

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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Whale of a Sale Returns



UD Launches AI Certificate



View from the Baseline: Playoffs

photo link: Delaware Art Museum



*Community*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# ROCKFORD TOWER LIGHTING GETS KICKOFF EVENT FOR SEASON

BY BETSY PRICE

When Rockford Tower in Wilmington was lit up for the holidays last year, it was the first time it ever had been and it delighted fans of the Wilmington park.

This year, the moment the lights go on will be celebrated at the end of Happy Hour at the Tower kickoff Nov. 4 that will include food trucks, drinks and artists showing off paintings of Wilmington scenes.

The point, said Wilmington City Councilman Nathan Field, is to help establish a dynamic new community tradition that is celebrated annually with a seasonal festival. The event also will double as a fundraiser for [Friends of Wilmington Parks](#) and the [Brandywine River Restoration Trust](#).

**Tickets** for those 13 and older are \$10, with a \$2.51 fee. Those 12 and under admitted free. The party will

last from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., ending with the lighting.


## ROCKFORD HISTORY

Last year, 14 of the tower's 16 arched windows were lit with gold lights. At the kickoff, the tower will be open for the Happy Hour, allowing people to climb up to the floor. The iconic tower was built in 1903 during the Industrial Revolution to hold water and was designed to look old. It sits on a hill in Rockford Park, near the Brandywine River.

Then, the park was meant to offer mill and quarry workers a break from the noise and grime of their jobs. Today, it's part of an upscale neighborhood that includes the Delaware Art Museum.



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# IN KENT, A FUTURISTIC ADDITION TO HISTORIC REGISTER?

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A saucer-shaped house built in 1969 and located outside Houston since 1977, looks like something out of the future. And it might soon be included on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Delaware State Review Board for Historic Preservation recently voted to move forward with a nomination for the Futuro house owned by Barney and Carol Vincelette. The 30-page nomination form calls the 500-square-foot home “startling [and] otherworldly.”

“It’s kind of inspiring, with that high ceiling,” said Stephanie Holyfield, who helped prepare the **nomination** with her daughter, Valarie Shorter. Their work on the nomination came out of a public history class Holyfield had been teaching at Wesley College in 2018.

“We need to save these the same as we would preserve old films,” Barney told WBOC.

If approved—which Holyfield expects in a few weeks—it would be the second Futuro on the register, following one in California. Being listed on the register “shows that it has value where it is,” Holyfield said.

That’s a huge contrast to the reception that Barney got when he bought it, paying \$16,000 for the fully furnished structure, using his Air Force severance and working off the rest to owner Joe Hudson “because no bank would finance such an unusual house,” he wrote in Nest Egg magazine, reposted on the From Moon to Moon blog. Various jurisdictions and his new neighbors didn’t want a Futuro, either.

Barney did not respond to requests for comment.

### BEING ON THE HISTORIC REGISTER

“Being on the register also opens up the ability to get grants for restoration,” Holyfield said, “but it doesn’t

stop you from doing what you want to it.” By contrast, buildings in historic districts do have to follow some guidelines, she added.

The Futuro “consists of a central fiberglass and polyester resin layer that sandwiches a core of polyurethane foam between an outer and inner layer of polyester plastic,” the nomination says. It has 18 windows and a five-step retractable staircase that flashes green or blue.

The Futuros began in the Space Age of the late 1960s, designed first as a ski chalet by Finnish architect Matti Suuronen. The 1973 oil embargo tripled the price of the polymers needed to create the 5,500-pound structure, and that was essentially the end of the Futuros, Claudia Colaprete **writes** in “Secrets of the Eastern Shore.”

Less than 100 were made and Delaware has a second one, near Eagle Crest Airport, north of Lewes.

The Vincelettes’ Futuro “retains many original character-defining features supporting its period of significance,” the nomination says, including the original layout, most kitchen appliances and the bedroom and bathroom furnishings. The original fireplace has been removed and the house uses geothermal heat and adjacent solar panels. The property also has four sheds (made by Polytech students, so they’re not historic), used for laundry, exercise and storage. The Vincelettes’ Futuro is “the best example of a surviving Futuro with exceptional integrity,” the nomination says.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# WHALE OF A SALE RETURNS SATURDAY AFTER FOUR-YEAR HIATUS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

**The Whale of a Sale**, which the Junior League of Wilmington calls Delaware’s largest garage sale, returns Saturday, Nov. 4, for the first time in four years.

“It’s a little bit of work, but it’s so rewarding,” league president Taylor Drainer said last month.

“We have fun hanging around with friends, and we enjoy helping parents find a good pair of shoes or a Christmas gift,” she said. “They’re so grateful at finding really good items at a fraction of retail.”

The sale runs 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday at Concord Mall. The mall has donated two empty stores, adjacent spaces once used by Hollister and Zumiez, at its southern end, so the league suggests that shoppers use the **entrance** by Bonefish Grill. Drainer said that in years past people lined up as early as 5 a.m. to be first to find bargains and she has heard that people camped out overnight.

In 2019, the last full-fledged Whale of a Sale netted \$23,285. The money raised from the sale supports the league’s **mission**: advancing “women’s leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration and training.”

