

# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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**December 21, 2023**  
**Vol. 4, Issue 51**



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photo link: Longwood Gardens  
photo by Eileen Tercha

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Hit-and-Run Hospitalizes Faithful Friends Founder



State Heading Into Years of Near-Level Revenues



Courtside View—Week 2 Girls' Basketball Top 10

photo link: Delaware Greenways

# Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# GUIDE TO CHRISTMAS 2023 IN DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

If you're hitting the road for Christmas, you're not alone. Nearly a third of the state's population is expected to travel 50 miles or more by car for the year-end holidays. Here's what to know about Christmas in the First State a week away from the holiday.

### TRAVEL

The 330,000 Delawareans traveling is an increase of 2.6% over last year, according to [AAA Mid-Atlantic](#), a regional travel agency. Other than 2019, that's the highest travel volume for the holiday since 2001 in the First State.

Gas prices are the lowest they've been in two years, an extra gift on top of those underneath the Christmas tree. A gallon costs an average of \$2.96 in Delaware compared to \$3.07 nationally, which was also the cost for a gallon of gas in the First State at this time last year.

"Air travel volume is expected to be the highest on record and gas prices are the lowest they've been in more than two years—fueling a holiday travel season of 'hustle and bustle' that continues the strong demand for travel seen throughout 2023," said Jana Tidwell, manager of public and government Affairs for AAA Mid-Atlantic.

Here's what AAA states are the best and worst times to travel for Christmas:

Best and Worst Times to Travel by Car		
Date	Worst Travel Time	Best Travel Time
Saturday, Dec 23	11:00 AM - 7:00 PM	Before 10:00 AM
Sunday, Dec 24	Minimal Traffic Impact Expected	
Monday, Dec 25	Minimal Traffic Impact Expected	
Tuesday, Dec 26	1:00 - 5:00 PM	Before 12:00 PM
Wednesday, Dec 27	1:00 - 7:00 PM	Before 12:00 PM
Thursday, Dec 28	2:00 - 8:00 PM	Before 12:00 PM

While most will be settled into their whereabouts on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, it's best to hit the road in the morning when heading or leaving their destination.

### ROAD SAFETY

As always, those enjoying an alcoholic drink need to plan ahead and make sure they have a sober driver to take them home.

There's also plenty of other options, such as public transportation or ride shares like Uber or Lyft.

With cold temperatures, drivers need to make sure they are not distracted or on their phones when driving, as well as following speed limits, especially as roads become slick at night.

For those taking a nighttime stroll, wear reflective and bright clothing to ensure visibility to drivers.

### WEATHER

It won't be a white Christmas, nor will it be a freezing Christmas, according to the [National Weather Service](#). Both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are supposed to be mostly sunny, with temperatures hovering around 50 degrees. There's no rain in the forecast and temperatures will drop to 30 degrees on both nights.

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Community

# RAPPER, ACTOR COMMON TO BRING BOOK TOUR TO WILMINGTON

BY BETSY PRICE

The multi-hyphenate entertainer **Common** will bring his book tour to the Wilmington Public Library Jan. 26 at 6 p.m. He will talk about and sign his book, “And Then We Rise,” which details Common’s journey to wellness as a vital element of his success as a rapper, actor and now author.

A testimony to the benefits of self-care, his book is divided into four sections: “The Food” focuses on nutrition. “The Body” focuses on fitness. “The Mind” focuses on mental health. And “The Soul” focuses on perhaps the most profound thing of all—spiritual well-being.

Books will be available for purchase the day of his appearance. while supplies last.

## COMMON RULES

Seating at Common’s appearance is first-come, first-served. No registration or tickets are required.

The library also will livestream the event.

Cameras are allowed, but if you do not have permission by the Wilmington Library director to move around, you must remain seated with your camera.

The library asks that attendees do not stand on chairs, in the aisles or in the back of the room in an attempt to record or take photos. That obstructs the view of others, causes a fire hazard and potentially blocks library cameras around the room that will be livestreaming the event.

Patrons who stand also prohibit guests, especially those in wheelchairs, from coming in and out to find a seat or to use the restroom.

All attendees must find a seat and are not allowed to block entrances or exits. Staff members and/or volunteers will help you find a seat if you can not find one.

The library asks that patrons be kind and courteous to one another as well as library staff who work hard to bring you these events.

