NEW TOWER HILL HEAD: ADMIN, MOM, CHEF, POET, STORYTELLER

BY JAREK RUTZ

Tower Hill's new head of school Sarah Baker believes her job is to be the chief storyteller of the Wilmington private college preparatory school.

"There's a great quote by C.S. Lewis, 'We read to know we are not alone,' and I believe that," she said.

Baker, who graduated from Duke University with a degree in history and a minor in Latin and developmental psychology, said her passion throughout her time as an educator has been teaching students how to write.

"I was particularly connected to the opportunities for self-expression that kids had in the English classroom," she said. In 2010, Baker earned her master's of education from the University of Pennsylvania.

Books are a huge part of Baker's life, and she's brought that love for literature into her household with her husband Scott, her 5-year-old son Cover and her 2-year-old daughter Alice. Their lives revolve around food, books and physical activity, she said.

"We read with the children every day for long periods of time and our son is really starting to be able to read himself which is exciting."

The family cooks together and loves going to farmers markets or to the Italian market in Philadelphia, where Baker roamed as a child.

"We gather up what we need to make things, and my son loves to throw dinner parties with me, which is just the coolest thing," she said.

Baker typically finishes a book a week, but has a constant rotation of a fiction book, a nonfiction piece and a food memoir, which she said is her favorite to read.

"Writing food memoirs is actually an elective course I taught here at Tower Hill, where kids wrote their own food memoirs and at the end of the course finished multi-chapter works," she said. "They were just remarkable for what they were expressing with themselves and their families by talking about their food traditions."

When reading nonfiction, she tends to pick books that deal with history or ones that are related to her practice as an educational leader. Baker's favorite fictional author is Alice Monroe.

"The way she talks about the experience of a woman, particularly the life phases of many of the women in her stories, is meditative for me to read," she said. "I used to read them sometimes to better understand my mom and now I read them to better understand myself."

She's such a reader that she even has her rotation of books in her email signature. Right now it reads: "Just Read: Stolen Focus by Johann Hari. Reading Now: Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver. Reading Next: Uncommon Sense Teaching by Barbara Oakley."

Baker wants to help students to find and explore what absorbs and thrills them. "And we want to make sure that they don't define themselves too early," she said. "It's important that they have room to surprise themselves and to continue to branch out."

Baker used to write poetry. "For some reason I'm in a bit of a dry spell with poetry," she said, "but right now my creativity is really coming through in my cooking."

Baker said her journey in education started when she went to [Episcopal Academy](#) in Newton, PA, from kindergarten through 12th grade.

"I learned the intimacy of a small community and the impact they have on a student's sense of self-worth, value and confidence," she said.

Part of her experience includes working at Episcopal Academy for seven years, serving as the dean and later chair of upper school English. She's also taught English for several years.

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TREE-CLIMBING SCHOOL OFFERS MENTAL, PHYSICAL CHALLENGES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Winterthur is helping folks channel their adventurous side this week with the state’s first tree-climbing school. In a culmination of mental fortitude meets physical endurance, the three-day event, ending Wednesday, will train 27 people to safely climb trees, while also teaching the basics of proper pruning techniques. Pruning is a practice involving the selective removal of certain parts of a plant, such as branches, buds or roots.

The climbers are outside in the heat—and Canadian wildfire smoke—from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

“I think one challenge is just staying hydrated on a tree,” said Kadine Mohomed, a Bear resident who works as a materials scientist at **W.L. Gore** in Maryland. “We don’t usually take our water up with us, and hydration and making sure you get those electrolytes before being

up there is important.”

The three-day course is a new cooperative program between **University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, Penn State Extension** and **Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library**.

“This is the only class like it in the country because there’s climbing schools, but most of them are, ‘Here’s how you do it, now go home and do it.’” said James Savage, the lead instructor. “We show you how to climb, watch you and help you do it and show you what you’re doing wrong.”

Savage is an assistant professor of arboriculture at Penn State University. The class he teaches is for arborists, landscapers, new or inexperienced climbers and others who work in and around trees.

“It’s a unique educational experience for anybody who

shows up,” he said. “It’s really different because we have people that have never climbed trees. They show up and we give them equipment. By tomorrow at noon, they should be going to the top of a 60- or 70-foot tree, working out the branches safely and able to get back to the ground.”

This is the sixth class Savage has taught this summer, and the first in Delaware. He plans on teaching more in Delaware in the future, specifically in the south to attract participants from Maryland and Virginia.

“We had one in York [Pennsylvania] four weeks ago, and we actually had people from Illinois, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey,” he said. “I mean we have people from all over the country that fly in for the week to do this.” A small group of participants in the inaugural school were from Washington, D.C.

“We have companies that send their new employees to teach them how to do it because it might be part of their job and it helps with production,” Savage said. “At the end, they’re going to know if they like climbing.... It takes skills that 99.99999% of the population do not want or care about, but it’s a very unique skill to know how to do.”

His passion for trees has taken him around the world, teaching classes and doing research in Switzerland, Italy, France, Germany, Mexico, Canada and more.

“It’s weird...I’ve made a life out of climbing trees,” he said. “I didn’t plan on it, but it happened.”

The course covers tree terminology, tree removal, safety and safe climbing practices, equipment and use of hand tools, tree disease and insect diagnosis as well as culture and pruning.

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OUR GUIDE TO DELAWARE STATE FAIR

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Delaware State Fair returns Thursday, with something for everyone: Rides, livestock shows, carnival games, blue ribbon food competitions, a circus, racing pigs, a camel show, a magic show, concerts—and people watching. It adds up to more than 200 hours of entertainment in a single day—not including the carnival or grandstand concerts, said Danny Aguilar, assistant general manager and director of marketing.

“We’ve got our mobile app that we’re bringing back and we strongly encourage folks to download the mobile app and look at the schedule ahead of time because there’s so many activities,” Aguilar said.