It also supports **Stand Up. Period.**, a program begun in 2019 to address “menstrual—or period—equity.” It has distributed more 250,000 essential items, including tampons, pads, liners and underwear.

“A year’s worth of period supplies costs the average person about \$200,” the league writes. “These products aren’t covered by government assistance programs like WIC or SNAP and they aren’t eligible for purchase under federal flexible spending account or health savings account programs. People without adequate supplies miss out on school, work and activities.”

The Wilmington league is one of the first leagues of the 291 in the Association of Junior Leagues International to establish such a program.

## HOW THE SALE COMES TOGETHER

The Wilmington league has more than 300 members, Drainer said, organized into three categories: new members, active members who have been involved for one to seven years and sustaining members who “are moving on to the next chapter of their lives.”

Active members are asked to donate \$150 worth of items, volunteer two shifts to help set it all up and work a half-day at the sale. New and sustaining members make donations as well, and all members are encouraged to reach out to their friends and family members for items to sell.

League members, plus their family members and friends, are also invited to a fundraiser preview party, where they can shop. The Selfie Lab sponsored the preview party space, she said.

Since 1980, the Wilmington Whale of a Sale has run 37 sales, meaning one every year or every other year, except for the pandemic hiatus in 2020 and 2021. A mini-sale was held in 2022.

Updates to the sale, including glimpses of the merch, will be posted on its **Facebook** event page.

Drainer is already excited by the 30 to 40 wedding dresses donated by Bella’s Yunique Bridal Boutique, near New Castle.

“They’ll be \$100 or less, and they retail for thousands of dollars,” she said.





# PANTRIES, FOOD DRIVES SPREAD THE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Thanksgiving tradition of a holiday centered around the harvest (yes, the football and the shopping came later) also inspires pantries and food drives to help people who are less fortunate. The **Food Bank of Delaware** is hosting three drive-thru mobile pantries across Delaware throughout November.

Its first mobile pantry is Nov. 6, and the nonprofit expects to serve to up to 1,200 households. Pre-registration is encouraged and customers must show proof they are Delaware residents, which could be a state-issued ID, utility bill, Delaware SNAP benefits card or other documents that contain a name and Delaware address.

Dates for the mobile pantries:

- **Sussex County:** Monday, Nov. 6, starting at 10 a.m. at the Crossroad Community Church (20684 State

Forest Road, Georgetown). Register [HERE](#).

- **Kent County:** Wednesday, Nov. 8, starting at 10 a.m. at Dover Motor Speedway (1131 N. du Pont Highway, Dover). Attendees should enter through the Leipsic Road entrance and follow signs. Register [HERE](#).
- **New Castle County:** Friday, Nov. 17, starting at 10 a.m. at Delaware Park (777 Delaware Park Blvd., Stanton). Register [HERE](#).

## DONATIONS

The Food Bank is also encouraging community members to participate in DART First State’s annual Stuff the Bus holiday food drive. Residents can donate food at the following times and locations:

- Monday, Nov. 6, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Safeway

(19283 Coastal Highway, Rehoboth) and ShopRite (19 Chestnut Hill Plaza, Newark)

- Tuesday, Nov. 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Walmart (939 N. du Pont Blvd., Milford) and Safeway (190 John Hunn Brown Road, Dover)
- Wednesday, Nov. 8, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at ShopRite of First State Plaza (1600 W. Newport Pike, Stanton)
- Thursday, Nov. 9, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Rodney Square (Market Street side, Wilmington)
- Friday, Nov. 10, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at ShopRite of Brandywine Commons (1300 Rocky Run Parkway, Wilmington)
- Saturday, Nov. 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at ShopRite of Four Seasons (700 Plaza Drive, Newark)



# DATA REVEALS EXTENT OF DELAWARE'S LOTTERY OBSESSION

BY BRYAN SHUPE

Delaware is the fourth most lottery-obsessed state in the nation. Casino sweepstakes comparison experts at CasinosSweeps.com have compiled a list of how many times people in each state search for more than 140 terms, including every major national lottery as well as lottery-related phrases like “what are the chances of winning the lottery” and “where to buy lottery tickets near me.”

Delaware ranks fourth with an average search volume of 21,680 per month per 100,000. The state lottery has contributed \$6 billion to Delaware’s General Fund, which is used for various public services within the state

and operates video lotteries at three racetrack casinos, including Delaware Park.

The largest win was claimed in 2016 by a resident of Selbyville with a ticket value of \$121.6 million. Delaware’s most searched lottery is the Powerball, with 4,103 average monthly searches per 100,000 compared with 4,076 average searches for the Mega Millions lottery each month.

The lottery’s \$825.2 million in revenue in the 2022 fiscal year including \$416.5 million from video slots, followed by draw games at \$119.8 million, instant games at \$110.9 million, the sports lottery at \$109.5 million,

table games at \$56.3 million and I-Gaming \$12 million according to its website.

The lottery transferred \$284.6 million to the state of Delaware, with \$233 million transferred to the state’s general fund, \$50 million to the Department of Agriculture and \$1.5 million to the Department of Health & Human Services..

Revenues in this past fiscal year are higher in absolute terms than they’ve been going back at least 20 years, during which revenues fluctuated between \$600 and \$700 million.