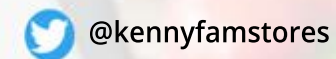
Common’s appearance is not part of the library’s Black History Month Speaker Series, but the library expects to announced that soon, a press release said.



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# HIT-AND-RUN HOSPITALIZES FAITHFUL FRIENDS FOUNDER, KILLS DOG

BY BETSY PRICE

The founder of **Faithful Friends Animal Society** is recovering from a hit-and-run accident that hospitalized her and killed her dog, Emma, which she

was walking at the time of the accident.

The incident occurred when Jane Pierantozzi was walking her dog Dec. 10 on South Clayton Street in Wilmington near the intersection of South Clayton and Maple Streets in Wilmington. The driver fled the scene.

Faithful Friends, Crime Stoppers and the Wilmington Police Department are seeking information to identify the driver of the vehicle that hit them, the animal society said Dec. 14. The vehicle is believed to be a tan minivan or full-sized SUV which fled south on Clayton Street (traveling in the wrong direction) after hitting Pierantozzi and Emma about 7:45 p.m.

Anyone with information or video is asked to contact Wilmington Police Sgt. Pete Leccia at (302) 571-4414 or [pete.leccia@cj.state.de.us](mailto:pete.leccia@cj.state.de.us); or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-847-3333 or at [www.delawarecrimestoppers.com](http://www.delawarecrimestoppers.com).

“Our entire organization is shocked and very saddened with the news of Jane’s injury and the loss of Emma’s life,” said Bob Wasserbach, president of the Faithful

Friends Board of Directors. “We are thankful to have a strong and competent team who have banded together to continue our lifesaving work as Jane recovers.”

Faithful Friends is a no-kill shelter and sanctuary serving the state and surrounding communities. It serves 17,000 pets and 24,000 people through rescue, adoption and outreach services including a low-cost veterinary clinic, free pet food bank and the state’s only pet lifeline resource hotline for pet caretakers in crisis.

Since its founding in 2000, the society has advocated for reforms, increasing public funding for spay/neuter, finding loving homes for rescued pets and providing safety-net services aimed at reducing pet relinquishment.

Pierantozzi most recently was quoted in a *Delaware Live* story about how shelters are now focusing on trying to keep pets with their families instead of forcing the family to give up the pet. Pet retention is “modeled after social services and is a better choice than a more expensive and stressful intervention,” she said. “Shelters are necessary, but they’re a place of last resort.”

The owners may need help with food or veterinary expenses, or even just advice on how to handle a certain kind of animal. “All pets deserve a loving home, but some already have them,” she said.



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- URSULINE ACADEMY



# CHILDREN ECSTATIC FOR SANTA'S CASE DISMISSAL IN DEL. TRADITION

BY JAREK RUTZ

Dozens of New Castle County elementary school students filled the rows of a courtroom in Wilmington's Leonard L. Williams Justice Center Dec. 15 as jolly Christmas music welcomed them. It's not everyday that a courthouse is exclusively filled with positivity, laughter and joy, but the annual "Miracle on 34th Street" rendition put jingle bells in the hands and smiles on the faces of everyone in attendance.

First State courts offered several, 45-minute performances of a scene from the heartwarming classic movie in all three of Delaware counties this week, wrapping up in New Castle County Dec. 15.

"Miracle on 34th Street" is about an old man named Kris Kringle who becomes a very popular Santa at

Macy's in Manhattan. When Kringle claims he's really Santa, the ensuing hubbub ends up in court to determine his mental health as well as whether his claim is really true. The 1947 film starred Edmund Gwenn as Kringle, with single mom Maureen O'Hara and her daughter, played by Natalie Wood, getting swept up in the fray.

The two-decade tradition returned to live-action last year after the pandemic forced the event to go virtual. Along with the playful environment, the demonstration was partly to inform young children about how the court system operates.

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photo link: Visit Delaware



*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**





## HERE'S HOW SCREENING ROOM AT 1313 SNARED 'MAESTRO'

BY BETSY PRICE

If you wanted to see Bradley Cooper's "[Maestro](#)" in Delaware last week, the only place you could was the [Screening Room at 1313](#).

It showed there last weekend—becoming the most popular film yet for the Screening Room, an independent movie theater that opened in the old Hercules building Feb. 17—and will show again this weekend.

About 200 people came to see the biography of legendary music conductor Leonard Bernstein, played by Philly native and regional favorite Cooper. He also wrote and directed the movie, and has been nominated for Golden Globe acting and directing awards.