The fair will run through July 29 at the State Fairgrounds in Harrington. The first fair there was held in 1920 and was known as the Kent and Sussex County

Fair. The event became the Delaware State Fair in 1962.

Find a thorough itinerary of every day’s events [HERE](#).

To assure safety, the fair will add metal detectors at the entrance, Aguilar said. “That’s basically just an enhancement to our existing prohibition on weapons,” he said, “so we’ll be screening folks, just looking to add that element to the security side.”

WEATHER

Fair-goers can expect good weather. According to the [National Weather Service](#), a summer shower might hit here and there, but the forecast calls for less than 50% chance of precipitation. Highs are forecast just below 90 degrees with the nighttime low falling to around 70.

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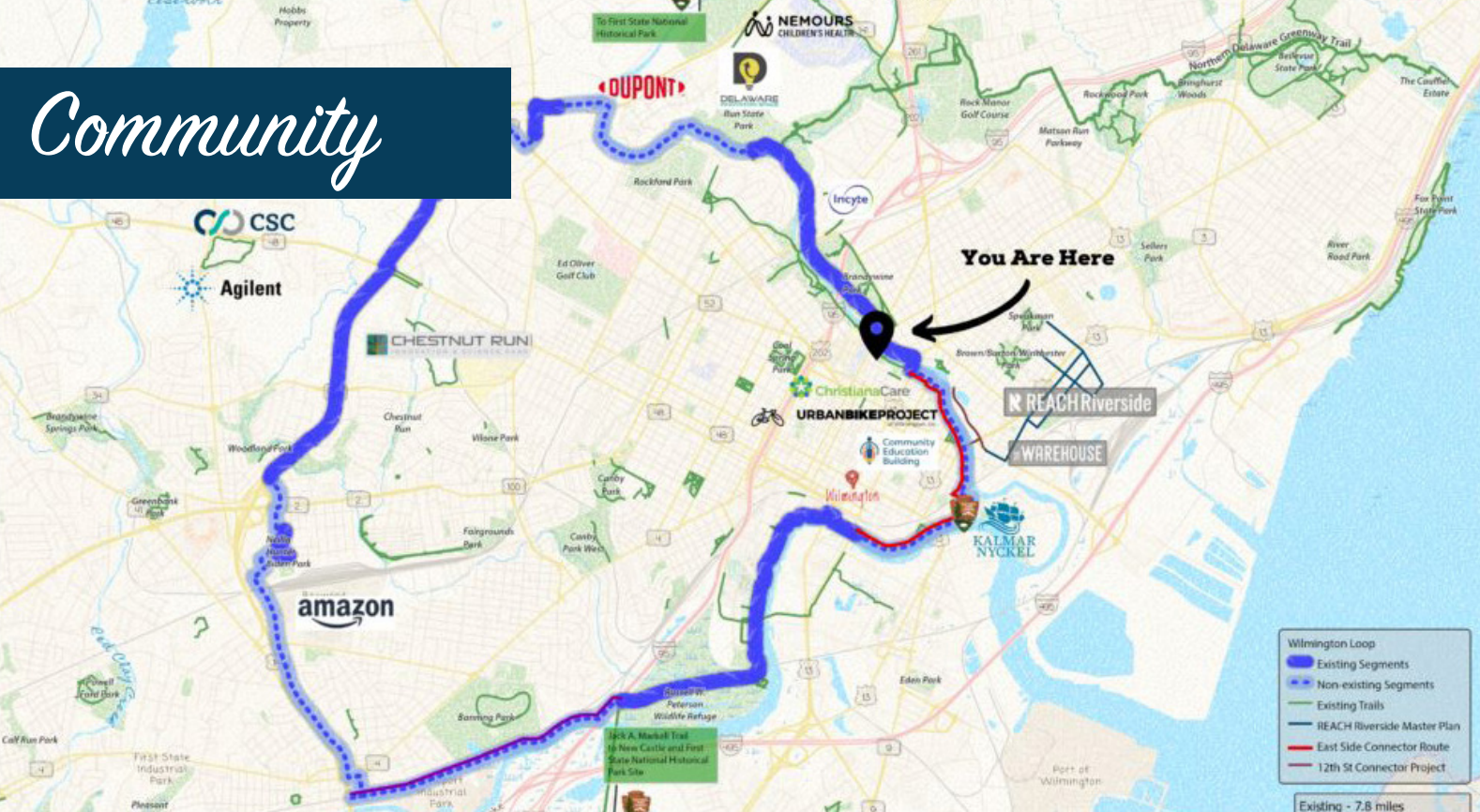
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LOOP COALITION: FINISH WALKABLE BIKE TRAIL AROUND WILMINGTON

National Heritage sites, state and local parks and hundreds of thousands of people with great jobs, restaurants and cultural attractions, the coalition said in a press release. Johnson pointed to the Atlanta Beltway in Atlanta, Georgia, the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, SC, and the Arlington Loop in Arlington, VA, all of which run through city, park and natural lands.

“You look at any small, big or medium-sized city that has done this, and it’s changed the whole benefit of accessibility around the city,” said Johnson, who is an avid biker and runner. No state in the region offers such an amenity, the coalition said.

Completing the loop would require building three links: one between Newport and Kirkwood Highway; one through Rockford Park; and a 2.1-mile piece through Wilmington’s East Side, where transformation already is taking place with the building of new neighborhoods in what had been a blighted area. The East Side Connector would link the Brandywine and Christina River trails, both of which end on the East Side, giving every neighborhood in and bordering the city safe and easy access resources and recreation, Johnson said.

It’s an idea that Logan Herring Sr., chief executive officer of the **WRK Group**, says speaks real truth to the issue of community investments and connections. His group is building the new East Side houses and operates the Teen Warehouse.

“Transportation is one of the biggest barriers to access resources,” Herring said from Boston, where he was attending a conference. “So if we’re going to think about innovative ways of connecting the community so things aren’t seen as ‘best for them and it’s not for me,’ one of the simplest ways to do it is through a mode of transportation.”