The 2019 fiscal year was the second highest in terms of absolute revenue, with the lottery making \$782.7 million, followed by \$770.7 million in 2021, \$755.1 million in 2007, 742.2 million in 2011 and \$674 million in 2002.

Delawareans also spend the fifth-highest amount on lottery games nationwide. The \$736 million in lottery sales equates to an average spend of \$743.47 per capita. This is \$421.55, or 131% more than the national state average per-head spending.

The Delaware Lottery plans to allow patrons of top lottery ticket sellers to use their debit cards to buy tickets over the counter. The lottery also will add a Sunday drawing to two of its popular draw games.

The two moves are expected to help the Lottery add another \$2.4 million to the state budget in fiscal year 2024, which started July 1, and \$6 million in fiscal year 2025. Since its founding in 1975, the lottery has only allowed cash to be used to buy a ticket over the counter. The lottery did allow debit cards to be used in machines that sell tickets in places such as Wawa and Royal Farms.





photo link: Visit Delaware



*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# DARIUS BROWN: CITY'S THREE RIVERS AREA SEEKING DEVELOPMENT

Christina and Delaware rivers and including the Route 9 corridor and the Wilmington Riverfront East, has the best access to property, people, government, finance and transportation along roads, water, rail and air, he said in a recent interview.

About 200 people were expected to attend the event. It's free and included Delaware politicians, national influencers, investors, developers and members of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers as part of that association's "60-City Black Wealth Tour."

The association offered a panel on how to help close the black wealth gap by creating more home ownership in minority communities such as the 2nd Senate District as well as through property investment and starting a business. Other panels included developing the area, creating new opportunities, lifting the community and establishing sustainable economic growth.

He pointed to the success that Reach Riverside has had in helping transform housing and more in the last five years.

Brown also wants to draw attention to how the transformation of the Wilmington Riverfront from polluted wasteland to vibrant living and entertainment center is being replicated by Claymont, Delaware City, Milford and other First State communities.

"We hear of investments that are being made in downtown and oftentimes neighborhoods feel like all the investment is being made there and none has been made

in the neighborhood," Brown said.

He hopes to make the case that investment and development does not have to be mutually exclusive. "We can do both well and so Opportunity LIVES here is really about spotlighting and leveraging our strengths, which are the gateways and corridors north of the financial sector of the city and south of the financial sector of the city that we need to drive investment into so that neighborhoods can share in that prosperity," he said.

Any company or business that chooses the Three Rivers region will reap the benefit of \$30 million Brown said he has helped get invested in the area's infrastructure. Some of that is in Riverfront East, the massive \$100 million overhaul along the Christina River designed to mirror Riverfront West.

Brown wants to encourage a range of businesses in the Three Rivers region, including small and mid-size firms, to consider the area including banking, insurance and the fintech industry. They will find a community willing to work in those businesses, he said.

## THREE RIVERS INDUSTRIAL PARKS

He hopes to interest more manufacturing and bioscience companies in the area's industrial parks, including River Edge, Bolden Circle and Twin Span along Route 9 and adjacent to I-295, but also at sites along Governor Printz Boulevard as well as the historic 7th Street Peninsula.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

Companies looking to grow a business in the Mid-Atlantic need look no farther than Wilmington's Three Rivers region for available real estate and for a community that will support a business and help it grow. That's the message Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, highlighted Nov. 1, in his **Opportunity LIVES Here** symposium at the Chase Center on the Riverfront.

His 2nd Senate District, defined by the Brandywine,

# DELMARVA POWER CUTS GAS COST RATE BY 18%

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Higher water rates were announced this year for customers of **Artesian**, **Veolia** and **Wilmington**, so a rate reduction from another utility is pleasant news for Delawareans. Starting in November, Delmarva Power is lowering the gas cost rate by 18 percent. It said that it's its second decrease this year.

Based on this adjusted rate, a residential gas customer, using an average of 56 CCF per month, would see a total monthly bill decrease of \$16.30. The decrease affects just the cost the gas, which Delmarva says is "a direct pass-through cost to customers with no markup and is typically adjusted annually but may be adjusted during the year due to rising or falling market prices."

The rate is just one of 17 lines on the bill for a residential customer who gets both electricity and gas from Delmarva.

As part of its effort to reduce the impact of increases in the cost of gas, Delmarva Power purchases and stores

about half of the natural gas needed to meet winter demand in the summer, when prices are generally lower. "Locking in prices, also known as hedging, seeks to limit the impact of wholesale price volatility that may occur throughout the year," it said.

Good thing the rate is going down now: The World Bank warns that "a major escalation of the war between Israel and Hamas...could send oil prices surging as much as 75 percent," the *New York Times* reports.

Delmarva chose to add to the announcement a pitch for **budget billing** (which averages payments over a 12-month period), **energy efficiency programs** and **energy assistance**. So far this year, Delmarva Power has connected financially strapped customers in Delaware with more than \$5.3 million in energy assistance.



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# NEWARK SECOND IN US FOR INTEREST IN USED CLOTHING; WILMINGTON SEVENTH

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Newark is second on a new list of America’s towns with the most interest in used clothing. And Wilmington is seventh. The list used Google Keyword Planner to see where people were searching the most to buy vintage attire on social e-commerce websites, such as eBay and sites specializing in secondhand fashion.

