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Contents

photo link: Longwood Gardens

Community	3
Business	7
Food & Dining	11
Government	13
Education.....	18
Sports	23
Stay Connected	27



Community Composting Facility Starting



DNREC Final EV Regulations



Salesianum Earns Trip to State Championship

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



COMMUNITY COMPOSTING FACILITY STARTING IN BRANDYWINE HUNDRED

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Plastic Free Delaware, a group that formed a decade ago to get rid of environmentally unfriendly single-use bags, is now tackling something that forms a **quarter** of municipal waste: Food scraps. It is creating its first community composting facility in Talley Day Park, behind the Brandywine Hundred Library, and prominently located right across a parking area from the playground.

The facility is for people who “want to compost your kitchen scraps, but don’t want to manage a backyard bin, or cannot for whatever reason, or you just like the social aspects of being in it together with others,” New Castle County Councilwoman Dee Durham wrote in her latest newsletter.

Durham is also on the board of Plastic Free Delaware, and the project is led for the group by Brigid Gregory.

They met through the Delaware Recycling Public Advisory Committee. Gregory and her husband, Andrew Trites, returned to Delaware in 2019. She has the education (a bachelor of science in energy, business and finance, with a minor in environmental inquiry, and a master of business administration in sustainability studies), the career background (four years at Johns Hopkins as the waste reduction and recycling coordinator) and the personal interest (a vermicomposting bin in a closet and a small composting tumbler in the backyard).

“Dee and I noticed a need for a community composting facility in Delaware,” she said. That realization led to “a lot of research into what might work and what is legal.” Homeowners can easily compost on their property, but it took a year for the group to clear the \$3,000

Talley Day facility with New Castle County and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.

The **Delaware Community Composting Initiative** has received funding—\$27,000 the first year and \$50,000 this year—from the New Castle County Conservation District, DNREC and the Delaware Solid Waste Authority, plus honorariums from speaking at events and in-kind donations. This funding goes toward infrastructure, member training materials, outreach and educational materials on food waste reduction and diversion, resources to help schools improve their waste reduction and diversion programs and Gregory’s contracted time. “I’m currently working with Wilmington Charter High School and Booker T. Washington Elementary on waste reduction pilot programs,” she said.

Plastic Free Delaware is also working to develop similar facilities at the Nest Play Cafe in Middletown, Wilmington Friends School in Alapocas and Frear Elementary near Camden.

“Composting is work to do well,” Gregory said. That’s why members will start out with an hour of training and they are asked to volunteer 1.5 hours a month at the facility to use a shovel to mix the materials, record pile temperatures, water the piles and handle other tasks. Or they can pay \$47.70 a month to belong. There’s an **online form** to apply. The facility is expected to open by early January.

There are limits on what is accepted: “only uncooked fruit and vegetable scraps, clean eggshells, coffee grinds with filters, untreated grass and plant material, straw, leaves, wood chips and broken-down sticks.”

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PLANNERS: HOW WOULD YOU LIKE KIRKWOOD HIGHWAY TO CHANGE?

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A regional planning agency wants your opinion on the **future of Kirkwood Highway** in its first comprehensive review of eight miles of the retail and business corridor.

“We have never looked at the full Kirkwood Highway/Capitol Trail Corridor for both transportation and land use, in this way,” said Dave Gula, principal planner for the Wilmington Area Planning Council. “To our knowledge no agency has taken this full-length view,” he said, acknowledging the agency’s Churchman’s Crossing **plan**, a recent review of growth in the middle of the area.

“The goal is for an attractive and cohesive plan...that will accommodate future economic growth along the corridor and position existing businesses to be competitive as changes to the retail business models occur,” WILMAPCO writes on the landing page for the project.

The most prominent of those changes, of course, is already underway: online shopping.

The public’s input starts with a visioning workshop on Dec. 11 at the Cranston Heights Fire Company, conveniently located at 3306 Kirkwood Highway. People can stop by anytime between 4 and 7 p.m. to learn about the project, share their thoughts and participate in visioning exercises. In visioning exercises, participants vote on their favorite looks of photos and renderings of other places. Four more workshops are planned and an online survey is available as well. A master plan is expected to be completed in the spring of 2025.

The center of the study is on Kirkwood Highway (also known as Route 2) from Possum Park Road (Route 72) to Elsmere. The study area runs east to the CSX tracks and west up to Paper Mill Road, Fox Den Road, New Linden Hill Road, Limestone Road, McKennans Church Road, Faulkland Road, Lancaster Pike and the municipal limits of Elsmere.

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HERE'S HOW LONGWOOD CREATED ITS RETRO CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

BY BETSY PRICE

Longwood Gardens planners kicked around the idea of a retro Christmas display for years before debuting it this holiday season.

“I think everybody’s nostalgic around the holiday season,” said Jim Sutton, Longwood’s display designer. “Christmas is one of those times where it’s sort of a melding between what’s old and what’s new. A lot of people pull things out and they pass them down through the family, so I think it’s one of those things that just resonates with everybody.”

The delay for Longwood came about because planners couldn’t agree on a decade to focus on. “So we kind of picked the 40s, 50s and 60s and made it in that time range without trying to get too specific as far as one decade versus another,” Sutton said.