“That’s not necessarily a bus line that you have to walk blocks to get to and so forth. You know, everybody can hop on a bicycle or walk, and I believe—and it’s very optimistic—but I believe that it’s possible.”

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BY BETSY PRICE

A group of business, community and government leaders would like to see several New Castle County walkable bike trails connected to become a seamless 16-mile **Wilmington Loop**. Doing so, says leaders of the coalition, would transform the city’s economy and quality of life because it would:

- Connect communities, jobs, schools, cultural institutions and state and national parks.
- Create safe paths for people to walk or bike for recreation or to get to work.
- Enhance and remove barriers for isolated and underserved neighborhoods.
- Encourage direct economic development in the form of stores, restaurants, offices, homes and entertainment venues along the path.
- Become the kind of destination amenity that attracts residents and corporations to the area.

“It would change the whole dynamic,” said Scott Johnson, leader of the Wilmington Loop Coalition and a developer with **Johnson Commercial Real Estate**.

A Wilmington Loop would tie together the Northern Delaware Greenway Trail, the Jack Markell Trail, the cities of Wilmington, Newport and New Castle, multiple



FIVE SELECTED FOR DELAWARE WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

STAFF WRITER

An advocate fighting child abuse, an economist who pushes financial education, Delaware's first Black female lawyer, the former head of the state's Children's And Families program and a physical therapist who helped make the University of Delaware's program No. 1 in the nation will be inducted into the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame. Gov. John Carney announced the selections Monday:

- Patricia Dailey Lewis, current chief executive officer of the Beau Biden Foundation and former deputy attorney general with the Delaware Department of Justice.
- Bonnie Meszaros, assistant professor of economics at the University of Delaware, associate director of the UD Center for Economics Education and Entrepreneurship and a champion for personal finance education in Delaware schools.

- Paulette Sullivan Moore, Delaware's first African American female lawyer, focusing largely on the needs of Domestic Violence victims and survivors. She also was the New Castle County Recorder of Deeds from 1990–1994.
- Leslie Newman, former CEO of Children and Families First. She also served as chairperson for the Delaware Community Foundation's COVID-19 grant award committee.
- Lynn Snyder-Mackler, a physical therapist and sports medicine researcher who helped make UD's Physical Therapy Graduate Program the top-ranked program in the country.

They were chosen from 50 applications received by the Office of Women's Advancement and Advocacy and the Delaware Women's Hall of Fame Committee.

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“These remarkable women are dedicated to our community and I’m honored to recognize their hard work,” Carney said in a press release. “These honorees serve as an inspiration for all Delawareans.”

The Hall of Fame of Delaware Women was established in 1981. Members represent a variety of professional fields and backgrounds, including artists, athletes, community advocates, military personnel, public servants and scientists. Nominees are only eligible if they have made an important and lasting impact upon the lives of Delawareans and resided in the state for at least 10 years.

Inductees will be recognized at an Oct. 4, ceremony. See their full biographies [HERE](#).





NC POLICE ISSUE WARNING ABOUT TIKTOK DOOR KICKING CHALLENGE

STAFF WRITER

New Castle County Police are warning home owners about a new TikTok youthquake trend: kicking the front doors of houses and running. The police said they are investigating three incidents in Brennan Estate Townhouses that involved someone kicking residential doors. On July 12, the door to one occupied home was kicked in, causing damage.

The police division said in a press release that it is aware of a new TikTok challenge that involves people punching or kicking someone’s door and then running away, all while documenting the incident on social media. The challenge is dangerous and will result in criminal charges, the police said.

Surveillance video from Brennan Estates showed youths kicking doors and immediately fleeing on foot and on bicycles. Officers are investigating and released two surveillance images to seek the public’s assistance. If you recognize the subjects, please contact the New Castle County Division of Police. Criminal Investigations Unit can be called at 302-395-8110 and New Castle County Division of Police non-emergency number is 302-573-2800. The department also can be contacted through their Facebook page “New Castle County Police.”



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DEL. GUN ADVOCATE GROUPS FURIOUS OVER STATE FAIR WEAPONS BAN

BY JAREK RUTZ

Gun owners and gun rights advocates are upset about a no-gun policy at the Delaware State Fair, even though the policy has been in place for decades. The addition of weapon detectors and screening devices at the fair entrance this year seemed to raise awareness of the policy.

“The Delaware State Fair is now officially anti-gun,” read a statement from the Delaware State Sportsmen’s Association.

“You’re making the place unsafe by declaring gun-free zones, so much like other places that have been declared gun-free zones, people who are intent on doing harm use that as an indicator of where they can go and do harm,” said Jeff Hague, president of the Sportsmen’s Association. “They tend to shy away from places where there might be a firearm for people to protect themselves.”

The fair kicks off Thursday and runs through July 29. “We’ve had a prohibition on weapons and I have been

here for 17 years and it’s been over 20 years that I can remember,” said Danny Aguilar, assistant general manager and director of marketing for the fair. “We’ve always had a prohibition on weapons coming in, so this is nothing new.” The detectors and screening devices simply enhance the prohibition and add an element of security, Aguilar has said.

Hague said the ban on guns excludes and isolates thousands of Delawareans.

“They’re saying that regardless of your training, your background, or the fact that you’re permitted to carry a concealed firearm or weapon in the state of Delaware or by the federal government,” Hague said, “you’re not considered trustworthy and safe on the state’s fair-ground with a firearm.”

Plenty of community members in the Delaware Gun Rights Facebook group, which has more than 23,311 members, have said they are planning on boycotting the fair. Several are predicting the fair’s attendance will take a big hit because patrons aren’t allowed to bring guns. Last year, the fair said it had 299,511 people attend.



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photo link: Longwood Gardens



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware native Wendee Lunt had worked for and with a Who's Who of luxury consumer goods companies before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. But when Swarovski closed her division, the Tatnall School graduate decided she didn't want to work for another multibillion dollar company. She wanted to take all the experience and relationships she had and build something for herself. But what? To help her think through that, she hired a life coach.