The announcement’s title referred to the best places to “launch a preloved clothing kingdom” or for entrepreneurs focused on preowned clothes.

The list was led by Morgantown, WV, and nine of the top 10 were in the Northeast or the Mid-Atlantic. The outlier: Salt Lake City at No. 5. The rest: Burlington, VT, at No. 3; Portland, ME, at No. 4; South Burlington,

VT, at No. 6; Charleston, WV, at No. 8; Bangor, ME, at No. 9; and Gaithersburg, MD, at No. 10.

Residents of Morgantown averaged 1,323.9 searches a month per 100,000 residents—245% over the average search rate for the top 200 cities studied. That average was 383.2. The search volume was 1,305.3 in Newark and 721.9 in Wilmington.

Three of the top 10 are college towns, with land grant universities: the University of Delaware in Newark, West Virginia University in Morgantown and the University of Vermont in Burlington.

The first three hits in a Google search of “used clothing Newark de” were Plato’s Closet (a franchise retail



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**”**  
 - URSULINE ACADEMY

store), Phoenix Used Clothing (which focuses on the “reuse and recycling of textiles”) and Goodwill.

The first three hits in a Google search of “used clothing Wilmington de” were Urban Vintage, the Salvation Army Thrift Store and the Thrift Shop at Tower Hill, all in Wilmington.

For the national list, thousands of search terms were analyzed for Income Nerd, including “Etsy clothing,” “used clothing Vinted” and “Poshmark shirt.” The number crunching included America’s 150 largest cities and the three largest in each state.





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photo link: City of Newark, Delaware



*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**

# DELAWARE CITY

## DE CITY FIRE TRAINS FOR SHOOTINGS, INVESTS IN BALLISTIC GEAR

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Delaware City Fire Co.** wants to make sure the town's 2,000 residents are protected in the case of an active shooter emergency. The fire company has been collaboratively training with other state law enforcement agencies, fire departments, Emergency Medical Services and emergency management groups. The first responders said in a press release that additional training is in response to a recent local incident that highlighted the need for rapidly accessible trauma supplies.

Earlier in the year, Delaware City and surrounding first responders were dispatched to a shooting with multiple victims. One patient was located on scene suffering from critical injuries requiring a significant amount of trauma supplies. An additional patient reported to be at the scene had been transported to a hospital by private auto.

"While this was not a 'mass casualty incident,' it easily could have been," the press release said.

The unit has purchased more trauma supplies to be stocked on each ambulance and also bought more trauma kits from **North American Rescue**. It's a national group that provides combat and trauma care.

Jeff Sands, assistant chief of the fire crew, said the company bought a total of nine kits: two for each of the two ambulances and one each for the fire apparatus and command vehicles. That cost the fire company \$2,600. It's also buying ballistic armor and helmets.

Last year, the **Delaware State Fire Chief's Association** distributed some equipment to fire companies courtesy of funding from the **Delaware Emergency Management Agency**, which has also provided funding for recent statewide training initiatives.



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The Delaware City press release came Oct. 26 after yet-another U.S. mass shooting, this time in Lewiston, Maine.

A 40-year-old male suspect, Robert Card, who's a fire-arms instructor and believed to be in the Army Reserve, had shot and killed 18 people. The suspect, Robert Card, was found dead Friday night in Lisbon, Maine, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

"In years past, it was unheard of for firefighters, EMTs and paramedics to need to wear ballistic armor and ballistic helmets," the Delaware City Fire Co. said in a press release. "But as threats continue to change, we need to be prepared to save lives in high-risk environments."





# UD RALLY CALLS FOR CEASEFIRE IN GAZA, JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE

BY BETSY PRICE

A rally organized by the University of Delaware **Students for Justice in Palestine** listened to calls for a ceasefire and expressions of grief for those killed during the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks and Israel’s retaliation in Gaza.

“We come together to reaffirm our commitment to a peaceful and just resolution, one that upholds the rights and dignities of all parties involved,” the event’s moderator said in opening the rally. “As we raise our voices, let us remember the importance of dialogue, understanding and cooperation, for it is through these means that we can pave the path for a brighter future for Palestinian and marginalized groups everywhere.”

Several speakers, who seemed to be mostly students, read letters from people who did not want to read themselves and led the crowd in call-and-responses: “Gaza, Gaza, don’t you cry” with a crowd response of “Palestine will never die;” “Hey, hey, ho, ho” with a response

of “The occupation has to go;” and, the most popular, “Free, Free Palestine” said by a speaker and repeated by the crowd.

One student thanked UD President Dennis Assanis for encouraging the students to stand up for their convictions. “I know that many of us are afraid to speak up for our beliefs on this, whether that be out of fear of retaliation from potential employers, deportation from this country or violence and harassment against us and our loved ones,” one student said.

She cited a Prophet Muhammad quote that said if you saw evil and could not change it with your hand, you should change it with your tongue.

The peaceful one-hour long rally on the Green in front of Memorial Hall was attended by about 200 people, including families with small children, at its peak.

At one lull in the amplified sound, a young man stand-

ing on a nearby brick wall screamed “God bless Israel. F–k Hamas.” As he jumped off the wall, the crowd responded by breaking out in several spontaneous rounds of “Free, Free Palestine” while watching the screamer walk through a sidewalk archway off the Green. A few minutes later, two university police officers appeared near the arch, but were not needed during the evening.