As with all Longwood **Christmas displays**, the themes from the decades show up in big and little ways and Longwood used area artisans to provide some of the details. Visitors can see the 40s in the massive tinsel garlands hanging from lamp posts in the conservatory’s show-stopping fern floor display, meant to evoke a small town street scene from the 1940s.

REMAKING RETRO TINSEL

The swags were made from vintage patterns. “The lending company we work with bought a company in China that used to produce it,” Sutton said. “They had the original plans for it and they had beautiful vintage catalogs. They’re 40-foot long. We had them make six of them to go across the fern floor.”



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Guests can also see the 40s in the plastic building blocks used to make bird feeders on the wildlife tree near the lake. The blocks are meant to be reminiscent of Legos, without mentioning them by name. The Danish toys came out in the 30s but were becoming popular in the 40s. The 50s are reflected in bubble lights and ornaments on the trees.

“Lots of ornaments,” Sutton said. Many are vintage, but Longwood staff made a lot of them, too. Some are the ornaments boomers may remember making as kids by attaching crystals, sequins and beads to a styrofoam ball. One gardener made stained glass ornaments and another used pipe cleaners.

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photo link: Visit Delaware



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



MILFORD'S NEW 'FARMACY MARKET' GREW OUT OF AN ABUNDANT GARDEN

BY BETSY PRICE

A new market in Milford hopes to help the community harness the nutritional power of locally grown produce and regionally made products. [The Farmacy Market](#) at 28 S. Walnut St., near My Sister's Fault Bakery, hosted invited friends and family Wednesday and formally opened Saturday for Small Business Saturday.

It has its roots in a scary episode of the lives of co-owners Chantel and Patrick Helmick. He is a Milford native and the couple had returned to his Southern Delaware town from Brevard College, where they met while both were on sports scholarships, to work on their masters at Wilmington College.

Around the time of their second wedding anniversary, Chantel was diagnosed with stage 2 Hodgkin's lymphoma, perilously close to stage 3. It's a cancer of the lymphatic system, a key part of the immune system.

Chantel underwent chemotherapy every two weeks for seven months to fight it. Doctors didn't want to give her radiation because of the location of the tumors and because of how it would affect her chances of having children. She was 25 and the couple wanted a family. At their age, though, they didn't have the \$20,000 they would need to harvest and freeze her eggs.

A stunned Patrick felt hopeless and wondered what he could do to support Chantel and improve her experience and maybe her outcome. He threw himself into gardening.

"I can't make chemotherapy drugs, but what I can do is produce the most nutritionally dense food possible and that's what I did," he said. "I started a backyard garden so she was getting the best nutrition possible as she fought cancer and she defeated it."

After she was declared cancer-free, he continued gardening, expanding the space devoted to it.

"By 2019, I was growing so much produce and I was giving it away to families and friends that people were saying to me, please stop giving me free produce," he said with a laugh. "Like I was walking around trying to find a cracked window to sneak a zucchini through. It was coming out of my ears."

THE FARMACY GENESIS

In 2020, the couple launched [Helmick's Homestead](#) and began selling their produce at the Milford, Dover and other farmers markets. Through that, they met a lot of area growers and makers offering quality products and the Helmicks began to entertain the idea of a more permanent place.

Along the way, they became parents. Their daughter, River, is 4 and their son, Noah, is 2, and Chantel is expecting a third child.

Along the way, they had become friends with Sherry and Bryan Shupe, who own Fur Baby Pet Resort, a business Sherry was starting when she and Bryan met. He also is Milford's member of the Delaware House of Representatives and CEO of Delaware LIVE.

As is the case in so many small towns, Patrick's family had known Bryan's family. They all have young children, and the Helmicks and the Shupes saw each other a lot at the farmers market and around town. They began to realize they shared the same concerns about local produce, sustainability and limiting chemicals and pesticides in food. That turned into a business plan for The Farmacy Market, Chantell said.

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OHIO CHEMICALS SETTLEMENT GIVES \$25 MILLION TO DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

The First State is getting \$25 million from a newly settled lawsuit in Ohio that triggered a contingency payment to Delaware. Chemours, DuPont and Corteva reached a \$110 million settlement in Ohio over “forever chemicals,” which refer to the release of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances from the facilities of those companies.

The substances, known as PFAS, have negative environmental impacts. They do not break down in the environment, can move through soils and contaminate drinking water sources, and can build up in fish and wildlife. Dozens of companies have faced thousands of lawsuits in recent years due to alleged contamination.

In 2021, Delaware settled with E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, The Chemours Company, DuPont de Nemours, Inc. and Corteva, Inc. The settlement was for

\$50 million, which went towards environmental restoration, improvement, sampling and analysis, community environmental justice and equity grants, and other natural resource needs. Part of the 2021 settlement stated that the companies will fund up to an additional \$25 million if they settle similar claims with other states for more than \$50 million.

“We are thrilled that our forward-thinking settlement with DuPont and others is now \$25 million more valuable to the state of Delaware,” said Kathy Jennings, Delaware’s attorney general. “That’s 50% more to restore our natural resources, to support public health initiatives in impacted communities and to keep our neighbors healthy.”



