

photo link: NCC Chamber of Commerce

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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October 19, 2023  
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photo link: Longwood Gardens  
photo by Cathy Matos

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Evernorth to Expand in New Castle



Marijuana Commissioner on Creating New Industry



On the Pitch: Week 6



# Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY HALLOWEEN FUN (AND ADULTS-ONLY, TOO)

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Here are some not-so-scary places to go trick or treating and celebrate Halloween in other ways. Be prepared for rain in the forecast this weekend. This calendar is chronological.

**Fall Festival and Corn Maze**, Mondays-Saturdays through Nov. 4, Fifer's, 1919 Allabands Mill Road, near Camden. Includes Motor Maze and play area, plus more events on Saturdays. All activities weather-permitting. Maze and play area \$12.95, \$16.95 Saturdays, free for 2 and younger. Maze and play area also sold separately. Other activities, such as the new apple cannon, sold a la carte.

**Frightland**, Fridays-Sundays through Nov. 4, plus Oct. 19 and Oct. 26, 309 Port Penn Road, Middletown. Eight haunted areas. \$40, \$50 on Saturdays, VIP pass \$80, plus \$5 parking, \$4 group discount and \$2 processing fee.

**Great Pumpkin Carve**, 4-9 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, 4-9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20; and 3-9 p.m. Oct. 21, Chadds Ford Historical Society, 1736 Creek Road, Chadds Ford, PA. More than 70 giant pumpkins are carved and lit the first night and lit and displayed the second and third nights. Plus Haunted Trail and music by Kenny Thompson & Friends. \$15, \$5 for children 7-17 and free for children 6 and under. This writer's take: Amazing.

**Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze**, Ramsey Farm, 400 Ramsey Road, Brandywine Hundred. Oct. 20-22, Oct. 27-29 and Nov. 4. Includes 10-acre maze, second maze for younger children, hay rides, farm yard playground, pumpkin painting and bonfires. \$15. If the farm be is closed for inclement weather, a voucher for future use will be issued.

**Trunk or Treat**, 4-7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20, Firestone Complete Auto Car, 3301 Old Capitol Trail, near Prices Corner. With a car show. Presented by Car Shows for Non-Profits.

**Trunk or Treat**, 6:30-8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 20, Brandywine Ball Field, off Naamans Road, Brandywine Hundred. Brandywine Little League event.

**Sleep Under the Stars**, starting at noon Saturday, Oct. 21, Carousel Park, 2700 Limestone Road, Pike Creek. New Castle County Parks and Recreation event includes games, moon bounces, scarecrow making, hayrides, bonfires, costume parade, tent-to-tent trick or treating and screening of "Hocus Pocus 2." \$25 per car. Rain date Oct. 28.

**Halloween Ghost Ship**, noon-4 p.m. Saturday, Oct 21, Kalmar Nyckel Shipyard, 1123 E. Seventh St., Wilmington. Includes costume parade, Halloween-themed crafts, pumpkin painting and tours.

**Halloween Candy Pairing**, 2-8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 21, Liquid Alchemy, 28 Brookside Drive, near Wilmington. Four candies, two meads and two ciders.

**Trunk or Treat**, 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22, Shellcrest Swim Club, Wilson Road, Brandywine Hundred. Includes bonfire fun. \$10 per family.

**Trunk or Treat**, 5:30-7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24, Elsmere Library, 20 Spruce Ave., Elsmere. "Wear your favorite costume." Includes, crafts, games, candy, coloring, cider and doughnuts.

**Halloween Party**, 4-5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, George Wilson Community Center, 303 New London Road, Newark. Costume contest, spooky storytelling, scary room and refreshments. \$5.

**Trunk or Treat**, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26, Greenbank Mills, 500 Greenbank Road, near Prices Corner. Registration requested, specifying if "you are a trunker or a treater." Also accepting candy donations."

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# 45TH HAGLEY CRAFT FAIR DRAWS 100 ARTISANS FROM REGION

BY BETSY PRICE

Adam Roush marshaled his experience as a chef to start making candles designed to appeal to masculine tastes when he couldn't find any he liked. Now **Dueling Rabbits**, his coffee, candle and plant company, offers a variety of candles with names such as Sawdust & Coriander; Victorian Greenhouse; and Peach & Tobacco Pipe. The hands down favorite scent, though, is "Spirit of the Forest," a fragrance he designed for his brother, a hunter.

"He didn't buy candles because he could never find candles he liked and he said if I could recreate his setting of waking up in a tent that he would buy candles," Roush said. He did, and his brother does.

Roush will be among the 100 vendors at the Oct. 21-22 Hagley Craft fair, an annual must-see for those interested in area artisans—and buying holiday presents for themselves and others. Visitors can roam the marketplace, spread throughout the fall foliage around Hagley

Library as well as inside and outside the Soda House, and then head to a food truck food court offering choices ranging from comfort food to Asian-fusion, as well as craft beer from **Wilmington Brew Works**.

This year's Craft Fair is featuring emerging crafters such as Don'Tay Brady of **A Flicker of Daisy Candle Co.** and Dierra Cooper, who makes vegan paints for **Autumn Leaf Co.**, a business she started in her teens.

Brady creates small-batch, hand-poured candles that smell great and "improve your mental state and well-being." One choice is "Smokey Nights," featuring a fragrance that might evoke a friendly gathering around a firepit. Its fragrance "intertwines rich vanilla with smokey, woody undertones and the freshness of lavender," she said.

Her full-time occupation comes with a high level of stress—she works as an intensive care nurse in a neona-

tal unit. Her candles help both her and her customers "drift away into a peaceful space."