The rally ended with a die-in, illustrating the loss of life in Gaza. About half the crowd—mostly the young—laid down but tried to keep their signs and banners up and visible. In the background, one man waved a large Pakistani flag.

## CALLS FOR JUSTICE

Ikram Masmoudi, a UD associate professor of Arabic, told the crowd they were there at the call of their consciences and humanity to express grief and sadness for the events unfolding in Gaza.

“We also condemn in the strongest terms the atrocious attacks of Oct. 7 on innocent Israeli people,” Masmoudi said, “but we also condemn the vicious, disproportionate and the enraging retaliation of Israel.” Israel’s attacks defy all international laws by bombing hospitals, churches, mosques, houses and schools, she said. “It is an attack on all of humanity,” she said. Elected officials must press for a ceasefire and a “serious” negotiated solution, she said.

“And not a return to the status quo that led to the deadlock where all parties find themselves today,” Masmoudi said. “Above all, we call for the end of the occupation. End occupation so that people—Israelis and Palestinians—can live together in peace, freedom and dignity. Free Palestine.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



photo credit: Christina School District



*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# SATS TO MOVE EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE IN 2024 WITH ADAPTIVE FORMAT

BY JAREK RUTZ

The SATs—a standardized test widely used for college admissions and mandated in Delaware—will be taken exclusively online for First State students starting in 2024. “The College Board is moving to a full digital adaptive test,” said Theresa Bennett, director of the Office of Assessment at the [Delaware Department of Education](#).

Adaptive tests vary the difficulty level and order of questions that get asked, depending on a student’s performance within the test.

“They also made some changes as far as fewer items, like for the reading passages,” Bennett said. “Instead of having a full end reading passage with 10 questions attached to it, it’s now going to be a shorter paragraph with one question.”

Shawn Snyder, manager of assessment and instruction at [Red Clay Consolidated School District](#), believes it will now be a more meaningful assessment.

“The old SAT was three plus hours, and that can be really challenging to schedule in a day,” he said. “So now that it’s going to be a two hour and 15 minute test, we’ll be able to fit that in before lunchtime starts, so from an organizational structural part, it’ll be easier to manage.”

He’s excited about the adaptive testing model.

“If a student gets a bunch of questions wrong, it’s going to ask them a few easier questions to find where their zone is of what they know, and then try to ask questions in that area to establish what their proficiency level is,” he said.

In decades past, he said, there’s that classic experience of going through the math section or another section and hitting a brick wall and saying “oh gosh, I have no idea how to answer any of this.”

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# ED. LEADERS DISCUSS EQUITY AHEAD OF DECEMBER FUNDING REPORT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two dozen leaders from state and national educational organizations on Monday got a sneak peek of potential recommendations on how Delaware should fund schools. A report by the [American Institutes for Research](#), being paid for by the Delaware Department of Education and designed to help guide state recommendations on changing the way schools are funded is expected to be released by the end of 2023.

Representatives of Rodel, DelawareCAN, ACLU Delaware, First State Educate, the Education Trust, the Wilmington Center for Education Equity and Policy, Christina School District and a few other groups asked questions and shared ideas on the state's funding mechanism. That mechanism was established in the 1940s and did not take into account special needs students, English language learners and income disparities.

Margie López Waite, chief executive officer of [Las Américas ASPIRA Academy](#) shared stats from a 2023

study conducted by [Franklin & Marshall College's](#) Center for Opinion Research which indicate that the First State is far from first when it comes to educational equity.

“Opportunity funding represents a small percentage of our funding,” she said. “It’s only about an additional 3% to 9% per student, while other states fund these student populations at an average of 25% to 50%, and in some states it’s up to 100% more funding.”

Opportunity funding is additional money from the state for low-income students and multi-language learners. A 2021 lawsuit settlement led to making that weighted funding permanent in Delaware. By fiscal year 2025, opportunity funding will more than double to \$60 million a year from \$25 million a year.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

 DELAWARECAN

# DID YOU KNOW?

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# ODYSSEY TEACHER IS AMERICAN FINALIST FOR \$1M PRIZE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Melissa Tracy, a social studies teacher at **Odyssey Charter School** in Wilmington, is one of 10 finalists — and the only U.S. one—for the \$1 million **2023 Global Teacher Prize**.

“I just feel so privileged to even be in the company of the other educators from all around the world,” Tracy said Thursday.

Tracy seemed to still be stunned Thursday to discover she is not only one of the finalist, but the only American. She read the biographies of the other nine finalists and was in awe to be in the company of such educational excellence. “To be honest, I was shocked to even be a top 50 finalist,” she said.

Tracy has already garnered national recognition with an award for combating hunger with Odyssey’s Hydroponic Learning Lab, which she oversees after helping to create. The native Californian is also the first educator in Delaware to teach the Advanced Placement African American Studies. It’s a new class from the College Board that will have a national rollout throughout 2024.

Tracy said the Global application process was exhaustive and involved interviews and questions on community contributions, impact on student achievement, impact on colleagues and more.