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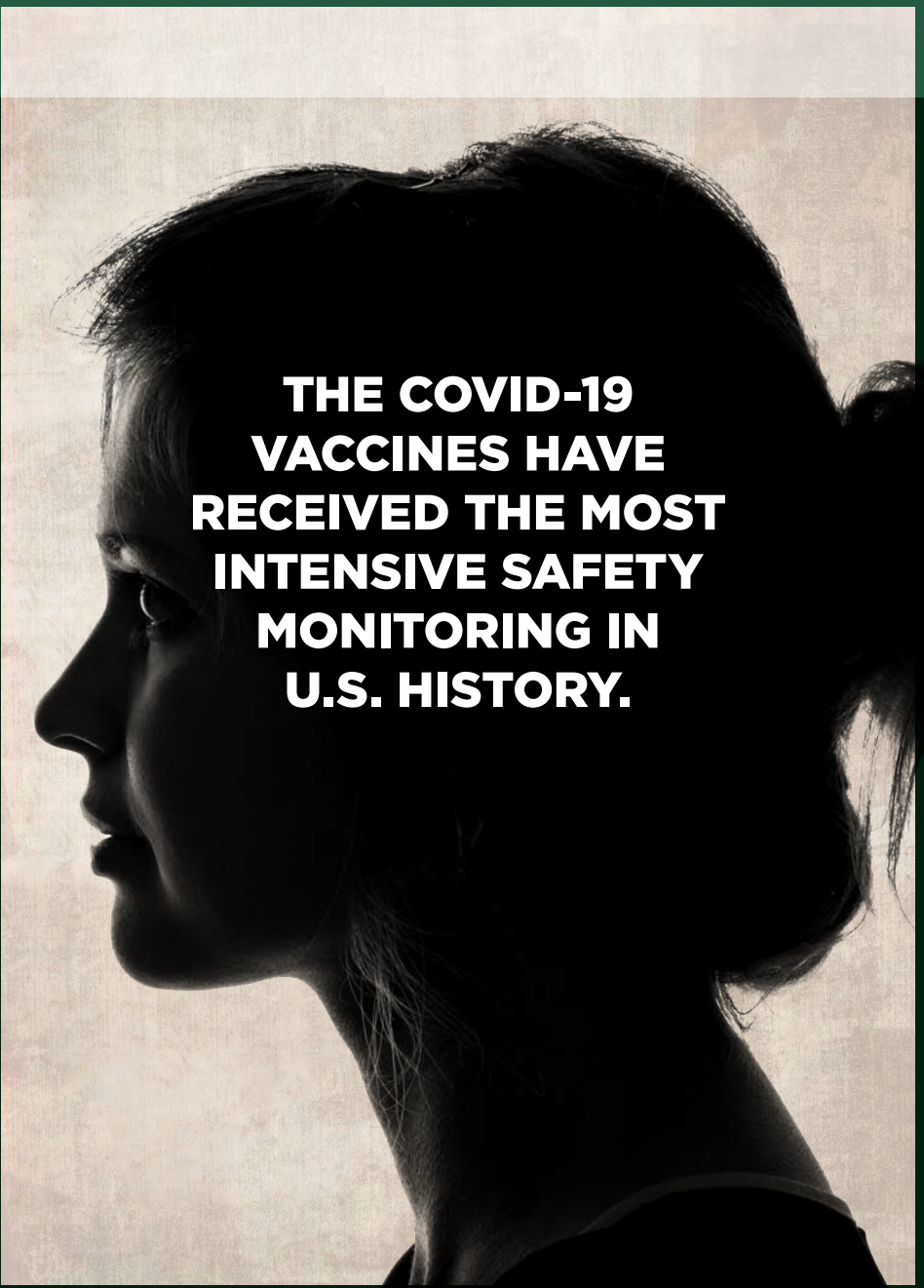


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Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



TAKE A LOOK AT THESE 10 DELAWARE HOLIDAY POP-UP BARS

BY PAM GEORGE

It's holiday pop-up season, and celebrants can never get enough holly, bells and elves. But festive décor is no longer limited to malls and retail stores. Restaurants are also sprinkling holiday cheer in their communities.

JINGLE BAR AT GRAIN CRAFT BAR + KITCHEN

Last year, the holiday theme was limited to the Delaware Avenue restaurant's rear patio, which has an outdoor bar. However, the holiday pop-up was so well-loved that the entire restaurant is participating this year. "The team went all out this time," said co-owner Lee Mikles.

The drink menu includes The Glittery Grinch (white wine, Patron Citronge, fresh fruit, white cranberry juice and ginger ale) and Rudolph's Nightcap (1792 Bourbon, maple syrup, Angostura bitters and cinnamon). The hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 3 p.m. to 11 p.m.

BLITZEN HOLIDAY POP-UP

The seasonal pop-up at 220 W. Ninth St.— Pochi's old space in downtown Wilmington—is owned by Mike

Day, who also has [The Farmer & the Cow](#) on Market Street. Delaware uber-designer Dallas Shaw decorated the pop-up as a fashionable abode for Santa's head reindeer. This year, Blitzen has a full kitchen to turn out noshes. "Small bites, nothing crazy," Day explained.

Enjoy Blitzen while you can. Eventually, Day would like to put a permanent concept in the space. The hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 4 p.m. to midnight until Dec. 23. After that date, many people spend time with family, Day said.

THE NAUGHTY LIST AT MAKER'S ALLEY

Through December, Maker's Alley in downtown Wilmington and its signature Airstream kitchen will dress up for the holidays. Along with lights, the outdoor eatery will salute the holiday's loveable anti-heroes, including the Grinch and Buddy the Elf.