Roush and his wife, Nicole Rummel, moved to Delaware—her hometown—two years ago after she finished her Ph.D. at the University of Kentucky. While his candles capture attention, it's the coffee business he's most focused on. Dueling Rabbits makes small batch roasted coffee.

"We try to do international coffee, so a lot of different types for people to come and do tastings kind of like bourbon flights," he said "We modeled ourselves basically after bourbon bars in Kentucky."

Their coffee comes in 8-ounce bags that sell for \$15 each. It can be shipped anywhere, he said. Roush and his wife hope to open Wilmington's first Plant Cafe, a place people can come to have coffee, and also buy plants and coffee. They are a registered nursery with the state of Delaware and have a license for exotic and rare plants.

Fall is candle season, Roush said, and most of his candle buyers are women buying for their husbands. The candles come in 4-ounce, 7-ounce and 10-ounce sizes for \$10, \$20 and \$30, respectively. One of his crowd-pleasing fragrances is Peach & Tobacco Pipe.

"I get a lot of comments from people saying that it reminds them of their grandfather or grandpa, someone in the past that used to smoke a tobacco pipe," Roush said. "They like the sweet smell of it, but they love the earthy smell that tobacco has as well."

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

Community

# BRANDYWINE Holiday FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware event impresario Barry Schlecker, who organizes September's popular [Brandywine Festival of the Arts](#), has always wanted to do an indoor arts show. Urged by painter friends who won't do outdoor shows and inspired by their studio tours, Schlecker decided this year to approach the Chase Center on the Riverfront about a holiday event.

Artists had told him they'd participate in an event that would bring many artists together, so they could draw a larger audience and give shoppers a wider selection of great works, Schlecker said. Chase Center planners were thrilled. They'd been trying to make their December calendar a kind of Winter Wonderland, they told Schlecker. Schlecker's name and the fame of his harbinger-of-fall arts event preceded him, they said.

"That's great," Schlecker told them. "What are you going to do to help me financially? Because I can't afford

## BRANDYWINE FESTIVAL OF ARTS ADDS HOLIDAY SALE

it." They made him a deal he couldn't refuse, and the [Brandywine Holiday Festival of the Arts](#) was born.

Schlecker immediately sent messages to all the artists who show at the fall festival telling him that the space will only allow 150 artists. Within two weeks, 100 had signed up. It's up to 120 for the Dec. 16-17 event and includes include many of the painters, jewelry makers, potters, photographers and fabric artists who appear in the September event. Schlecker expects the last 30 slots to be full by December.

The holiday festival will be cosponsored by Children and Families First, a Delaware nonprofit focused on helping children, youth and families thrive to their full potential. The group will share in the proceeds from festival admissions.

### HOLIDAY LINEUP

The holiday show's featured artist will be Wilmington painter and folk artist Eunice LaFate, a native of Jamaica who settled in the city 40 years ago and now operates her own [gallery](#) on Market Street. She's fond of saying that she doesn't believe she could have done better than establishing herself in Delaware. Big cities would have taken no notice of her, she's said.

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# MORE THAN 500 DELAWAREANS TURN OUT TO 'STAND WITH ISRAEL'

## ISRAEL'S 9/11

Delaware Gov. John Carney seemed to best sum up many people's feelings. "I have not felt this way since the attacks we experienced at 9/11," Carney said. "Just haven't felt this bad at my core, in my heart, and, as others have said, this is Israel's 9/11 and the horror seems to keep building with every new image."

Seeing children from the Albert Einstein Academy sing both the U.S. and the Israeli national anthems at the rally made him feel better than he had in the last week, he said. We cannot have peace when we have terror, Carney said. Terrorism can never be justified, he said.

"But tonight my heart aches with sorrow and goes out to all the families, families and people that we know who suffered such a terrible loss and are living in fear," Carney said. "The victims of this depravity are our friends, friends of this community. Some are Americans. This is not some distant tragedy. This is searing. It's painful. And it's personal."

"We must remember these are not just numbers, or statistics," Marcus-Sape said. "These are real people, their families with real dreams and real hopes for the future."

"We must also remember that this tragedy extends beyond borders and religions. It is a loss for humanity. as a whole and we must condemn all acts of violence and work towards a world where every individual can live in peace, security, regardless of their fate." She said everyone should strive to educate themselves about the complexities of the solution, "recognizing that there are no easy solutions."

Marcus-Sape also urged people to donate generously to programs to help and to hold Shabbats—the Jewish day of rest ceremony—and invite family and friends to join them.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

Hundreds of arms shot into the air Oct. 11 at the packed "We Stand With Israel Solidarity Rally" at Wilmington's [Siegel Jewish Community Center](#). Caryl Marcus-Sape, chairman of the board of the [Jewish Federation of Delaware](#), had just asked, "How many of you have parents, children, grandparents, loved ones, families or friends in Israel?" Then, "How many of you know someone serving in the Israeli army right now," she asked. Most of the hands stayed in the air.

That interactive moment started a ceremony that alternated between prayer, song and speeches as Delaware Jews, friends and allies from many faiths offered solace and support for the dead, injured and suffering after the Hamas attacks in Israel. A crowd of about 500 people gathered for the event, filling parking lot after parking lot, all guarded with police units with flashing lights and under a hovering black helicopter. The size of the crowd—many wearing carrying miniature versions of the Israeli flag and wearing blue in a salute to it—slowed arrivals and forced the event to start later than the planned 6 p.m. When it did, Marcus-Sape admitted she was shaking from emotion and fighting not to cry.