"You really light up when you talk about pickleball," the coach told her in one session. "You should consider this."

Lunt did. The result: A line of sports bags designed to help pickleball players organize their gear and personal belongings to get on the court faster and play in style.

TATNALL GRAD CREATES LINE OF STYLISH, USEFUL PICKLEBALL BAGS

Both the DuPont County Club and the Wilmington Country Club stock her Lighthouse Sports bags.

Lunt put to use the knowledge she'd picked up as a global vice president for Swarovski, vice president of licensing for Tumi luggage, chief marketing officer for Biaggi luggage, vice president of licensing for Judith Leiber, director of worldwide marketing for Movado Group Watches, director of business development for Coach and director of international merchandising for Tiffany & Co.

"I've never really done the same thing twice," she said.

It's not a future she could have predicted to herself, but she's always been sporty. Lunt is the daughter of Will and Nancy Huntzinger. He was the first in his family to earn a college degree, and ultimately a doctorate, and was a principal at A.I. du Pont High School. He's now deceased and her mom now lives in Glen Mills, PA.

Wendee, a self-described math nerd, skipped second grade. She played three sports in high school: tennis, field hockey and lacrosse. She earned a bachelor of arts from Dartmouth College and now lives with her family in northern New Jersey.

She couldn't have picked a better growth market. In the last year, 36.9 million people are said to be playing the game, with another 5 million joining sport each year. That's a lot of bags. Up and down Delaware, communities can't build courts—which are smaller than tennis courts—fast enough.

Lunt's offerings benefit from her years in helping design and market luggage and consumer bags, as well as her experience playing tennis since she was 12, paddle tennis for 20 years and pickleball for six years. One example: Her backpack is engineered so the racquet sits at an angle, with the handle extending over a shoulder.

"No one wants the handle hitting you in the neck," she said.

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photo by Engin Akyurt / Pexels



Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BY PAM GEORGE

When it comes to Delaware’s dining scene, there is rarely a slow news day and that’s been particularly true this summer. There are new restaurants in the works, and plenty of opportunities to try new foods.

MORE MEXICAN

In fall, Greg Vogely, owner of two Delaware **Drip Café** locations, plans to open Roja & Verde Taqueria next to the Newark Drip Café on North College Avenue. Vogeley named the newcomer for red and green salsas, all made from scratch. He will also feature freshly pressed flour and corn tortillas, two kinds of tamales and taquitos. Customers will be able to order individual items or make a platter with refried black beans and rice. There are no plans to sell alcohol.

Making the jump from French toast to tamales isn’t a stretch for Vogeley. His family has a longtime passion for Mexican food.

MORE MEXICAN RESTAURANTS HEADED TO NEWARK, DOVER

“We have even eaten Mexican food on the Fourth of July—every birthday, every celebration,” he said.

But that changed after tasting Maria Gonzalez’s staff meals at Drip Café. The prep cook’s cuisine is so impressive that no one else could compare. Gonzalez inspired Roja & Verde and is on the team.

To the south, Dover is the next stop for the **Burrito-Bar** Tex-Mex franchise. The first location opened in Toronto in 2005 as **BarBurrito**, and the chain quickly spread across Canada. There are more than 200 locations. BurritoBar will be in Capital Station Shopping Center, which replaced the Playtex plant on Route 13.

BRUNCH STILL BIG AT BEACH

Eggcellent in downtown Lewes is opening a second location on the Coastal Highway in the space formerly occupied by Fork + Flask and Nage. Outlet Liquors and an expanded Touch of Italy are also in the center.

Eggcellent owners Elina Kamalova and her husband, Ibo Sen, opened the Lewes restaurant in June 2020 in the building many still call the old **Café Azafran**. Now the Mediterranean-influenced restaurant is in Rehoboth Beach. However, owner Richard Steele also has **Olive & Oats by Azafran**, which is an olive’s throw from Eggcellent in Lewes.

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE



BODHI KITCHEN OPENS IN REHOBOTH; MY SISTER'S FAULT REOPENS

BY PAM GEORGE

Right on schedule, **Bodhi Kitchen** opened this week in downtown Rehoboth. This is the second new project for the culinary minds behind **Drift**, and it seems as though Bodhi will make a similar splash in the coastal resort town.

There's no missing the theme. Cocktails sport names like Happy Buddha, East Meets West and Quiet Meditation, and the menu features noodles and rice dishes, dim sum (soup dumplings and pork belly steamed buns), lettuce wraps and Southern Thai fried chicken. The price point is \$12-\$15 for small plates; \$7-\$15 for dim sum; and \$18-\$29 for noodle/rice dishes and large plates.

ANOTHER COUP FOR MILFORD

My Sister's Fault has reopened after a two-month expansion and renovation. Owners—and sisters—Angie and Rous Robles purchased the building on SW Front Street, where they'd rented space for five years. (The

location was once home to the Milford Chronicle). The restaurant can now properly showcase the sweet and savory sides of the sisters, who moved to Delaware from Puerto Rico in 2009 and opened the bakery in 2017.

Since then, the business has received numerous awards, and last year, My Sister's Fault received an EDGE Grant from the Delaware Division of Small Business to purchase new equipment for custom cake orders, hire additional staff and extend operating hours for special events.

The fresh interior includes the work of artist Nadia Zychal, whose trompe l'oeil also graces the walls of nearby Benvenuto, and much of the wall décor was gifts from customers. The redesign also includes a fun kids' picnic table.

Empanadas remain the Robles' claim to fame, but you'll also find platters with rice, such as pork chops or shredded pork shoulder. The menu includes Cubano

sandwiches, breakfast dishes and, of course, such sweets as guava cake, tres leches and cream cheese flan. Don't be surprised if some dishes are creative takes on the traditional. Nutella empanada, anyone?

While the staff gets accustomed to the larger digs, My Sister's Fault recommends online ordering [HERE](#).