The movie ended up at the Screening Room, which now has expanded to two screens, through a connec-

tion co-owner Beverly Zimmermann has had in the Boston area for years. He has always told her to call him if she ever ran into trouble getting a film she wanted.

"Maestro," owned by Netflix, wasn't showing in Boston proper, her friend told her, and Netflix was being really picky about who did show it. He was allowed to at Dedham, MA, about an hour from Boston. While Zimmermann had contacts at Netflix, they weren't returning her emails.

He asked if "Maestro" was playing anywhere near her, and she said it was playing in Philly. He said he'd call her back. Two hours later, he called back and told her "Maestro" was hers because it wasn't playing anywhere else in Delaware.

"I was over the moon," Zimmermann said. She was delighted to be able to keep the movie a second weekend, even as it began screening on Netflix Wednesday.

Zimmermann loved the movie and says it proves Cooper isn't a one-hit wonder with "A Star is Born," which earned multiple nominations and won for music. He's wonderful in "Maestro" and so is Carey Mulligan, who plays his wife, Zimmermann said.

### BEFORE 'MAESTRO'

The Screening Room has had more than 3,300 people see movies there since opening. Zimmermann expects the annual total to rise as the movie industry heads into what she calls high season for independent movies. That's because people become more familiar with movies as the year-end acting award nominations come out.

"Business is always dependent on the film itself," Zimmermann said. "The Golden Globe nominations come out. The Independent Spirit Awards came out. Oscar nominations will be out in January.

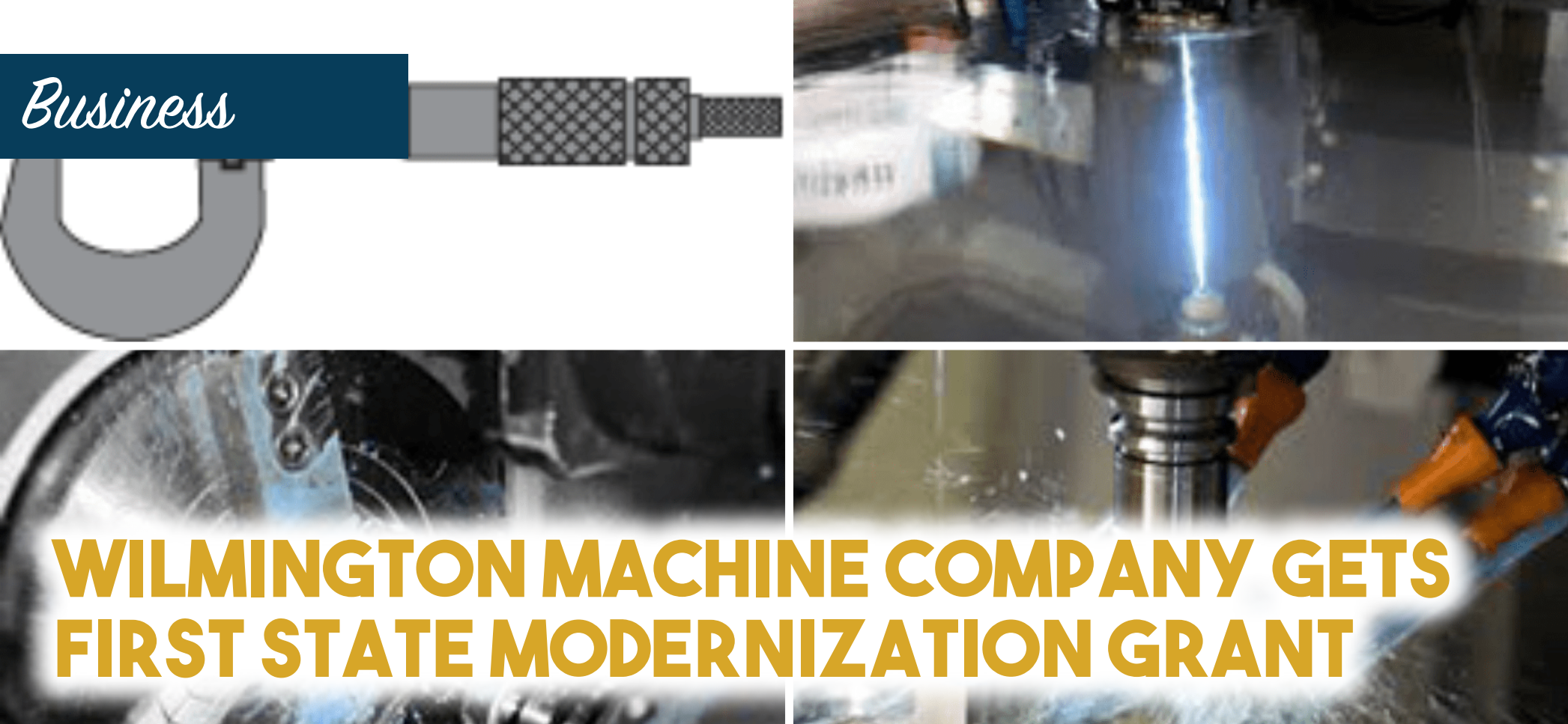
"So more people know and, of course," she says with a laugh, "there's nothing else to do in January, February, so people will go to the movies."