The other nine finalists are from Ghana, India, South Africa, United Kingdom, France, Pakistan, Canada, Chile and Ukraine. The winner will be announced Nov. 8, in

Paris, France, as part of the general meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

“I’m not expecting to win, but if for some reason I were to win, I plan on sharing some of the award money with some of the other finalists,” Tracy said. She also plans to spend some of the reward money to help spread Odyssey’s hydroponic programming to other schools.

One of Tracy’s core mantras is that administrators and community members need to be open to saying “yes.”

“We need to create spaces by which educators can innovate and be creative,” she said. “There are so many phenomenal educators out there that are prevented from experimenting, from pursuing personal interests that would ultimately benefit students.”

Tracy said the hydroponic program, which had its greatest impact during the pandemic, would not be possible if the school administration, board, facilities team and students were not supportive of her passion and vision.

“Sometimes we forget what the focus should be on, and the focus should be on our students,” she said. “We need to create more opportunities for educators to simply be creative and try new things, and I feel like our program is a testament to that.”



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A futuristic graphic with a central glowing hexagon containing the letters 'AI'. The background is dark blue with various white icons like a padlock, a globe, a brain, and a gear, connected by a network of lines. Two hands are shown interacting with the central 'AI' hexagon.

# UD LAUNCHES GRADUATE CERTIFICATE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

BY JAREK RUTZ

The University of Delaware is now offering a certificate for graduate students focused on artificial intelligence. The program requires nine credits in classes designed to teach Artificial Intelligence, a rapidly evolving field that has been integrated into many facets of everyday life, the economy and education.

Students in the program will have to complete three classes of the nine offered, which are: Introduction to Computer Vision, Artificial Intelligence, Introduction to Data Mining, Introduction to Machine Learning, Introduction to Multi-Agent Systems, Introduction to Natural Language Processing, Topics: Artificial Intelligence, Multi-Agent Systems and Advanced Topics in Artificial Intelligence.

Each course must be completed with at least a B grade

and students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade point average in the program to earn the certificate.

The new certificate is designed to provide students with the fundamental knowledge needed to pursue careers in AI research, development and application development, stated Associate Professor Sunita Chandrasekaran and Professor Kathy McCoy, the directors of the certificate program.

Students will learn the tools to analyze and use AI techniques to address complex computational problems; understand data set preparation and implementation for complex problem-solving; design, implement and evaluate a variety of AI-based solutions; use effective professional communication; and make informed AI-related judgements using legal and ethical principles.

The school stated that Chat GPT, a popular chat bot, is one example of how AI is “revolutionizing how we work, live and interact with the world” and highlights the importance of having a workforce that can understand, develop and apply AI tools. Chat GPT is also one of the countless programs that allow a user to simply type a prompt, and have the application type a written response or display an image.

For example, a user could prompt the program to “write a short story about Mickey Mouse becoming an Olympic athlete” or “create a photo of Mickey Mouse with a gold medal on a tri-level podium” and AI will generate the story or image.

This graduate program is available to both prospective and current graduate students, as well as currently enrolled undergraduates. For undergrads, it’s similar to how UD’s 4+1 programs work, in which undergraduates are also able to enroll in this certificate program and, upon completion of the required coursework, graduate with both a bachelor’s degree and graduate certificate.

“The skills and experiences acquired through this certificate program not only prepare students for job opportunities, but also set them on a path for long-term success in the rapidly evolving field of AI,” Chandrasekaran and McCoy said in a joint statement.

UD is also in the process of developing “bridge courses” that would provide the background necessary to take the courses in the AI certificate. The school hopes to make those available by summer 2024. Learn more about the graduate [AI certificate program](#).





BY JAREK RUTZ

Six Democratic state legislators are sponsoring legislation that would require all public schools to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students. [House Bill 125](#), whose primary sponsor is Rep. Sherae'a Moore, D-Middletown, was introduced in April, but never heard by the General Assembly, which returns to session in January. Moore declined an interview to discuss the bill.

The bill explains that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) eased program restrictions to allow for free breakfast and lunch for all students. However, the department's waivers expired on June 30, 2022, so Delaware schools participating in the [USDA School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program](#) were required to return to pre-pandemic policies on free meals.

"The Delaware Department of Education appreciates the intent of the legislation, but we realize the potential for a significant fiscal note," said Alison May, public

# BILL TO MANDATE FREE SCHOOL MEALS COULD COST STATE MILLIONS

information officer at the [Department of Education](#). The original fiscal note of the bill had a hefty state cost that included:

- \$31,635,852 (\$6,801,866 for breakfast and \$24,833,986 for lunch) in fiscal year 2024
- \$33,147,815 (\$7,125,645 for breakfast and \$26,022,170 for lunch) in fiscal year 2025
- \$34,804,569 (\$7,486,590 for breakfast and \$27,317,979 for lunch) in fiscal year 2026

The fiscal note—a projection of its cost—will be updated when the General Assembly reconvenes in January, May said.

One breakfast for one student is estimated to cost the state between 30 cents and \$2.17 depending on the need level of the school, and one lunch for one student is estimated to cost the state between 40 cents and \$3.56. There is no cost to the state for federally reimbursed free breakfasts or lunches. Approximately 9,022,550 breakfasts and 16,427,270 lunches are served in Delaware schools each year.