She was not the only one. At many moments during the evening, tears could be shining in the eyes of those in the crowd.

photo link: Visit Delaware



*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





## FED'S HARKER DOESN'T EXPECT RECESSION, MORE RATE INCREASES

BY BETSY PRICE

Another rise in interest rates is not needed and the U.S. economy seems unlikely to tip into a recession, the president of the [Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank](#) told the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce Oct. 13.

Patrick T. Harker, a former president of the University of Delaware, also said wages are falling slightly and that he expects the unemployment rate to rise to 4.5% in 2024, but predicts there will be no mass layoffs.

“There are many factors that play into the calculation of the unemployment rate itself,” he said. “For instance, we’ve had recent months where even as the economy added more jobs, the unemployment rate increases, because more workers move off the sidelines and back into the labor force.”

Harker—who was wearing a Phillies tie to celebrate the Thursday night win putting them into the National League Championship Series—stressed during his annual appearance at the Chamber that his comments

reflected his own opinions, not those of the Fed. “Or as I’ve become fond of saying, when you’re telling your colleagues about this morning’s conversation, you can say ‘Pat said,’ not ‘The Fed,’ OK?” he joked.

Harker said he’s often asked about interest rates and inflation. The Fed has raised interest rates 11 times in a row to try to slow down the economy’s inflation rate. That more-than-5% hike has slowed home loans and hit banks’ bottom lines because of tighter credit. He said he doesn’t expect another rate hike, but noted he said the same thing two months before the rates were raised the last time.

“I’m happy to say that so far economic and financial conditions are evolving, as I expected, if not perhaps even a tad better,” Harker said. “Disinflation is underway. Economic activity has been resilient. Labor markets are coming into better balance. Moreover, these conditions aren’t just where I see the national economy being

but also our regional economy and specifically for today’s discussion, Delaware’s.”

The economy has continued to stabilize despite labor strikes, unexpected wars, a \$33 trillion national debt and fears about the federal government shutting down, Harker said. In August, inflation was still elevated at 3.5% year over year, but was three points below what it had been a year before. Harker said he expects inflation to drop below 3% in 2024 and level out to the target rate of 2%.

The country’s Gross Domestic Product is outperforming estimates from earlier in the year, and he expects that to continue through 2023 before pulling back slightly in 2024, he said. “This economy is proving to be nothing if not resilient,” Harker said.

It’s impossible to say now how long the Fed needs to keep interest rates up because more months of data are needed, he said. “If inflation were to rebound, I know I would have no hesitancy to support further rate increases as our objective at the Fed is to return inflation to target and that is simply not negotiable,” he said. “I believe that a resolute patient stance of monetary policy will allow us to achieve the soft landing that I think we all wish for in our economy.”

### HARKER ON DELAWARE

The Philadelphia Fed’s region’s economy increased 3.3% year over year as of August and Delaware’s three-month increase of .06% matched the national rate. The state’s high propensity businesses, which are those likely to grow and add employees, is strong and has been growing since the start of COVID-19 pandemic.

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# EVERNORTH TO EXPAND IN NEW CASTLE, ADD SPECIALITY PHARMACY

BY BETSY PRICE

Cigna Group’s **Evernorth Health Services** will use a \$4.62 million state grant to expand into a bigger building in New Castle and add employees over the next four years. The move will group several of Cigna’s companies—Evernorth, its specialty pharmacy Accredo Health Group and its specialty pharmaceutical distributor, CuraScript SD together for distribution of millions of doses of specialty medications for rare and complex conditions.

The \$4.62 million grant is said to be the largest given out this year by the state, followed by the \$4.5 million given to the **Agile Cold Storage**’s new Claymont facility.

Accredo will move from its 34,000-square-foot facility near New Castle to another location with 200,000 square feet, the company said. The facility will be staffed at the beginning by about 90 existing Delaware employ-

ees including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, warehouse associates and operations staff. Evernorth expects the number of employees to more than double.

They will support patients diagnosed with some of the most rare and complex conditions known today, as well as help providers who help treat these patients.

The Delaware Prosperity Partnership supported Evernorth’s request to Delaware’s Council on Development Finance for a Jobs Retention Grant, a Jobs Performance Grant, a Capital Expenditure Grant and a matching Training Grant.

Evernorth officials first about the move in the council’s September meeting. Evernorth looks forward to deepening and expanding its ties in the community at its new location, said President Matt Perlberg.



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“This new facility will help us meet the growing demand and need for specialty medications, which have **risen by 280%** over the past two decades,” said Perlberg. “As more complex medications come to market in the years ahead, our expanding location in Delaware will enable us to more efficiently and effectively distribute these lifesaving medications to individuals throughout the country, particularly in the Northeast.”

Evernorth is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Cigna Group and its companies also include Express Scripts, Express Scripts Pharmacy, eviCore and MDLIVE, along with holistic Evernorth platforms and solutions.



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# Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# DONUTS, BARBECUE, PIZZA AND A SALUTE TO FRENCH FRIES

BY PAM GEORGE

Barbecue and donuts are big news in Delaware and one newcomer has decided to package them together. But word on the street also has good eats in Newark, where a West African restaurant just opened and La Casa Pasta prepares to celebrate its 45th anniversary.

## BARBECUE AND BREAKFAST

Those who commute via Marsh Road in Brandywine Hundred may have noticed a flurry of activity at the short-lived [Rosenfeld's Jewish Deli](#) and Big Fish Market in Plaza III shopping center. Seemingly overnight, [322 BBQ](#) and [Hill Donut Co. & Pancake House](#) slipped into the space and quietly opened on Oct. 18

The concepts are the brainchild of David Wiederholt, who spent five years with the Starr Restaurant Organization in Philadelphia. The Culinary Institute of America graduate was the executive chef of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and a chef at Buddakan and Barclay Prime, where he undoubtedly deepened his beef knowledge.