SPECIAL DELIVERY

Washington, D.C., natives know all about **Lebanese Taverna**, which also has locations in Arlington, McLean and Baltimore. Now beach residents can see what all the buzz is about.

During the pandemic, the Middle Eastern restaurant group started a neighborhood delivery service, including stops at the beaches. It was so popular that the trips resumed. On Friday, July 21, the truck will come to Lewes, Rehoboth and Bethany Beach. Order [online](#) in advance and show up at the designated time to pick up your meals. For instance, the Lewes delivery is to St. Jude the Apostle Church parking lot off Route 1 near the Nassau bridge.

When the truck pulls in, you'll see everyone streaming from their cars like kids around an ice cream truck. It is genuinely that good.

SUMMERS SIPS IN THE GARDEN

The Delaware Restaurant Association's **Women of Hospitality** initiative hosted an industry networking event at **Bardea Garden** on July 18. The garden is between Bardea Food & Drink and Bardea Steak in downtown Wilmington.

The ancillary events lead up to the **Women of Hospitality Conference** on Nov. 8 at The Queen Theatre in Wilmington.

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photo link: Town of Middletown, DE



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



WILM. CITY COUNCIL ADAMANTLY REFUSES TO CENSURE OLIVER

BY JAREK RUTZ

A resolution to censure Wilmington councilwoman Zanthia Oliver was slammed by city council members in the group’s meeting June 13, losing by a vote of 10 to 2.

Resolution 0333, sponsored by Councilwoman Shané Darby, was a public censure of councilmember Oliver, following the public reprimand issued in April by the city of Wilmington Ethics Commission.

“I have already come in front of the ethics committee and this has been discussed and it has been handled, and this is all I have to say” Oliver said. “This committee gave me my reprimand and I’ve accepted it and I’m done with this conversation.”

Oliver was given a public reprimand by the city’s ethics commission after voting during a previous meeting to allocate \$200,000 to her brother’s nonprofit. Norman Oliver’s organization, **Our Youth, Inc.**, offers physical and educational services for children in New Castle County to help them stay on the right path and set them up for success in their future endeavors.

According to the Wilmington Ethics Commission’s **public reprimand**, the councilwoman voted in 2020 for a 196-page resolution which laid out numerous beneficiaries of different grants, one being her brother’s group. No one on the council argued that Oliver’s actions weren’t wrong, but the strong majority said that the situation has already been handled and Oliver has been through enough public humiliation and punishment.

Darby said she wanted to file her resolution to censure sooner. “Back in April, I did request for this but I really can’t control the timeline of the law department and when they were going to be able to produce it and then put it on the council agenda,” she said. “I wanted it to be in the same timeframe but it was out of my control.”

Darby said there are so many obstacles in the way of holding city council members accountable when they do things that are unethical, that the behavior will continue.

“I can’t be fired. I can’t really be removed,” she said. “The only thing that can happen is for me to resign or people not to vote me in the next session.” The city’s funds were mishandled which brought harm to the community, she said.

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STATE VEHICLE INSPECTIONS TO USE MORE ONBOARD DIAGNOSTICS

BY BETSY PRICE

Starting Aug. 14, Delaware vehicle inspection rules change to require the use of onboard diagnostics more often. The state will continue to require a curb idle and gas cap test in models from 1995 and before.

The Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles says the revised inspection and maintenance regulations are designed to help reduce emissions and improve air quality. The state has more than 1 million registered vehicles, with 323,576 in Sussex County alone.

Vehicle emissions have been a topic of concern in recent months as the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Economic Controls creates regulations that will increase the number of electric vehicles being sold in the state until 2035, when gasoline-powered vehicles will be outlawed. Many groups oppose the regulations.

The onboard diagnostic testing, referred to by the state as OBD-II testing, uses a handheld computer reader that will be familiar to people with cars made since 1996. A technician will use the reader to plug into the vehicle's electronic system, often via a port easily accessible under the dashboard near the steering wheel, to check for such things as whether the malfunction indicator light is working, specific diagnostic trouble codes, emission-related malfunctions and more.

Vehicle inspections will continue to be done at DMV locations in Delaware City, Wilmington, Georgetown and Dover.

Residents of Sussex County—Delaware's largest county—were warned in a DMV press release to give themselves extra time for registration renewal, particularly if they believe their vehicle will need repair under the new regulations.

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Summer Nights
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Unwind by the Brandywine.

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Hagley

photo credit: William Penn High School

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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



LEARNING COLLAB SETS \$10 MILLION PRELIM. BUDGET

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative has proposed a way to spend the \$10 million it will get from the state next year as the effort to improve educational and societal outcomes for the Wilmington students ramps up.

The group’s governing council voted to approve the budget Tuesday night and it will now head to the Department of Education for approval before becoming official.

WLC’S BUDGET

The largest allocation is \$5 million, or 50% of the budget, for educational programs. These can include new curricula or books.

“Keep in mind that each of the schools will be developing their own kind of turnaround plans or their own working school plans,” said councilwoman Alethea Smith-Tucker, who’s a board member in Christina. “This is money directly allocated to go into educational programming, and that should be the highest expenditure—money toward the kids,” she said.

Three line items distribute \$1 million, or 10% of the budget, each. Those are employee salaries, payroll taxes and benefits, and wraparound services for children and families. Wraparound services focus on filling the needs of a student that a school day doesn’t. They include programs like before- and after-school, summer programs, interventions, tutoring, wellness centers, child care and other social services.

The next largest budget item is outreach initiatives, which will take up 5% of the budget, or \$500,000. These initiatives could be town halls and meet-and-greets for community engagement or connecting with external partners.

Consulting and contracting services will cost \$450,000, or 4.5% of next year’s budget. An example of this line item is the learning collab contracting Delaware State University to help with their executive director search. Other purchases that would fall under this category would be if a school contracts a tutoring service.

AMENDMENT

The Collaborative, which was created with the November 2022 signing of a memorandum of understanding, involves nine city elementary schools from Brandywine, Christina and Red Clay school districts.