She's had a couple of bombs that nobody came to see, but believes that's because people weren't familiar with the movie, no matter how good it was.

One movie that did extremely well was the documentary, "Invisible Beauty," about pioneering Black model Bethann Hardison.

"I always thought the first big Black model was Beverly Johnson, but she wasn't. It was Bethann Hardison," Zimmermann said. "She's in her 80s now and still going strong and she can pick up the phone to any designer and they answer."

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# WILMINGTON MACHINE COMPANY GETS FIRST STATE MODERNIZATION GRANT

BY BETSY PRICE

A Wilmington machining company will use a new kind of state grant to offset the cost of \$1.1 million in equipment upgrades. **High-Tech Machine Co. Inc.** received \$219,525 from the new Modernization Investment Support Initiative, created earlier this year.

The company will use the money to make almost \$1.1 million in equipment upgrades that are necessary for computer numerical control (CNC) machining and wire electrical discharge machining (EDM) to retain current contracts, compete for new contracts and maintain its 17 full-time employees.

Demand for CNC and EDM products has grown steadily, the Delaware Prosperity Partnership said in a press release. Much of that growth comes from aerospace and defense; medical imaging; instrumentation;

and oil and gas sectors.

Small shops such as High-Tech Machine play a key role in the U.S. and global supply chain for these increasingly complex components for which even miniscule variations in size or shape carry significant consequences, while also providing well-paying industry jobs, the press release said.

### HIGH-TECH MACHINE HISTORY

High-Tech Machine, founded in 1991, wants to offer customers a single source for complete turnkey products and processes for all aspects of projects, including machining, furnace brazing, plating, painting, heat treating, anodizing, silk screening and assembly.

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photo link: Visit Delaware



# *Food & Dining*

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## DELAWARE FOOD TRUCK PUTS PIZZA IN A CONE

BY PAM GEORGE

Tom Craft doesn't stray far from the kitchen. The co-founder of [2 Fat Guys American Grill](#) in Hockessin is a full-time culinary arts instructor at Delcastle Technical High School. Consequently, he has summers off.

Since partner Jeff Cook handles the restaurant's on-site operations, Craft wanted a productive part-time gig, which, of course, involves food. Introducing a surprising twist on the traditional slice.

The food trailer hit the road last summer and Craft is already booking 2024 events, community appearances and private parties. Admittedly, it's hard to wrap one's mind around a pizza cone. Is it a slice folded into a cone shape?

Nope.

Craft makes a dough cone and fills it with pizza-style toppings, sauce and cheese. Most would agree that the pizza cone stands out in a sea of ice cream, taco, barbecue and burger trucks.

### PET PROJECT

Craft and Cook started 2 Fat Guys in 2005 and expanded to Greenville and Concord Pike. After those two locations closed, Craft took the teaching job and ran the restaurant's back office from home. He said this time, he wanted to do something on his own. He initially thought of pizza because [Bivouac Pizza](#) rents 2 Fat Guys' kitchen as a commissary and he could pick the food truck owner's brain.

But after negotiations to buy a wood-fired pizza trail-

er sputtered, Craft learned about Kono Pizza—pizza in a cone—in Bucks County, PA. Craft and a friend went on a road trip to see the operation and tour the truck. Since 2 Fat Guys still had a catering food trailer, Craft had a head start.

The cone-making equipment, however, was made to order in China and took six to eight weeks to ship. It was nerve-wracking to write checks, given he'd never made a pizza cone before. But when the giant containers landed in his driveway, he was "like a kid in at Christmas," he said. "I couldn't wait to open them.