He's putting that skill to good use at 322 BBQ, which is part butcher shop, barbecue joint and deli. We recently sampled a chicken cheesesteak made with chunks of tender, well-seasoned meat and fresh mushrooms. Wiederholt's desire to make the perfect brioche bun led to brioche donuts and a new division.

This is the third operation for the "combo concepts." The first two are in Mullica Hill and Swedesboro, NJ, which explains why the cashier tried to charge tax on a Delaware guest's order. Be patient during the opening weeks.

## CATCH45 OPENS IN NEWARK

Longtime Delaware diners remember when finding a sushi restaurant was challenging. Today, you can purchase it in supermarkets. But the state is still woefully lacking in some cuisines, namely West African.

Myra Dorley, a native of Liberia and a Delaware resident since 2014, and Douglas Jones decided to do something about it. The partners recently opened the 45-seat

[Catch45](#) on Capitol Trail to serve Liberian dishes such as pepper soup with fufu—a starchy meal usually made from cassava—or rice, goat soup, grilled fish, chicken wings and plantains. The owners plan to serve Western breakfast foods and offer catering.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LA CASA PASTA!

[La Casa Pasta](#) in Glasgow will celebrate its 45th anniversary on Thursday, Nov. 2, beginning at 6 p.m. The party is open to the public and [tickets](#) are \$45.

The event will feature passed hors d'oeuvres and food stations, including a table for sliders, carving stations, pasta stations and dessert stations with mini cannoli. There will also be live music.

The restaurant has come a long way since Giuseppe and Anna Martuscelli were left as the sole owners of a small pizza place. Their partners pulled out after questioning the location. On New Year's Eve 1977, no customers stepped through the door. News Journal critic Otto Dekom changed all that when he raved about the mussels fra diavolo antipasto and lasagna.

Today, La Casa Pasta is the flagship of the Martuscelli Restaurant Group, which includes [Klondike Kate's](#) in Newark and the [Chesapeake Inn](#).

## SCRAPPLE, SAUSAGE AND HAM—OH, MY!

Equipment delays paused the opening of [Helen's Sausage House](#) at 145 E. Main St. in Newark. Initially planned for Oct. 2, it should now happen later this month.

It's hard to believe that the Smyrna location opened in 1983; it feels like it's been part of Delaware's culinary lore for much longer.

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## TASTE KENNETT TOUR SHOWCASES P.A. TOWN'S CULINARY DIVERSITY

BY PAM GEORGE

Most people leave the [Eating Rehoboth](#) walking tour with a full belly. That's because the 2½-hour trek through downtown Rehoboth Beach pauses at five eateries for samples. Ann Vaughan, however, took home an idea.

"Oh, my God, this would be so great in Kennett Square," she told herself.

That was in 2013. By 2014, [Taste Kennett Food Tours](#) was operating in her hometown. The guided excursion through the heart of the Mushroom Capital takes about three hours and participants will not leave hungry. Or so I learned when I went with two friends on a culinary adventure—which is satisfying in more ways than one.

"The host provided just the right amount of Kennett history along with a good mix of Kennett flavors," said Deena Dimmer, a tour participant.

If you haven't explored Kennett in some time, you're in for a pleasant surprise. The borough is bursting with restaurants and shops, and on a Sunday, it was full of families, couples and friends. But if you want to take a food tour in 2023, book now. They stop on Nov. 5 for the year and restart on the Sunday after Mother's Day.

### RECIPE FOR TASTE SUCCESS

Before launching Taste Kennett, Vaughan booked similar walking tours in New York, where there is seemingly one for every neighborhood. She consulted with Paul Cullen, a co-founder of Eating Rehoboth, who was "super helpful," she said.

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*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# DELAWARE MARIJUANA COMMISSIONER DESCRIBES CREATING NEW INDUSTRY

BY BETSY PRICE

As Delaware moves toward 2025 retail sale of recreational marijuana, lots of moving parts require decisions and implementation, the state’s Marijuana Commissioner told a packed **New Castle County Chamber of Commerce** meeting Wednesday.

Among those fine points are creating a digital infrastructure, formalizing regulations, and creating ways for people to apply for licenses, **Rob Coupe** said in a wide-ranging and detailed presentation. The state also must decide whether and how the medical marijuana industry will coexist with legal marijuana, he said.

One good thing about Delaware’s timing, Coupe noted, is that the state can watch what New York, New Jersey, Maryland and other states have done and adopt their good ideas and try to avoid problems.

## THE NEW LAW

The new law allows people who are 21 or older to own one ounce of marijuana for personal use, but still prohibits consuming it in public or in a car. Instead of the ounce of flower buds to smoke, the law will allow 12 ounces of concentrated marijuana or 750 milligrams of TCH, the active ingredient in pot, which covers edibles, oils and other forms of marijuana. It prohibits growing marijuana for personal use or selling marijuana.

Four types of licenses related to the industry will be granted: growing, manufacturing, retail and testing. In every category, some licenses will be for social equity owners, who are people said to be unfairly impacted by drug laws that were not equally enforced, especially across racial lines.

Only about half the people who use marijuana smoke it, Coupe said. That’s because the fire ends up consuming more of the weed than they want. So about half of Delaware retail offerings will be in other forms, he said.

Medical marijuana sales, which are not taxed, were \$49 million in 2022 with only 17,000 participants, Coupe said. Recreational sales will be taxed at 15% when sales begin in 2025 and the state expects to have between 100,000 to 180,000 users, Coupe said.