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Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

DNREC FINALIZES EV REGULATIONS. CRITICS ARE NOT IMPRESSED

BY BETSY PRICE

DNREC has finalized state regulations about electric and other zero-emission vehicles it says will help Delaware achieve lower air pollution caused by light- and medium-duty cars. Instead of demanding that by 2035 all new car sales in Delaware must be electric, the program will end in 2032 when sales are expected to hit 82%.

That will address many of the issues opponents complained about, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control said in a press release while patting itself on the back for “taking a significant step to improve air quality and address climate change.” The regulations will not make those opposed happy.

“With over 93% of comments opposed to the Advanced Clean Car II regulations, we know where the public stands,” said Delaware Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown.

“Consumer demand just isn’t there and that fact is

evident by not only the public comments on the ACCII regulations, but also by recent announcements from major auto manufacturers stating they are cutting back on their production and sales goals of electric vehicles,” he said. “This regulation is bad for the availability of affordable, reliable and inexpensive vehicle ownership in Delaware and it should be stopped.”

REGULATIONS BACKLASH

The subject drew a wide range of backlash with opposition to the higher costs of electric vehicles, the higher weight of those vehicles, the low mileage many of the current models get—especially if you live in a rural area that requires you to drive more compared to urban residents—and the fact that research continues in other areas.

Many also object to the way the regulations came about. Instead of being legislated, they were required in

an executive order from Gov. John Carney asking DNREC to model regulations on a California law.

The regulations require automakers to deliver an increasing amount of zero-emission vehicles—that’s politicized code for electric vehicles—for sale in Delaware. Zero-emission options, including battery-electric, plug-in hybrid electric and fuel cell electric vehicles, will be more accessible across the state.

Under the finalized regulation, starting with model year 2027, 43% of new cars and trucks sent to Delaware for sale will be ZEVs. That percentage is expected to increase to 82% in 2032. The regulations will expire in model year 2033. The changes will be phased in over the period and the regulations do not prohibit the sale or use of internal combustion engine vehicles, the DNREC press release said.

The decision was announced by a [DNREC Secretary’s Order](#) and is set for publication in the Delaware Register of Regulations on Dec. 1, 2023. It was informed by state law, the federal Clean Air Act, information included in the technical response memo and [comments](#) received from the public during the rule-making process.

“By adopting the revised regulation, DNREC aims to protect public health, reduce emissions and align with Delaware’s climate goals—all while providing consumers with cleaner and more sustainable transportation options,” said DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin in the press release. “This decision will result in cleaner air in Delaware and strengthen protections for communities overburdened by exposure to tailpipe pollution.”

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HOPE CENTER PLANS TO FACE BUDGET QUESTIONS WITH FACTS

BY PETER OSBOURNE

As homelessness increases in Delaware and COVID-related support dries up, the New Castle County Hope Center plans to roll out its new long-term sustainability strategy in January. It will include a companion dashboard demonstrating how big a dent in the problem the center has made over the past three years.

New Castle County purchased the former Sheraton Hotel on Airport Road off I-95 in early December 2020 for \$19.5 million from its share of federal CARES Act funding. Two weeks later, it reopened the 192-room hotel as a temporary emergency shelter to protect homeless state residents from winter weather and the coronavirus. But federal COVID support largely went away on Oct. 1, 2022.

Carrie Casey, general manager of the county's Department of Community Services, says funding worries keep her awake at night as she looks to plug gaps in her \$5 million annual budget. New Castle County does not provide operational support.

"We may charge \$50 a night," Casey said, "but the total cost including shuttle transportation, security, building costs and staffing, engineering, maintenance, case management and pet care is about \$80 a night."

Now, the East Coast's largest homeless shelter is helping families find permanent housing by tying the length of their stay to active participation in its programs. Those include seeking employment, attending substance abuse meetings and medical appointments, meeting curfews and treating center employees with respect.

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"We have kind of built the airplane in the air," says Casey. But this airplane lacks sufficient onboard data to understand basic metrics.

For example, more than 3,200 people have spent at least one night at the Hope Center, with 325 households finding permanent housing after getting back on track. Casey struggles to provide information on total room nights or how many people have moved into some kind of permanent housing.

During the COVID pandemic, the Hope Center had 450 people in the building at any given point, but today's numbers are closer to 300-350.

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DELAWAREANS INCLUDED IN \$30M PREHIRED STUDENT LOAN SETTLEMENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

The First State is one of 12 involved in a national \$30 million order against a student lender for malpractice. Attorney General Kathy Jennings’ office worked with the federal Consumer Protection Financial Bureau and 11 other states to crack down on the bankrupt student lender Prehired.

A Delaware bankruptcy court approved a stipulated judgment that requires Prehired to pay more than \$30 million in relief to student borrowers nationwide for making false promises of job placement, trapping students with income share loans that violated the law and resorting to abusive debt collection practices when borrowers could not pay.

The order, approved by a federal bankruptcy court, requires Prehired to cease all operations, as well as permitting the potential payment of \$4.2 million in redress to consumers that were affected by the malpractice.