### THE CONE THAT EATS LIKE A CALZONE

Craft's machine makes four cones at once and he freezes them when they're about two-thirds cooked.

"I usually make 200 to 300 at a time," he noted. He gets his dough from a Brooklyn company—"It's fantastic!"

He also prepares, packages and freezes toppings in advance, including a special pepperoni that cups when cooked. The cheese is a mix of low-moisture and whole milk, so it's "a little bit melty and a little bit stringy," he said.

To make a cone, Craft spoons three layers of cheese, sauce and toppings into the dough, which equals the weight of two pizza slices. The filled cones then go into a second machine. "It eats kind of like a stromboli or calzone," he explained. Except, that is, for the open top. Diners can request a fork.

### WORKING OUT THE KINKS

There were no instructions with the machines and Craft learned through trial and error how long to cook the cones and at what temperature. He did all of that while creating a website and social media presence.

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photo link: City of Newark, Delaware



*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



## STATE STARTS NEGOTIATING WIND FARM CABLE LANDING AT SEASHORE PARK

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware will negotiate a deal with US Wind for its two wind farms, including a \$350,000 a year cable landing on Delaware Seashore State Park, as well as energy credits and funding for workforce and environmental projects.

The move comes after years of public controversy over whether wind power is a viable renewable source of energy and will reduce costs for state residents. Many residents were split over whether wind farms and bringing power ashore in Delaware would ruin the pristine nature of the park and beach experience in general.

A working initial **Term Sheet** signed Tuesday by Gov. John Carney and US Wind CEO Jeffrey Grybowski discusses the direction of negotiations over a lease at 3Rs Beach at the state park for an underground cable landing to deliver power from the turbines to the regional electrical grid.

“This agreement means Delaware will become an active player in the growing offshore wind industry,” Carney said in the press release announcing the negotiations. “It aligns with other objectives, including our emission reduction targets and meeting the net-zero carbon goal set last year by House Bill 99. Transitioning to clean energy sources is essential to reducing manmade greenhouse gas emissions that are driving climate change, and these wind projects are part of that transition.”

US Wind plans two wind farms, MarWin and Momentum Wind, off the coast near Ocean City, MD.

Opponents of the plan to use wind energy were not surprised at the announcement, but continue to disapprove based on several points, including the high costs of getting going. Danish energy company Ørsted said last month it was dropping two wind farm projects in New Jersey because of supply chain issues, regulatory timelines and increased interest rates.

“The Carney administration telegraphed its intention to aggressively adopt offshore wind power with the enactment of legislation in June that directed state officials to work with operators of the regional power grid, PJM Interconnection, to issue a report on a process for procuring it,” said Joseph Fulgham, chief of Policy & Communications for the House Republican Caucus. “That study is due to be delivered at the end of this month.”

The Delaware-US Wind term sheet includes plans to ensure “Delaware’s residents, the people, communities and ratepayers of Delaware receive benefits from the development, construction and operation of the projects,” such as:

- 150,000 renewable energy credits each year associated with the wind generation, which would be transferred at no cost to Delaware utilities to help them meet clean energy requirements and lower customer bills. The credits have an estimated value of \$76 million over the life of the projects.
- Funding for dredging projects in Delaware’s coastal areas
- Funding for clean energy workforce development training at Delaware colleges and schools
- An environmental education scholarship fund
- A Resiliency Fund for climate change projects at state parks
- Replenishing the 21st Century Fund, which funds environmental, facility, stewardship, interpretation, environmental justice, and youth & veteran conservation corps projects in state parks.

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# STATE HEADING INTO YEARS OF NEAR-LEVEL REVENUES, BOARD SAYS

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware can expect a revenue surplus of \$364.8 million heading into the 2025 fiscal year. It can also expect a few years of plateaued revenues instead of the nearly \$1 billion surpluses of recent years. Some legislators would argue the state doesn't have surplus in reality, because that money will be needed for expected rises in costs for a number of programs, including health insurance for employees, scheduled employee salary raises, high pension costs and higher Medicaid costs.

## REVENUE GROWTH TRENDS

Even so, said State Rep. Danny Short, R-Seafood, the best news out of Monday's meeting of the [Delaware Economic Forecast and Advisory Council](#) is that the state's financial position improved between its October and December meetings.