Its governing council was not filled until February of this year, so the group is seeking an amendment to extend the planning period, which was supposed to end with the 2022-2023 school year.

Planning was supposed to be the time the governing council would be formed and an executive director hired, with needs such as root-cause assessments conducted at each school and more. The three participating districts will vote in their August board meetings whether to amend the signed agreement to extend the planning period. All three boards were presented with the amendment this month.

Laura Burgos, who has been offered the job of executive director, will be working with the districts and schools to help implement the initiatives the collaborative spends money on.

“What we discovered was that because the full council was not seated until February, it was impossible to permit the executive director to be on board and to give her an entire year to complete the aforementioned assignments,” said council chair Rev. Shanika Perry at Brandywine’s school board meeting Monday. “Therefore, as a council, we are asking for us to revisit the MOU and asking for an extension of the planning year,” she said.

She added that extending the timeline does not hinder the work the collaborative is currently doing. Most of that work is focused on building the foundation of the agency, such as bylaws, meeting procedures, creating a budget, creating school plans, engaging with teachers and parents, and starting to conduct a needs assessment and root cause analysis.





CONTRACT DELAYS TO LEARNING COLLAB'S EXEC. DIRECTOR BURGOS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Wilmington Learning Collaborative** still doesn't have an executive director. Laura Burgos, who was tapped by the Collaborative's governing council to take over, has yet to sign her contract, the council was told Tuesday night. That detail was a bit surprising because in Brandywine's school board meeting Monday, council chair the Rev. Shanika Perry—who's also a Brandywine board member—said she expected Burgos to sign her contract at the Tuesday night meeting.

"We will vote to officially make an offer to her so that she can start on Wednesday," Perry said. "Hopefully it all goes well so her official start date will be July 19."

Wednesday morning, councilwoman Alethea Smith-Tucker said the council is making sure that the coordination of the offer, benefits and memorandum of

understanding, are in alignment as a well-crafted contract and that the benefits provided are properly looped in for congruence.

"This is the last leg of dotting our I's and crossing our T's," she said.

The executive director job description said the role will pay an annual salary between \$156,257 and \$175,616. In her role, Burgos will oversee the 15-person governing council's business and affairs and administer the budget and relay financial information to the treasurer. She'll be able to discuss and introduce initiatives, but will not have voting power.

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ED LEADERS DETAIL WHAT THEY CONSIDER LEGISLATION HIGHLIGHTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

With the 2023 General Assembly session ending in June, educational advocates are cheering the legislature’s action on early education, mental health support and transparency relating to school boards. One leader, though, would like to see bills that focus on letting parents know clearly and precisely what’s happening in the classroom, starting with easy to find proficiency ratings.

About 60 bills related to education were passed this session. Here’s what stood out to three of the state’s educational leaders:

RODEL

The **Rodel Foundation of Delaware** partners with policymakers, the private sector, nonprofits and practitioners to make systemic changes that can improve students’ lives. Madeleine Bayard, vice president of Rodel, said this year’s legislative session was a carryover from 2022.

“They had a strong focus again on education with more continued investments in high-needs student populations, opportunity funding and continued investment in mental health,” she said.

Delaware’s ongoing focus on the teacher shortage was illustrated, she said, when Gov. John Carney established a 9% increase in educator pay for the 2023-24 school year. That increase is specific to the state share of educator pay. The state funds about 70% of what teachers and other school workers take home. Local districts fund the remaining 30%.

“We know we need to do more to keep up with Maryland and other surrounding states to recruit and retain teachers,” Bayard said, “but the investments in the budget in educator salaries and in early childhood were some of the most significant improvements.”

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APPO TO SEEK INCREASE TO PROPERTY TAXES FOR 23-24 SCHOOL YEAR

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Appoquinimink School District** voted this week to approve a tax increase because of rising costs. The school board will ask for a rate increase by 1.42 cents per \$100 of assessed home value.

According to Danielle Pro-Hudson, district chief communication officer, the tax increase is part of the tax rate that is locally determined by the board, not voted through referendum by Appo residents. The last referendum was four years ago and passed. With a tax increase, Appo expects nearly \$4 million more in revenue than last year, or \$229,392,205.

“With rising expenses, certainly the revenue is not keeping pace with that,” said Eric Loftus, the district’s director of finance.

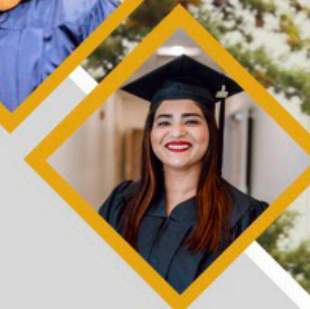
Most Delaware school boards are unveiling preliminary 2023-24 school year budgets and tax rates this month. They are expected to take official votes on whether to approve the proposal in August.

Appo also swore in newly-elected school board member Tashiba Graham. Michelle Wall was re-elected to serve as board president and Richard Forsten was voted to serve as vice president for next school year.



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RED CLAY, WILM U PARTNER FOR PROGRAM TO CREATE MORE TEACHERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Red Clay Consolidated School District is joining forces with Wilmington University to combat the ongoing teacher shortage. District superintendent Dorrell Green told the board an exclusive partnership with Wilm U will create alternate paths for Red Clay workers to get their teacher certification. The program will start this fall.

“As we know, again, the teacher and educator shortage tends to be a challenge and a lot of that also has to deal with certification,” Green said.

The teacher shortage has been a focus of educational and governmental groups for several years. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many teachers and substitutes leaving the field, and educators have said that there are fewer college education majors. As that’s happened, surrounding states have been raising the

starting salaries of teachers, forcing Delaware to look at its education pay structure, too.

The employees who may want to get their certification could come from many jobs, including paraprofessionals or secretaries. Green said the first group of employees will take online classes this fall.

Pathways that will be available include certificates for K-12 special education, early childhood exceptional teacher, paraeducator to teacher alternative route to certification and traditional dual certified alternative route to certification programs.