“The number of borrowers in Delaware is still being determined and I can’t speculate as to how much they

might receive,” said Mat Marshall, communications director at the Delaware Department of Justice. “The state of Delaware—i.e., the DOJ or any other government agency—will not receive any funds as part of the settlement. This money is for consumers, not the government.”

The order also voids all of its outstanding income share loans, valued by Prehired at nearly \$27 million.

“Through an effort that grew to include 11 other states and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, we are pleased to announce this resolution that will provide real relief to borrowers around the country,” Jennings said.

Prehired operated a 12-week online training program claiming to prepare students for entry-level positions as software sales development representatives with “six-figure salaries” and a “job guarantee.” The company offered students “income share” loans to help finance the costs of the program.

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DNREC: SURF FISHING RESERVATION SYSTEM NOW PERMANENT

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware has declared its drive-on surf fishing reservation system permanent after last year’s pilot try. It allowed the state to sell unlimited surf fishing permits, but required those who had them to reserve a spot on holidays and peak weekends, which are generally every weekend in the summer.

The system seemed to solve an ongoing dilemma that pitted the number of those who wanted a surf fishing permit against the number available, as well as accommodate out-of-state fishing fans who also wanted in on the First State action.

Surf fishing permits went on on sale Tuesday, Nov. 28, as well Delaware State Park annual passes, said Delaware **Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control**. The park passes and surf fishing permits may be purchased at any state park office and DNREC’s Dover campus Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to

4 p.m. Passes and permits may also be purchased online at destateparks.com/Know/PassesTagsFees, with an estimated timeframe for delivery of two to three weeks.

The annual passes cover the state’s fee season from March 1 through Nov. 30. They cost \$35 for Delaware residents and \$70 for non-residents. Those ages 62 and older receive a discounted rate of \$18 for residents and \$35 for non-residents. A \$65 lifetime pass is available for Delawareans 65 and older, the Delaware Military Pass is available for \$17.50 and an Assistance Program Pass is available for \$10.

Delaware firefighters and emergency medical technicians can obtain an annual pass or surf fishing permit for free. Those who qualify must first obtain an application from their fire company or the Delaware Volunteer Firefighters Association. The completed form must be taken to a state park office to receive the pass or permit.



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SURF FISHING SYSTEM

Last year’s reservation system for the peak weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day—a total of 33 days—required people who had a permit to reserve a spot at one of the seven locations where surf fishing is permitted.

Peak weekend reservations for Saturday, May 25, 2024, will go on sale May 21, 2024, in the same way reservations were offered in the 2023 season.

The weekend before Memorial Day will no longer be considered a peak weekend, DNREC said. It will continue to evaluate and make improvements to the surf fishing program as needed moving forward, it said in a press release.

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photo credit: Christina School District



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

WLC WILL FOCUS ON TASKS AT HAND, NOT EXPANDING TO OTHER SCHOOLS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The new head of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative pushed back Tuesday night on suggestions that the new agency expand to include more city elementary schools.

“This is a long journey, this is going to take many years to get our schools where they need to be,” said Laura Burgos, the group’s executive director. That’s not going to happen by adding expansion into the mix now, she said.

“We have so much to do, systems that we need to re-imagine, and we need to look at everything from curriculum to staffing structures to accountability,” she said. “I said it before. Funding alone is not enough without strategy and accountability. We’re going to keep throwing money, throwing money, throwing money and wondering why outcomes aren’t shifting.”

The issue popped up in a meeting devoted mostly to finalizing contracts and budgets with community partners at the governing council’s monthly meeting.

The learning collab was created to help nine elementaries which are in the city, but operated by suburban Red Clay, Brandywine and Christina school districts. Its \$10 million annual budget, plus \$6 million rolled over from last year, is devoted to creating programs dealing with challenges faced by city students.

It hopes to empower city students and families, as well as on-the-ground workers, by giving them a voice in policy making to improve student achievement metrics like test scores, absenteeism and graduation rates.

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COLONIAL, RED CLAY BIGGEST WINNERS IN STATE FUNDING REQUESTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The state **Department of Education** has made some school districts very happy by deeming their requests for state funding necessary to fulfill building projects. For fiscal year 2025, the department approved 50 certificate of necessity requests, 44 of which involved state funding. They were concentrated in six districts.

Districts submit certificates of necessity each year to the department, typically asking for state money for capital projects and deferred maintenance on buildings that districts lack the local funds to address. The department then determines if the money is in fact needed.

Sometimes, the certificate of necessity includes a smaller percentage of local funds. This often pushes the district to referendum, where district residents must approve a local tax increase to boost local revenue and fulfill the local share of the agreement with the state.

The local/state split is different for every district, but usually hovers around 65% state/35% district.

For example, in Colonial and Red Clay Consolidated school districts, the state pays 60% for these projects while the district pays for the other 40% in local funds. For the Polytech School District, however, the state ponies up 71% of the funds and the local share is just 29%.

The state approves certificates of necessity even if there is no state funding involved. This is because the certificate of necessity provides the legal authorization for districts to hold a local referendum, said Alison May, public information officer at the Department of Education.

For this year's cycle of requests, Red Clay—which hasn't been approved in a decade—and Colonial were big winners.

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DSU SETS RECORD ENROLLMENT AGAIN

BY JAREK RUTZ

For back-to-back years, Delaware State University has a new record for student enrollment. DSU this week reported an overall enrollment increase of 3.5% from this time last year. The 132-year-old institution now has 6,451 students, a 23% increase since 2020, making the Dover school the fastest-growing Historically Black College and University in the country.