Members of the Delaware Economic and Finance Advisory Committee were told Monday that the tax on recreational marijuana is expected to generate about \$8 million in 2025, but that money would not go into the General Fund.

Coupe—who brought a notebook containing a print-out of the laws—noted that the tax money is required to be used to support the Office of the Marijuana Commissioner, the Marijuana Regulation Fund and the Justice Reinvestment Fund. But, he pointed out, the law also says that any remaining money may be appropriated by the General Assembly as it sees fit and he thought that meant it would go back to the General Fund.

## CREATING THE SYSTEM

The law authorized 14 jobs to create and oversee the recreational sales program. They included:

- Five for the Office of Marijuana Commissioner, including Coupe.
- 14 for Delaware Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement.
- Seven for the Department of Revenue
- Two for the Department of Agriculture
- Six in Health Systems Protection for the Division of Public Health.

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# DELAWARE SEEMS DESTINED TO HAVE HARD BUDGET CHOICES NEXT YEAR

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware budget forecasts show that revenues and expenditures for 2025 are running at almost the same level as this year, which had a budget of \$6.1 billion. Even so, Dover politicians may have to scramble to figure out how to accommodate an additional \$400 million in expenses for 2025.

That's what **Cerron Cade**, director of the state **Office of Budget and Management**, said he expected would need to be added to the state budget. It will be needed to cover expected hikes in Medicaid needs, salaries for state employees, particularly those in education and hikes in higher healthcare costs for employees and retirees, among other things.

That information led Monday to a couple of brief discussions from members of the **Delaware Economic and Finance Advisory Council** about whether Delaware—which relies on income tax, corporate taxes and real estate tax for the majority of its budget—would ever consider raising income tax rates or instituting a sales

tax. The council has no authority to suggest or support a tax or tax hike.

Delaware's budget years run from July 1 to June 30, and the state currently is in the middle of fiscal year 2024. If needs outstrip revenue, the state has several funds—\$316.4 million in its Rainy Day fund and \$402.6 million in its Budget Stabilization Fund—that could be accessed for help. That money came in handy in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic messed with the state's proposed budget.

DEFAC has been warning for more than a year that the heady days of nearly \$1 billion surpluses for 2022, 2023 and 2024, would end this year. The surpluses were a result of COVID money plowed into the state, unexpected but massive real estate transfer taxes and a rise in corporate taxes and capital gain taxes.

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# WILM. CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS PLEAD FOR RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Three members of the Wilmington City Council, including the president, on Monday protested Mayor Mike Purzycki's decision to no longer require city residency for current and newly hired employees.

"We have the power to make sure that the residents get to make that decision and that we don't go from a five-year residency commitment to none," said District 2 Councilwoman Shané Darby. "That is extreme and unacceptable and it's disrespectful, and a slap in the face to our constituents."

District 1 Councilman Vincent White noted that Purzycki's decision came within the same hour he announced he would not be seeking re-election in the 2024 mayoral election. A member of the crowd said it was wrong for the mayor to make residency requirement decisions that affect the future of Wilmington when he's on his way out.

Efforts were unsuccessful to reach At Large Council member James Spadola, the council's only Republican, for comment.

White said that having a residency requirement fosters a strong sense of community, provides employees with a vested interest in the city's success and ensures taxpayer dollars benefit the local economy.

"It promotes accountability and responsiveness by enabling employees to understand the residents' needs and concerns, which better facilitates effective communication and decision making," he said.

Darby read a prepared statement from District 4 Councilwoman Michelle Harlee, who also opposes dropping the residency requirement.

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*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# CORY HAFER NAMED 2024 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

BY JAREK RUTZ

Cory Hafer, an engineering and science teacher at **Appoquinimink School District's Middletown High School**, is this year's teacher of the year. Hafer won over 19 other finalists, one from each district and a charter school representative. All finalists receive \$2,000.

In addition to winning \$5,000 to use for his students, Hafer pockets an extra \$5,000 prize. This is the 60th year in a row the recognition has been given out.

Ashley Lockwood, a fifth-grade teacher at Lulu Ross Elementary in Milford School District, took home the award last year. As usual, the former teacher of the year gives some words of encouragement for the new awardee.

"The best part of this experience is that it's never over," she said. "It never ends. This is truly just the beginning." The opportunities will change, she said, "but the responsibility to outlive teaching and advocate for students will always be your work to do."

"To represent Delaware, my home...will always be the greatest honor of my life," she said. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you so very much for all of your support."

Hafer took the stage and thanked his administrative staff, Appo school district, as well as his family.

"The biggest thing I take away from this experience is that I've learned a lot about how important it is to build those connections," Hafer said. "Look at all of the 20 candidates and everyone talked about the idea that

building connections and creating an educational space where students are excited to learn and connected with the real world is going to lead to really meaningful education."

### SELECTION PROCESS

The candidates were nominated by their districts or the Delaware Charter Schools Network during 2023 based on their superior ability to inspire students with a love of learning, exemplary demonstration of professional traits and strong sense of dedication and devotion to teaching.

Each nominee submitted an application exemplifying his or her teaching philosophy and five Delaware Department of Education staff members independently evaluated each application. A former Delaware Teacher of the Year and department staff member observed each candidate in the classroom as part of the process.

Taking into consideration the ratings from the application review and observations, as well as a recorded presentation by the nominees, another independent panel of non-department judges then selected Hafer as the winner.



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# HOW THE WLC PLANS TO SPEND \$16.6M TO IMPROVE CITY SCHOOLS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative’s governing council voted Tuesday night for a budget containing various programs intended to improve outcomes for city students. The budget is for this fiscal year, which concludes June 30, 2024. It totals \$16,632,690.20, with \$10 million set in the state budget for this year, and the other \$6,632,690.20 is carryover funds from last year.