“This offers Red Clay employees a combination of benefits including discounted tuition, eligibility to apply for financial aid and eligibility for tuition reimbursement,” Green said.

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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



CONRAD'S HOME GAMES: NOT FANCY, BUT A FAVORITE EXPERIENCE

BY NICK HALLIDAY

This is first of a series of stories looking at Delaware stadiums and gyms, and the experience gamegoers will have at them.

If you find yourself with some time on a Saturday morning in the fall and you want to go watch a high school football game, do yourself a favor and take a trip to the Conrad Schools of Science. The Red Wolves almost always field a competitive team and the stadium experience is one of my favorites. It's not a fancy experience, to be sure, but the emphasis is on the right things.

Conrad always draws a good crowd. Those who are not inside the stadium can be found lining the fence that surrounds the stadium, watching from lawn chairs

or the beds of pickup trucks. The bleachers, which are only on the home side of the field, offer a great view.

Conrad has a passionate alumni base, dating back to the days of Henry C. Conrad High School, which closed in the late 1970s, as well as from the current Conrad Schools of Science. Fans at the game are treated to one of the best public address announcers in the state. Even if you're there cheering on the visiting team, it's hard not to get caught up in the event.

While you're at Conrad, you'll definitely notice the smells coming from the concession stand. The cheerleaders will be busy the entire game. There is plenty of parking in the school lot and nearby neighborhoods.



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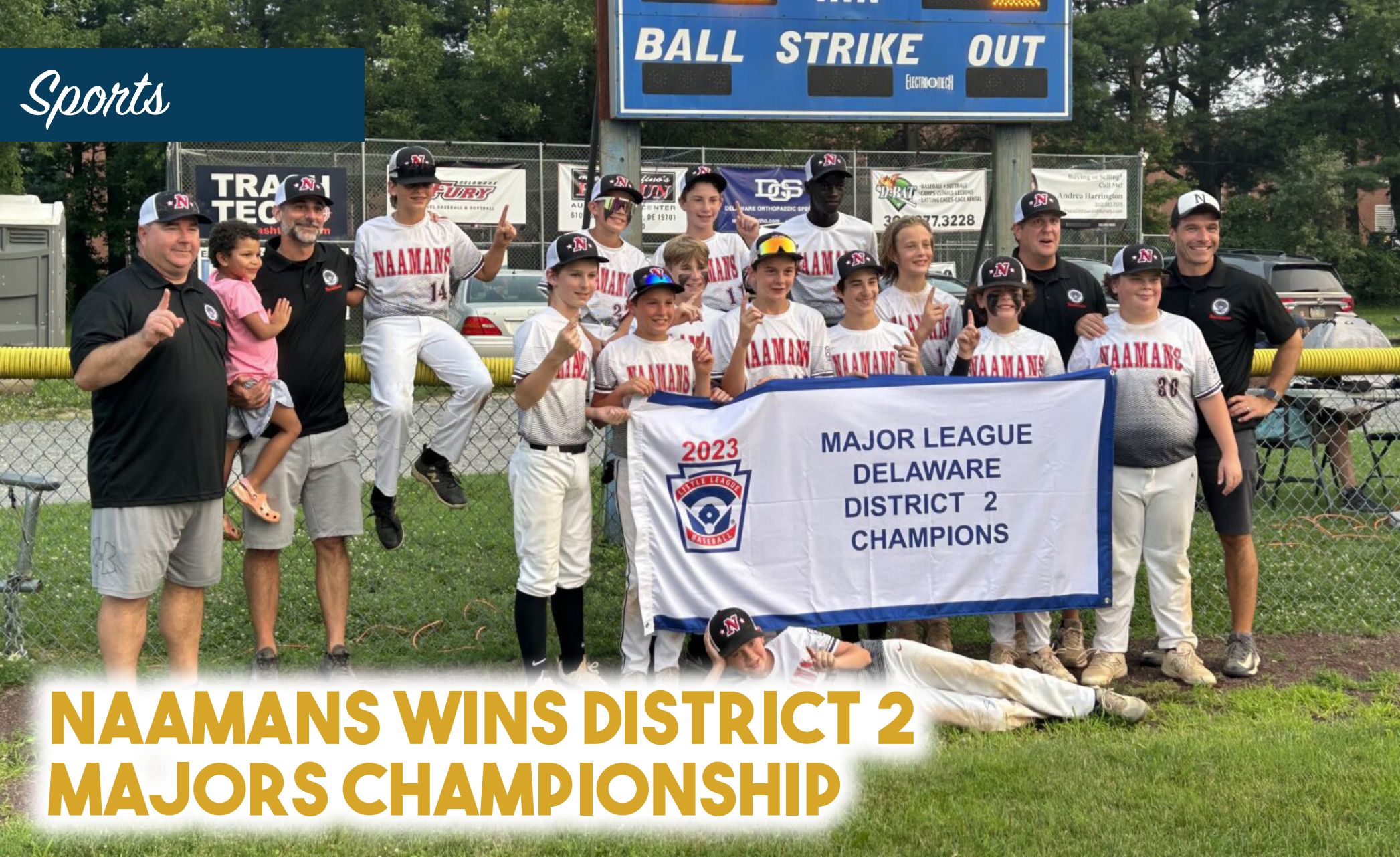
The folks at Conrad are friendly, even if you're not wearing red and black.

The Red Wolves have a decent home schedule this season, and they've added a wrinkle for the second straight season for those who may not be able to get there for an 11 a.m. Saturday start: Conrad will host Indian River Nov. 3 for a Friday night under temporary lights.

I didn't graduate from Conrad—in fact, there was no Conrad while I was in high school—but I always try to get there for at least a game or two each season.

And so should you.





NAAMANS WINS DISTRICT 2 MAJORS CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Three runs in the top of the first inning proved to be enough for Naamans Little League, which got a stand-out pitching performance from Josh Stiebel in an 8-0 win over Brandywine on July 17 at Canal Little League. With the win, Naamans clinched the state District 2 Majors championship and a trip to the state tournament, which begins later this month in Seaford.