Some schools in low-income communities are part of the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision, which allows all their students to get free meals and districts are reimbursed by the federal government. Students who are not in CEP schools have to meet certain household incomes to qualify for free meals. Out of Delaware's 250 public schools, there are 127 CEP schools, according to Department of Education [data](#).

"You have to separate the emotion of wanting to ensure that no child goes to school hungry from what the state can afford to do," said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover. "Middle class Delawareans will be asked to give more of their hard-earned dollars to pay for this program."

There is a national push to provide more free meals to students, largely initiated by Democrat legislation.

"Delawareans already pay for children from low-income households to receive free nutrition and adding to that bill by including households like mine may seem like a good idea until you realize that nothing is free and ultimately someone has to pay the bill," he said.

The idea that no child has to go to school hungry is one everyone supports, he said, but the state has programs in place to ensure that doesn't occur and adding millions of dollars to Delaware's budget at a time when the budget is already in a deficit is a mistake.

"A family of four can qualify for nearly \$300 in food stamp money a week if they meet income guidelines and those same children qualify for free and reduced lunch along with families who are challenged when it comes to income in their households," he said. "When you expand government programs like this one, you have to take away funding from other programs or you have to ask the taxpayer to give more at a time when they can ill afford to do so given the inflation and challenges this state and country are facing."

photo credit: Ben Fulton



*Sports*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



## VIEW FROM THE BASELINE: FIRST ROUND OF PLAYOFFS

BY JASON WINCHELL

Tournament fever is in the air. One of the most exciting championship events on the high school calendar is just a few days away.

The volleyball postseason gets going on Wednesday (Nov. 1) and Thursday (Nov. 2), with four first-round matches each night. The second round will take place Friday and Saturday.

Saint Mark's is the top seed despite a loss in the regular season finale to Ursuline. The Spartans were one of three teams to finish 14-1 this year, along with Smyrna and Tower Hill. Interestingly, the Spartans and Hillers both lost to Ursuline. Saint Mark's handed Smyrna its lone setback.

Sanford, which earned the final spot in the 24-team bracket on a three-way tiebreaker, is back in the field for

the first time since 2015 and just the second time since the turn of the century. They are led by Sarah Cushing, the former Padua standout who was a member of the Pandas' state championship teams in 2013 and '14. They visit Tower Hill, the ninth seed, on Thursday.

The 16th seed, Sussex Academy, earned a spot by virtue of its Henlopen South championship. The Seahawks, under the direction of Hailee Gooch, are making their second appearance since their first varsity season in 2015. They lost to Red Lion in the first round in 2017. Sussex Academy will host Friends on Thursday.

And Delaware Military Academy secured a spot in the field with a four-match winning streak to end the regular season. That included a big sweep of Middletown, the eighth seed. DMA had to move a few home

games while repairs were made to its home court and coach Nikki Kinnier has missed much of the season. Former Seahawks standout Cassie Kowalski has been leading the team. DMA, the 21st seed, will play at St. Georges on Wednesday.

All games through the quarterfinals will be played at home sites at 6:30 p.m., although the starting times are subject to change. The semifinals will be at the Bob Carpenter Center on Nov. 13, with the first match at 6 p.m. and the finals are at the Bob on Nov. 16. Tickets for the first and second rounds and the quarterfinals, will be available at [gofan.co/app/school/DIAA](http://gofan.co/app/school/DIAA).

The top 10 below, are not the same as the seeding for the tournament.

**No. 1 Saint Mark's (No. 1 seed)** is looking to win another title after losing in the championship last season to Tower Hill.

**No. 2 Smyrna (No. 2 seed)** also bowed out of the tournament last year with a loss to Tower Hill. The Eagles are riding a five-match winning streak, plus they won the Henlopen Conference title match.

**No. 3 Ursuline (No. 4 seed)** knocked off Saint Mark's in the regular season finale, a five-set marathon that lasted well over two hours. The Raiders will be a tough out.

**No. 4 Tower Hill (No. 9 seed)** wears the crown. The Hillers' seeding was affected by their relative lack of bonus points, but they won as the ninth seed last year.

**No. 5 Padua (No. 5 seed)** has played as many tournament teams as anyone in Delaware as the tourney begins. In addition, it defeated two out-of-state powerhouses.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# THE CORNER SCOOP: DIAA STATE TOURNAMENT PREVIEW

BY SHANNON TIMMONS

We have reached the end of the 2023 regular season in field hockey. Saturday, Oct. 28, Delmar was crowned the Henlopen Conference Champions as they defeated Smyrna 6-0 on their home field. A great win for the Delmar community who has suffered the loss of Carter Figgs, a 16-year-old football player and wrestler. This game was a rematch of the regular season game between the top D1 and top D2 teams, where Smyrna edged Delmar 3-2 and broke the 120-game win streak the Wildcats had. Again, that is a record I don't think we will soon see again, if ever. Congratulations to Delmar and head coach Jodi Hollamon for that incredible accomplishment and to all the players who had a part in those 120 wins.

For the first time Delmar and Cape will not be the number one seeds in each of their respective brackets. Here are the seeds and a preview of what should be the

most competitive tournament in the past few seasons.