“We have overcome some notable trends in higher education,” said President Tony Allen. “As we have seen impressive growth in our enrollment since 2017, we have also seen the national trend going in the other direction.”

DSU had a 5% increase in new transfer students, up to just over 300 students, and a sizable boost to its online profile at almost 800 students. Of the 750 first-year in-state students, 79% are INSPIRE Scholars, benefiting

from the state-sponsored, four-year full-tuition INSPIRE scholarship meant to help students from low income families.

“The race for talent is on and we have to be prepared to meet our students where they are,” Allen said. “If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that a full portfolio of quality educational offerings, new ways to learn in and outside of the traditional classroom, and a commitment to educating and training students who look like the smaller, more connected world we are becoming is the key to long-term success.”

In addition to its student growth, DSU has risen in national attention and also drawn significant donations and government grants. The biggest was a \$20 million donation from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott in 2020.

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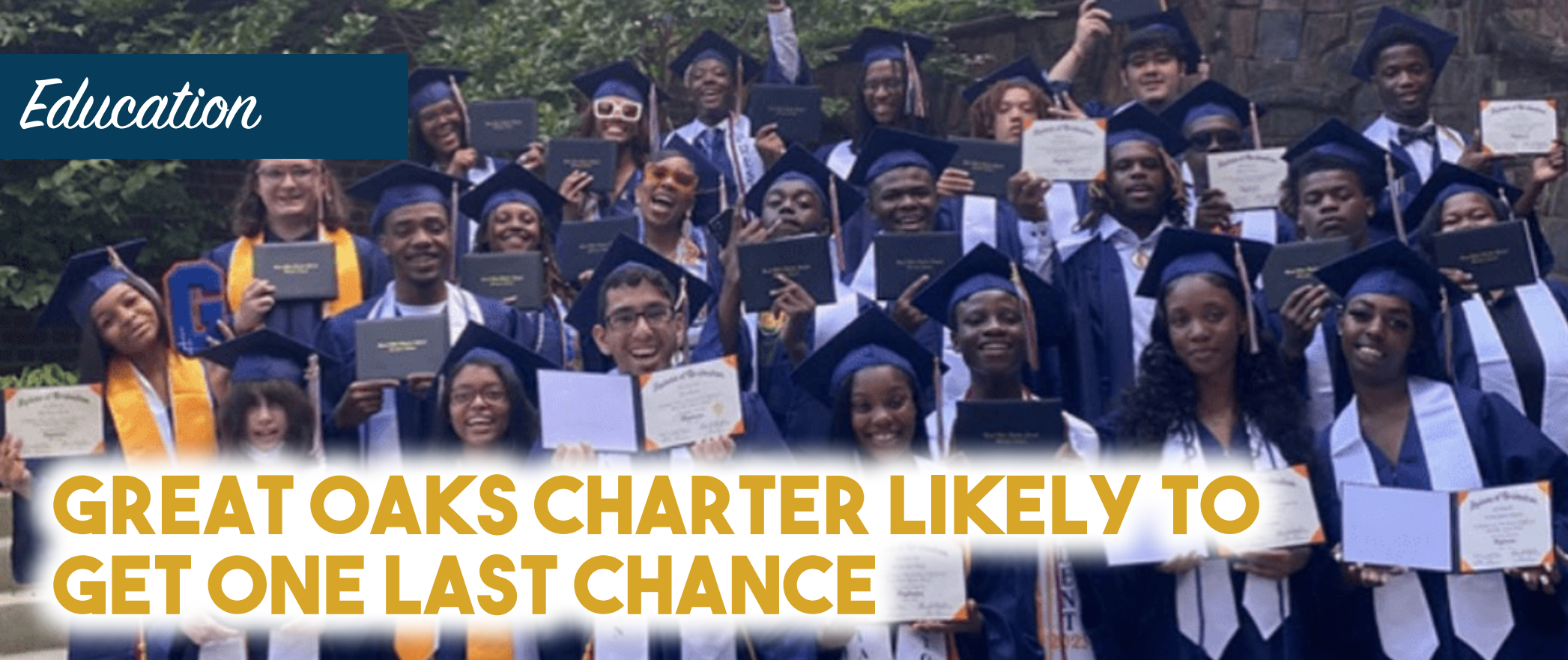
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Other notable donations and grants include a **\$1 million grant** for creating a special education teaching certificate; a five-year **\$18.36 million grant** from the National Institutes of Health to study health disparities among different populations; a \$1 million grant for urban revitalization; and a **\$899,000 grant** from NASA to contribute to the Lunar Land Rover Mission and **\$500,000** for Alzheimer’s disease research.

DSU has also climbed in the rankings of the *U.S. News & World Report’s* college rankings, making its way to the second best public Historically Black College in the nation.

“In the words of Robert Frost,” Allen said, “we have miles to go before we sleep’. Our students need our total effort without equivocation.”





GREAT OAKS CHARTER LIKELY TO GET ONE LAST CHANCE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Great Oaks Charter School has been given one last chance by a state agency focused on ensuring the accountability of Delaware’s charter schools.