Naamans wasted no time going to work against Brandywine starter Jayson Gniewocz. Matt Robinette dou-

bled to right-center, and after Max Fox was hit by a pitch and Joe Ricciardi walked, the bases were loaded with no outs. Gniewocz rebounded with consecutive strikeouts, but Isaac Aulick smoked a two-run double to the center field fence. Ricciardi stopped after rounding third, but he scored after getting caught in a rundown.

Gniewocz retired the next eight batters he faced, five by strikeout, before Fox singled with one out in the fourth. He scored on an error later in the inning, and

Ricciardi, who also singled, came home on a bases-loaded walk to Vinny Alfieri. Naamans added three runs in the final two innings off reliever Liam Mitchell.

Stiebel, meanwhile, looked for much of the evening as if he might repeat his outing against Brandywine in the teams' previous meeting last week, when he tossed a no-hitter. He retired the first 12 batters he faced, and he helped his own cause with three assists, including one on a comebacker off the bat of Bryce Avent to lead off the third.

Cal Steinour picked up Brandywine's first hit, smacking a grounder to right field. The next hitter, Tyler Overly, hit a ground ball up the middle, but Naamans shortstop Jude Sawyer made a diving stop and got the lead runner. That came in handy when Gniewocz singled to left, putting runners at first and second. Stiebel worked out of trouble to keep the shutout intact.

Ryan Coleman singled to open the sixth and final inning, but two groundouts and a caught stealing brought the game to an end.

For Naamans, Fox, Ricciardi, Aulick and Alfieri all reached base three times. Fox and Ricciardi each scored three times, and Aulick drove in three runs. Stiebel allowed three singles and struck out five. Naamans is still without an error in four all-star games.

Gniewocz allowed five runs on four hits, and he struck out eight.

The state tournament, which will determine which district advances to the Northeast Regional, is set for July 25-29 at Nanticoke Little League in Seaford. Check the 302 Sports schedule to see when it will be streaming.



DELAWARE LIVE'S SURPRISE TEAMS FROM 2022-23 SEASON

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Wilmington Friends Girls Soccer: The Quakers girls soccer team was a very young team this season and they showed that the future would be bright in Division 2 girls soccer. They started the season with a 9-0-1 record with a tie against a good DMA team. They suffered their first loss against Archmere only to beat Saint Mark's in their next match to get to 13-1-1. They would get to the semifinals where the experienced Spartans would win 4-2.

Woodbridge Girls Basketball: The Blue Raiders had a great basketball season this year as they would go 17-3 with two of those losses to Ursuline and Caravel. They would have to go to Claymont and take on sixth-seeded Archmere in the second round. The Blue Raiders exploded in the fourth quarter to defeat the Auks 42-36. Then they traveled to Cape Henlopen to battle the third-seeded Vikings in the quarterfinals. They outscored the Vikings 9-0 in the fourth quarter to seal a 48-34 win. They would lose to Ursuline in the semifinals, but what a great showing by the Blue Raiders.

Conrad Baseball: The Red Wolves had a great baseball season that saw their schedule loaded with the who's who of baseball teams. They finished 14-4 with wins over Sallies, Middletown, St. Georges, Tower Hill and Appoquinimink. Its four losses were to DMA, Saint Mark's, Caravel and Archmere. Conrad would beat

Laurel in the second round. In the quarterfinals, the Red Wolves would walk it off in the seventh, 6-5 over Sussex Tech. The Red Wolves then would defeat Saint Mark's 10-7 in the semifinals to advance to the championship. They ran into a hot Seahawks team, but had an amazing run to get to the championship.

Delmarva Christian Softball: The Royals had a softball season to remember and at one point had the top ranking by Delaware Live. They started the season 10-0 with wins over Sussex Central, Indian River, Smyrna, Appoquinimink and Padua. They would lose in an extra inning battle to Caravel 5-4. They would lose to Caravel again and 2-1 to Laurel to finish the regular season 15-3. They would beat Padua 3-2 and Sussex Tech 5-0 to get to the semifinals. There they ran into a hot Indian River team in the semifinals and lost a heartbreaker, 2-1.

Red Lion Football: The Lions football team was looking to improve on a tough '21 season and that wouldn't be easy in the 2A District 3 conference. The Lions would lose some early season games to Saint Mark's and Caravel. The Lions would get a big 20-19 win vs Delmar and would go a perfect 5-0 record at home to get a state tournament berth. They would defeat Delmar in the first round before falling to Saint Mark's in the 2A quarterfinals.

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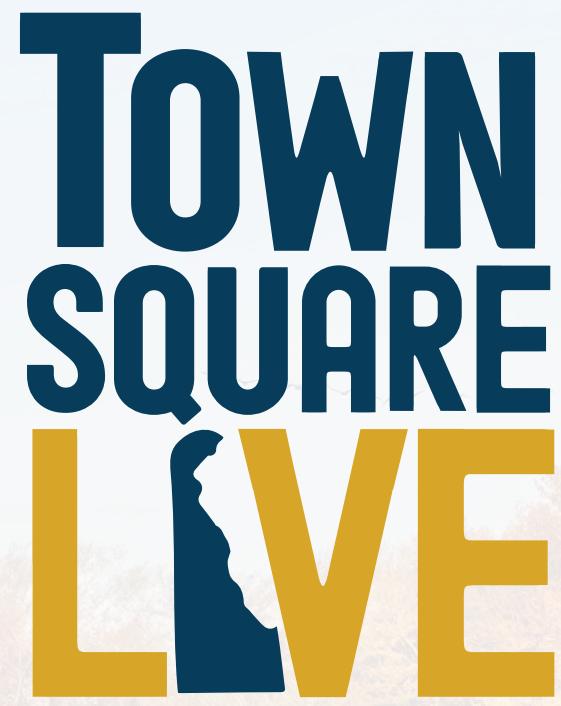
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