The tournament committee has seeded the Division 1 and Division 2 tournament brackets. Eight teams will play in the Division 1 playoffs and 12 teams will play in the Division 2 playoffs. What you will see by all these teams is an unselfish style of play. Many of these players lead in goals, but the assists are consistent too. Some teams have up to 10 and 11 players with goals on the season. Field hockey is truly an unselfish sport and these teams are the best at demonstrating that. Credit to all the coaches who spent countless hours prepping their squads for the opportunity to compete in the DIAA tournament and be the best team on any given game day. That's all it takes to be called champion. Best of luck to all coaches and players!

Games of the Week: Division 2: Wednesday, Nov. 1, 1st Round & Saturday, Nov. 4, Quarterfinals Division 1

Thursday, Nov. 2 Quarterfinals

Here is the tournament seeding for Delaware Live-302 Sports—Division 2:

**Bye Round 1: No 1. Newark Charter 14-1** The Patriots, under head coach Stacey Spiker have made a name for themselves this season. Upsetting the traditional rankings and having one of the strongest offensive attacks I've seen, they are the top seed in D2 and have a first round bye. Charter is led by Amanda Rattay (33 goals, 16 assists), Audrey Nelson (16 goals, 13 assists), and Sophia Orlando (nine goals, eight assists).

**Bye Round 1 : No 2. Delmar 13-2** The Wildcats are always a tournament favorite this time of year and I don't think a two seed will stop Jodi Hollamon and her crew from being ready to face anyone on gameday. Congrats to the Henlopen Conference champs.

**Bye Round 1: No 3. Caravel 13-2** The Bucs under head coach Sarah Broehl have a strong three seed and a first round bye. Caravel's midfield and defense are top notch. It will need to figure out how to put up goals in order to win and advance. Caravel is led by Delaney Brunner, Katie Cole, Carson Pearce and goalkeeper Addison Van Rensler.

**Bye Round 1 : No 4. St. Mark's 13-2** The Spartans are led by their young head coach from the University of Delaware, Alexis Esbitt. They have run out their schedule and won five games in a row, which they will hope to carry over into tournament play. Kieran Haywood (17 goals, 12 assists), Katherine Hanich (17 goals, seven assists) and goalkeeper Catherine Jones (25 saves) will lead the way.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

# LAMONS AND STAMPER LEAD TATNALL TO VICTORY



BY NICK HALLIDAY

Rahshan LaMons and Micah Stamper led the way for the No. 1 ranked 3A Tatnall Hornets in a commanding victory over St. Elizabeths Oct. 26. LaMons and his fellow Hornets teammates spoiled the Vikings' homecoming by winning by a margin that forced a running clock.

LaMons and Stamper accounted for all six touchdowns in a 41-6 route over the Vikings. Ironically, both players scored two offensive touchdowns and one defensive touchdown.

On the game's opening kickoff, the Vikings returner fumbled the ball and Stamper picked it up and returned 25 yards for a touchdown. He then went on to score two

offensive touchdowns on four- and 10-yard runs.

LaMons' defensive touchdown came late in the third quarter when he picked off a pass attempt from the Vikings and returned it 59 yards for a pick six. His two offensive touchdowns were on a four-yard run and an 80-yard run that he kept on a quarterback keeper and just outran the Vikings defense.

Rahshan finished with 228 yards on 10 carries, to go along with his three touchdowns. After the game we asked head coach Brendon Ireton what Rahshan means to his team.



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“Rahshan is our point guard, he makes everyone around him better and the guys around have stepped up and made plays to compliment what he does. Stamp-er, Moore, Gordon, Maycole and Minor have all made plays to go along with what he does. Our line (Boothe, Hoggard, Glazier, Martire, Henly and Homer) has done a tremendous job learning and buying into our scheme. We are also doing some great things defensively, that allows us to play with confidence on offense. Very proud of all our players and assistant coaches, they have done a great job building something special this season.”



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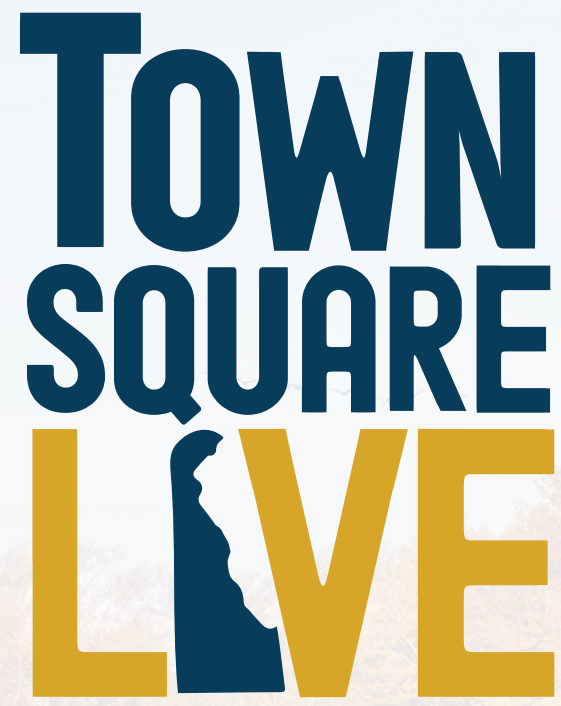
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