Executive Director Laura Burgos said the programs are largely a result of her working with all nine principals of the schools involved in the collaborative. She also said it’s important the budget gets passed so the group isn’t in January or February and still waiting to get programs started.

The collaborative’s state funds are allocated towards the following initiatives. Those funds are then further broken down by the collaborative, whose goal is to improve academic and societal achievement for students at nine city of Wilmington elementary schools across the Brandywine, Christina and Red Clay school districts.

## Expanded Learning Time (\$4,900,000)

*Summer Academy – \$3,000,000*

A Summer Academy will be created to serve at least 2,500 students from mid-June through mid-August. The program will span 6 to 8 weeks across multiple WLC school sites and staffed by current teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and nonprofit partners. There will be a weekly skill focus and thematic unit with daily activities focused on project-based learning and STEAM activities.

*Spring Break Academy – \$750,000*

The Spring Break Academy will serve students at or approaching grade level, as well as students identified as Gifted and Talented, which by state code, are students identified with the capability of high performance because of their: general intellectual ability; specific academic aptitude; creative productive thinking; leadership ability; visual and performing arts; and psychomotor ability

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# POSITIVE OUTCOMES CHARTER KICKS OFF SIX RENEWAL HEARINGS

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Positive Outcomes Charter School** of Camden came prepared for its sixth meeting with a state committee that reviews Delaware’s charter schools’ progress.

Positive Outcomes showed the committee a short video presenting a lot of anecdotal and data-based successes. “We’re very proud to be in front of you today seeking our sixth renewal of our school,” said Ed Emmett, school director. “This renewal would actually take us into our fourth decade of providing services to students throughout all three counties.”

The 13-person **Charter School Accountability Committee** is made up of charter leaders, community members and Department of Education officials from academic support, student support, operations support, educator support and more.

Positive Outcomes is the first of six schools to go through the renewal process this fall. Delaware charters are required to go through a renewal process every five years in which they make their case to stay open by offering data focused on student achievement, test scores,

school climate, graduation rates, suspensions and more. The accountability committee curates a report for Mark Holodick, Delaware’s secretary of education.

The decision about renewal is guided by three questions said Committee Chair Kim Klein: “Is the academic program a success? Is the school financially viable? Is the school organizationally sound?”

Positive Outcomes has students from seven different districts this year, Emmett said, with Lake Forest providing the highest number. It serves seventh through 12th grade and its enrollment of 115 students is 46.96% low-income and 65.22% have disabilities.

The school has a proficiency rate in math and English language arts that is lower than the state average: 5% of students meet grade-level expectations in math and 13% meet those for English language arts. Statewide, those numbers are 41% and 31%, respectively.

Chronic absenteeism is also higher at the charger than the state average: 45.37% of its students are chronically absent, which means they miss 10% or more of school

days in a year. The state average is 20.79%. Emmett said the school had a 20% chronic absenteeism before the pandemic.

“We’re seeing average daily attendance rates improve, but we still are really working with students to remind them of why being in school is important,” he said. “It’s one of our major points this year because we cannot improve deficits if [students] can’t come in the building.”

Next, Positive Outcomes will respond to a report created by Accountability Committee during a public hearing Oct. 24 at 5 p.m.

The other charters up for renewal this year are First State Military Academy, Freire Charter School Wilmington, Great Oaks Charter School, Kuumba Academy Charter School and Sussex Montessori School are the six up for renewal this year.

Here the schedule:

- First State Military Academy –Thursday, Oct. 19, 1 p.m.
- Freire Charter School Wilmington – Monday, Oct. 23, 1 p.m.
- Sussex Montessori School – Oct. 30, 1 p.m.
- Great Oaks Charter School – Oct. 31, 8:30 a.m.
- Kuumba Academy Charter School – Oct. 31, 1 p.m.

To see a timeline of meetings, reviews for each school and find live streams to the public hearings, click [HERE](#). Secretary Holodick’s decision on all six charters will be presented to the State Board of Education Dec.14 at 5 p.m.



# PAY PANEL TO GIVE CARNEY EDUCATOR SALARY PROPOSALS NEXT MONTH

BY JAREK RUTZ

Raises seem likely to be on the way for all Delaware educators, from teachers to bus drivers to custodians and everything in between. The state **Public Education Compensation Committee** will submit its recommendations to Gov. John Carney’s office by Nov. 15. Whatever salary recommendations he includes, the committee’s or another version, in his proposed budget for fiscal year 2025, must be approved by the General Assembly.

The educator raises popped up several times Monday when the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Committee met and discussed factors affecting the fiscal year 2025 budget, which starts July 1. Money is expected to be tight and higher salaries, higher costs for insurance for both retirees and employees, and rising Medicaid costs are among the reasons why.

At Monday’s compensation committee meeting, the 15-person group, which includes legislators and education leaders, discussed creating state-funded units for information technology workers.

The group was deciding between two funding mechanisms for IT workers: one would cost the state \$4,837,830 next fiscal year and the other would cost the state \$6,446,395 next fiscal year.

The committee, formed to make pay recommendations to make Delaware a more attractive place to work for educators, opted for the more expensive option.

Delaware created the committee at the start of the 2022-2023 school year after neighboring Maryland passed a law that would bump teachers’ starting salaries to \$60,000 by 2026. New Jersey is also raising teacher salaries. Here’s what the committee settled on as recommendations for each employee group:

- 1,305 – teachers and professional staff: a 2% increase plus a \$1,875 stipend (state cost = \$212,658,997 over next four fiscal years).