The Wilmington charter, which serves a student body that’s 97.24% minority students, received a promising decision in Tuesday’s Charter School Accountability Committee final renewal meeting. The committee voted to recommend the renewal of Great Oaks—with 16 conditions—to Education Secretary Mark Holodick, who will likely follow that recommendation.

Great Oaks is one of six charter schools in Delaware up for renewal this year, with Holodick announcing the state’s decisions at the State Board of Education’s December meeting. State law requires charters to apply for renewal every five years, with applications that contain basic information about the school like leadership

personnel, contacts, enrollment, district of residence, mission statements and more. Applications also include more complex details like trends in enrollment, academic performance, graduation rates and proficiency rates.

Great Oaks serves a unique student body, with 36% of students receiving special education services, 15% of students have previously been incarcerated, 10% of students are current/expecting parents or have experienced late term pregnancy loss and 5% of students are in foster care and/or homeless.

“I want to recognize that this group...stood up for a group of children that for years and decades had nobody that stood up for them,” said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). “When we talk about charter schools being put together for the underserved, that’s what you’re doing.”

In many cases they have been left on their own, Massett said, have fallen through the cracks, and have been neglected.

Massett said Great Oaks, which has just 148 students, might be smaller in size, but is ginormous in impact. The charter was placed on formal review by the state last school year due to low enrollment numbers, having 37% fewer students than its authorized enrollment.

Back in October 2022, Great Oaks parents, students and teachers laughed, cried and pleaded with Department of Education representatives for the survival of their school. Months later, in December 2022, their wishes were met, as the state Board of Education voted to allow the charter to continue operation as long as it met 22 conditions.

The conditions were focused on increasing enrollment numbers, certifying teachers, building financial stability and cash reserves, evaluations for faculty and more. Great Oaks met most of those conditions, but there were a few not met, specifically with enrollment numbers.

Rather than meeting the condition of 200 students for the current 2023-2024 school year, Great Oaks has just 145. However, school leadership has touted impressive improvements in other areas, such as:

- Reduced the number of suspensions by 20%.
- Increased school testing participation rates increased by 21%.
- Increased Math Smarter Balanced Assessment scores by 6%.
- Made sure 100% of administrators are certified and have prior leadership experience.

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photo credit: Jason Winchell



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



SALESIANUM EARNS TRIP TO STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY JASON WINCHELL

Salesianum, the top seed in the DIAA Class 3A football tournament, overcame a stiff challenge from No. 5 Middletown, earning a 24-14 win on Nov. 24 at Abessinio Stadium. It will be the Sals' first trip to a state championship game since 2018.

The Sals (11-1) advanced to the Class 3A championship game against No. 6 Cape Henlopen, who stunned the second seed, Sussex Central, 46-14, in the other semifinal. The game is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Friday at Delaware Stadium.

After a quarterfinal round where the Sals escaped Smyrna despite giving up 40 points, coach Paul Worri-

low's defense was on point most of the night against the Cavaliers. R.J. Johnson, Andrew Semmel and Ahmaad Foster seemed to be in Middletown quarterback Austin Troyer's face all night, hampering the high-powered Cavs offense.

Middletown did take a 7-0 lead on a nice fade pass from Troyer to Aviyon Matthews late in the first quarter, but a long kickoff return by the Sals' Jasir Gaymon got his team started at the Cavs' 13. That drive ended with a Colin Maradick field goal.

The Salesianum defense shut out the Cavaliers until the fourth quarter, with standout running back B.J. Al-

leyne came through on defense to help keep it that way. The Sals were driving early in the second quarter when Middletown's Jacobi Rodgers scooped up a fumble and took off down the left sideline. He appeared to be on his way to a 75-yard touchdown, but Alleyne closed the gap and tackled Rodgers at the Sals' 12. Middletown went in the wrong direction, eventually giving up the ball on downs and coming away with no points.

The Sals took the lead for good late in the first half. Gaymon and standout running back B.J. Alleyne covered all of the 53 yards on the drive, with Alleyne capping it with a 17-yard score.

They added to the lead late in the third quarter, and Alleyne again played a role. He took a pitch from quarterback Ryan Stoehr and hit a wide-open Billy Neumann behind the defense for a 52-yard score. The Cavaliers cut the Salesianum lead to 17-14 on a Troyer keeper with 8:41 to go, but the Sals again used a long kickoff return to set up a score, this one a two-yard run by Alleyne.

Middletown had two more possessions, but both ended with an interception. The first was by Jake Ziegler in the end zone that ended a long Cavs drive and the last came from John Casale to clinch it.

Alleyne finished with 31 carries for 123 yards and the two rushing touchdowns. Tickets for the Sals' game against Cape Henlopen will be sold through the University of Delaware ticket portal and the NFHS Network will have the live stream produced by Delaware Live Sports. Middletown finished the season 8-4.

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ARCHMERE DEFEATS WOODBRIDGE TO ADVANCE TO STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY JASON WINCHELL

Miles Kempfski led a prolific Archmere offense with three rushing touchdowns and two more through the air as the Auks clinched a trip to the DIAA Class 2A championship, with a 56-28 win over Woodbridge on a sun-splashed day at Coaches Field on Nov. 25.