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# KRISTIN NYE FINALIST FOR NATIONAL COUNSELOR OF YEAR

Throughout her career, she said she’s prioritized making a real, concerted effort to work with local and state agencies to advocate for mental health. She even helped develop the wording for House Bill 100 back in its earliest draft five years ago. That bill passed in 2021 and included an \$8 million investment to provide mental health services in the state’s elementary schools.

“My biggest mission is to make all people recognize that mental health is health,” she said. “I work strongly to learn about how the brain works when students are dysregulated, what happens to the brain when students experience poverty or trauma, and then using that science to back up the ways that I intervene.”

No Delawarean has ever won the award, which was first given out in 2019.

## COUNSELOR AWARD CRITERIA

The association’s national model guides school counselors to develop programs school that:

- Are based on data-informed decision making
- Are delivered to all students systematically
- Include a developmentally-appropriate curriculum focused on the mindsets and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and success
- Close achievement and opportunity gaps
- Result in improved student achievement, attendance and discipline

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BY JAREK RUTZ

A Delaware counselor has been chosen as one of five finalists from around the country for an award honoring the best school counselor in America. Kristin Nye from **Anna P. Mote Elementary School** in the **Red Clay Consolidated School District** will represent the First State for the **American School Counselor Association** School Counselor of the Year Award.

“To get this recognition now feels like a spotlight is being put not only on the great work we’re doing here in Delaware, but the great work that we’re doing at our school,” Nye said. She’s in her 19th year as a school counselor and eighth at Mote Elementary.

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# DE AGRICULTURE STUDENTS, TEAMS WIN NATIONAL AWARDS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two Delaware chapters and five individuals of the Future Farmers of America brought home national awards from Springfield, MA. They were winners at The Big E, an annual event that begins on the second Friday after Labor Day.

Delaware FFA members competed in 16 career and leadership development events as well as the Agriscience Fair. Jennae Overton from Middletown FFA in Appo won first place in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking Event. Lake Forest's team took home the gold in the

Agriculture Issues Event. Odessa's team scored first place in the Floriculture Event.

In addition to competing in the events, three Delaware FFA members participated in the regionals Stars selection process. Cole Murphy from Lake Forest was selected as the Eastern Regional Star Farmer. Faith Hewes from Smyrna was selected as the Eastern Regional Star in Agriscience and Roarie Glen-Russum, also from Smyrna, was selected as a finalist for the Eastern Regional Star in Agricultural Placement.

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*Sports*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE


**BY NICK HALLIDAY**

Last week was a crazy week for ranked teams as we saw a lot of rank teams lost. That made this week's rankings the toughest all season. Division 2 saw all 10 spots change and there are many big matches on the schedule this week.

**DIVISION 1**

**No. 1 Sallies (7-3-1)** (LW No 1.) The Sals lost to two teams in the top 10 in the nation including a 4-2 setback to Constaga (PA). The Sals traveled to Caesar Rodney on Tuesday and host Appoquinimink on Thursday.

**No. 2 Wilmington Charter (8-1)** (LW No. 2) The Force picked up a pair of wins over Friends and St Andrew's last week. The Force hit the road this week as they trav-

# ON THE PITCH: WEEK 6 BOYS SOCCER TOP 10 RANKINGS

el to Newark Charter on Tuesday and Delcastle on Friday.

**No. 3 Delcastle (10-0-1)** (LW No. 4) The Cougars beat St. Georges Tech 5-0 last week. They traveled to Middletown on Tuesday and host No. 2 Wilmington Charter on Friday.

**No. 4 Sussex Central (7-1-2)** (LW No. 7) The Golden Knights had a 2-2 draw against Indian River and a 5-2 win over Milford. They hosted Lake Forest on Tuesday and travel to Laurel on Thursday.

**No. 5 Cape Henlopen (8-2)** (LW No. 3) The Vikings went 2-1 last week with wins over Sussex Academy (1-0) and Brandywine (2-1). They also lost 2-1 to Dover. They hosted Indian River Tuesday and Delmar on Thursday.

**No. 6 Appoquinimink (4-3-2)** (LW No. 6) The Jags picked up a win over Mount Pleasant. They hosted Odessa on Tuesday and travel to top ranked Sallies on Thursday.

**No. 7 Milford (8-2)** (LW No. 5) The Bucs picked up a 1-0 win over Delmar before losing 5-2 to Sussex Central. They travel to Indian River on Thursday.

**No. 8 St. Georges Tech (8-2)** (LW No. 8) The Hawks picked up a split last week with a loss to No. 3 Delcastle and a win over Middletown. They traveled to William Penn on Tuesday and to Caravel on Thursday.

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## Halloween at Hagley



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## VIEW FROM THE BASELINE: WEEK 6 VOLLEYBALL TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

This week on the Baseline, we're going to take a look at the various conference races and see where they stand. Remember, the conference champions get an automatic bid to the state tournament as long as they are in the top half of teams according to point index. So, theoretically, a team could finish with a record of 12-3 and win their conference, but because of their strength of schedule and that of other teams in the state, they would not necessarily earn an automatic bid. To be sure, it's a pretty rare occurrence.

**Blue Hen Flight A:** It's Middletown's title to lose. The Cavaliers are undefeated in conference and have two winnable Flight A matches remaining.

**Blue Hen Flight B:** Concord and Dickinson are both 6-0 in conference play entering this week. The Raiders visit the Rams on Thursday, with the winner earning the Flight B title.

**Henlopen North:** Well, this is fun. The bottom line is this: if Smyrna—5-0 in conference play—defeated Dover on Tuesday and Polytech next week, the Eagles win the North. Dover is 4-1 with a loss to Caesar Rodney, and CR is 4-1 with a loss to Smyrna. So if Dover won on Tuesday, it could be a very interesting tiebreaker. Regardless, all three teams are in the tournament.

**Henlopen South:** Sussex Academy took control with a win over Lake Forest last week. If they win their final two South matches, they take the conference. Lake and Indian River each have just one conference loss, both to Sussex Academy, so even if the Seahawks lose of of their two remaining South matches, they hold the tiebreaker.

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BY SHANNON TIMMONS

This week is exciting for high school field hockey as they take to the fast astroturf at Rullo Stadium at the University of Delaware for the Turf Bowl. I don't expect the top teams in either division to change much in the next two weeks of regular season play. But there are teams that still have six or seven games left to play and could change the landscape of who finds their way into the tournament brackets. Milford is the surprise team of the season and continues to play well. St. Georges had a tough week and will drop out this week and I welcome newcomers the top 10, William Penn and Delcastle in D1. D2 sees DMA join the top 10 again, but Lake Forest drops out. The No. 10 spot has been tough to fill consistently in D2 all season and counting the preseason picks seven teams have occupied that position.

## THE CORNER SCOOP: WEEK 6 FIELD HOCKEY TOP 10 RANKINGS

Game of the Week: Delmar at Cape Henlopen Thursday, Oct. 19, 6 pm. Watch live on 302 Sports.

### DIVISION 1

**No. 1 Smyrna 10-0** The Eagles didn't disappoint this week and picked up two more wins. Goalkeeper Hallie Geiger is committed to play next year at Drexel and has only given up four goals and has 34 saves. Watch the Eagles this week on Oct. 17 at Tatnall, Oct. 19 at home vs. Indian River and in the Turf Bowl at University of Delaware Sunday, Oct. 22, against Padua.

**No. 2 Cape Henlopen 11-1** Cape will finish out its regular season with home games, always an advantage when you play on turf. The Vikings will play in the Game of the Week when they host D2 powerhouse Delmar Thursday night, Oct. 19, in Champions Stadium. Tune in and watch this one live on Delaware Live-302 Sports.

**No. 3 Milford 8-2** The Bucs picked up a BIG win in overtime this week in the game of the week against St. Mark's. What a show these athletes put on for their teachers on Teacher Appreciation Day. They faced Indian River away, under the lights Tuesday Oct. 17, Seaford at home Oct. 19 and Laurel at UD in the Turf Bowl at 5:30 Saturday, Oct. 21.

**No. 4 Middletown 8-2** Head Coach Stefany Krygier has her Cavaliers on the move! It's been almost a month since they lost a game and this week will be important for their tournament seeding. They were home Tuesday

Oct. 17 vs. CR, at Conrad Oct. 19, for their Pink Out Game and home Friday, Oct. 20, vs. Polytech.

**No. 5 Charter School of Wilmington 7-2** The Force is a team with a lot of games left on the schedule. They play three tough matchups this week, let's see if they can hold onto their spot here in the top 10. They played Oct. 17 at St. Mark's, Oct. 19 at home vs. Newark Charter and Saturday, Oct. 21, at 1 p.m. in the Turf Bowl vs. Archmere Academy.

**No. 6 Polytech 8-3** The Panthers season has been inconsistent. They win and lose games alternately and can't seem to get a win streak going. Three of their next four games are against top teams in this division so they have their work cut out for them. This week, they were home Tuesday vs. Lake Forest and Oct. 20 at Middletown.

**No. 7 Odessa 8-2** I can't say enough good things about Odessa this season. Head Coach Maria Collier and her roster of 19 Ducks are making a name for themselves. They have a busy week with Dover at home Oct. 16, sister school Appo at home Oct. 18 for Senior Night at 7 p.m., and Friday night they play Delcastle at 8 p.m. at UD for the Turf Bowl.

**No. 8 Appoquinimink 6-5** The Jags saw their other sister school, Odessa, Oct. 18, and play St. Georges Friday night at 6:30 p.m. in the Turf Bowl at UD. They need to rebound from a loss to Middletown as these next two weeks are all about getting the best seed possible for the tournament.

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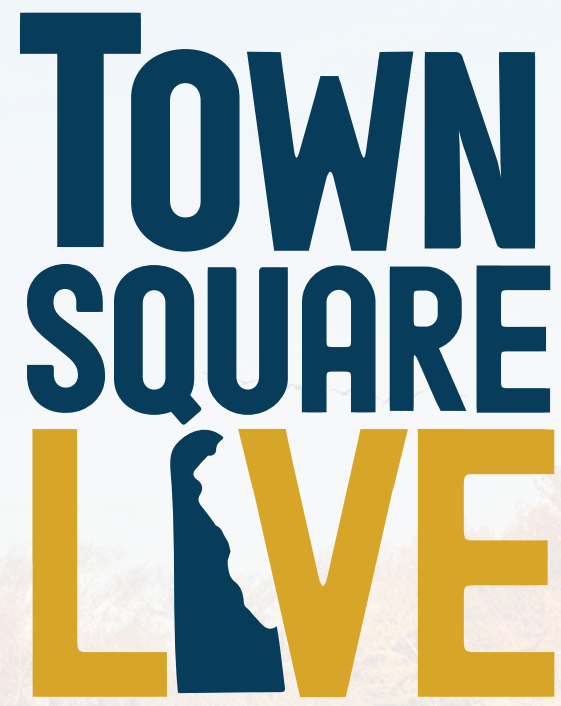
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