The Auks and Blue Raiders began their assault on the scoreboard immediately, with Archmere not letting up at all. The Blue Raiders' Traci Johnson scored the first two times he touched the ball, only to see the Auks answer each time. The Bridge took its final lead at 22-14 after quarterback Logan Moran hit Ji'Kare Banks early in the second, but Kempfski and Archmere tied it up two minutes later, the first of 29 unanswered Auks points.

The Auks got a four-yard scoring run from Ryan Hagenberg on the opening drive of the second half, taking the lead by six. Archmere recovered a Blue Raiders fumble a few plays later, leading to a 19-yard run by Kempfski. The quarterback then hit Drew Duncan on a fourth down play to extend the lead to 43-22, and the large crowd watching from the hill overlooking Coaches Field began thinking about another trip to Delaware Stadium.

But Johnson showed them he wasn't finished. He scored from 49 yards out and Woodbridge recovered an onside kick, generating some excitement among the fans wearing blue. The Bridge, however, lost the ball on downs, and the Auks ended up scoring twice more.

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Kempfski ran for 157 yards and three touchdowns, and he threw for 171 yards and two scores. Duncan caught both TD passes and had four catches overall for 111 yards. Blesington led the defense with 10 tackles, while Christian Wittmeyer had nine tackles and an interception.

The Auks improved to 9-3 and will take on No. 1 Caravel at Delaware Stadium at 3 p.m. on Saturday. The Buccaneers defeated the Auks, 28-2, on Sept. 29, the last time Archmere lost. No stats were available for Woodbridge. The Blue Raiders finished the season 9-3.





TATNALL ADVANCES TO CLASS 1A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Tatnall Hornets will advance to the Delaware Scholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) Class 1A football state championship after defeating the Indian River Indians Nov. 25.

Tatnall came into the game with a 10-1 record with its only loss at the hands of Class 2A Wilmington Friends. They went undefeated in conference play this season. Indian River had an 8-3 record, suffering losses to Class 2A Delmar and Laurel while suffering one loss in conference to St. Elizabeths.

Indian River received the opening kickoff of the game, but had to punt the ball away after failing to get a first down. On the first play from scrimmage, Tatnall quarterback Rahshan LaMons took a direct snap, broke

through the line and passed all the Indian defenders for a 79-yard touchdown run. The Hornets took an early 7-0 lead.

The Indians were able to drive deep into Tatnall territory on their next drive. However, they failed to get a first down, which made them decide to take a shot at a field goal. The snap was good, but Indians' kicker Justin Rowe pulled it wide to the left.

After a good defensive stand by the Indians, they forced the Hornets to punt. The Indians were driving again as they moved the ball down inside the Tatnall 35-yard line. Indian River quarterback Dylan Grise took the snap in shotgun formation, looked right and tried to hit his wide receiver, but the ball was tipped up

and into the hands of LaMons, who returned it 65 yards for another Tatnall touchdown. LaMons' second touchdown of the game gave the Hornets a 14-0 lead.

Early in the second quarter, the Indians were driving against this time deep in Hornets' territory. On fourth down and nine to go, Grise again set up in shotgun formation took the snap and delivered a pass on the back corner of the end zone connecting with Rashad Hopkins for a touchdown. After a successful extra point, the Indians now trailed 14-7.

Tatnall had the ball deep in Indian territory with 20 seconds to go before the half. LaMons raced up to the line to get the play called in as time was running out before the half and they had no timeouts to stop it. The snap went low to his left side, but he was able to gain control, he threw a quick pass which was behind wide receiver Chris Gordon. Gordon was able to tap the ball to himself and secure the catch for another Hornets touchdown. The Hornets took a 21-7 lead into halftime.

With no scoring in the third quarter, it wasn't until midway through the fourth quarter until either team threatened to score. The Indians found themselves on the Tatnall three-yard line, with two chances to punch it in for a touchdown. They tried to run the ball twice, but the Hornets' defense was able to stuff them half a yard short of the end zone.

The Hornets then played clock management just trying to get first downs to run out the time to solidify the victory. They then found themselves in a fourth down situation where they had to punt the ball away to the Indians.

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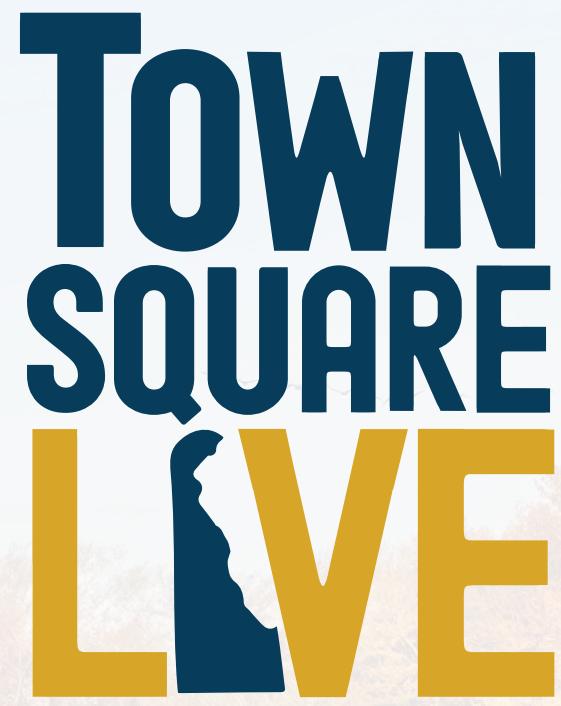
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