"It's a good picture to have a revenue increase when, in fact, a lot of folks were anticipating a recession not too many months ago," said Short, who is a member of

the council. "It looks like we're not going to have that, hopefully. Knock on wood."

The council's prediction added \$89 million to the forecast of \$6.6 billion in revenues for FY2025, which starts July 1. It seems to reflect a growing belief that the nation will avoid a recession, a feeling bolstered by a recent announcement that the Federal Reserve Board has no plans to raise interest rates again and may begin to lower them next year.

If the U.S. does indeed have what many term "a soft landing," it will be the first time in history that inflation has risen to 5% or more and the country hasn't gone into a recession, the committee said.

Short, who has been in the General Assembly for 18 years, said he would like to see the state do the same kind of analysis of its expenditures as it does revenues.

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# WILMINGTON REDUCES PARKING FINES; RIPS OUT METERS TO ADD KIOSKS

BY BETSY PRICE

Wilmington's had lots of parking news in recent days. First, the Wilmington City Council last week passed a new law that starting Jan. 1 will reduce parking tickets from \$40 to \$25 for people who pay the fine within 14 days of getting the ticket.

On Tuesday, the city announced it is installing parking kiosks and eliminating parking meters, work that will take place in phases, starting this week in the Riverfront District. The kiosks will accept coins, credit cards or payment through the Park Mobile app. Motorists can also pay by text. The goal, the city said, is to make paying for parking in Wilmington easier and more convenient.

"It's encouraging to see all these steps being taken," said Ken Grant, member of the Wilmington Fines and Fees Justice Team. He has been front and center battling the city over its parking practices, frequently hammering the city with videos on social media.

"The city still needs to take some time and really do a comprehensive overview of the entire system," he said.

Five new parking kiosks were to be installed Tuesday in the Riverfront District, which has had kiosks for year. The new ones will serve as a test run to make sure there are no issues with the system, the city said in a press release.

The next phase of installments, set to start in January, will put kiosks at 44 locations in the Downtown Busi-

ness District. Commissioner of Public Works Kelly Williams said the kiosks will appear wherever there currently are downtown meters. Once the kiosks are installed, the city will remove the old meter heads and eventually the poles that support them.

As the kiosks are activated, meters on that block will display a yellow sign that says "Pay at kiosk," reminding motorists to do that.

The kiosks are being installed by Flowbird, which has a \$604,000 contract to buy and install the kiosks, and to provide ongoing support.

The kiosks will accept coins, credit cards or payment through the Park Mobile app. Motorists can also pay by text. Here's how the text payment option works:

- Text a code to the number provided on the sign or sticker displayed on the kiosk.
- You will immediately receive a text reply.
- Follow the secure link and enter your license plate number.
- Choose your length of stay.
- Enter your payment information.
- Your parking session begins immediately.

Flowbird's generic instructional video can be seen [HERE](#).

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# NEW BILL WOULD EXPAND ACCESS TO MEDICAL MARIJUANA CARDS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware Democrats filed new legislation Dec. 14 that would enhance patient access to medical marijuana and revamp the framework of the Delaware Medical Marijuana Act. **House Bill 285**, sponsored by Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, would remove the requirement that a patient must have a debilitating medical condition to qualify for a registry identification card.

Instead, health-care providers would determine whether a patient has a diagnosed medical condition that would benefit therapeutically or palliatively from the use of medical marijuana.

In a statement, Osienski said this bill is a result of conversations and feedback from medical marijuana patients.

“Drawing from their insights, we identified numerous ways to improve our medical marijuana program,” he said. The bill would modify the issuance process of medi-

cal marijuana registry identification cards, which facilitate the acquisition, delivery, possession or transfer of medical marijuana. These cards are authorized documents granted to eligible adult patients, registered designated caregivers assisting adult patients or registered designated caregivers for pediatric patients.

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, said the bill doesn’t go far enough. “Our federal government has yet to recognize the medicinal value of marijuana when prescribed by a doctor to deal with things like post-traumatic stress disorder and depression along with pain management evidence,” he said, “by the fact that medical card holders are not covered by their insurance providers and pay cash for their prescription because the federal government has scheduled medicinal marijuana at a level equal to crystal meth, fentanyl and heroin. It makes no sense.”

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# GOP REPS: DEMS NEVER TOLD US ABOUT APPROPRIATIONS BILL RELEASES

BY BETSY PRICE

Republican members of the House Appropriations Committee say they were not notified that Democrats planned to release bills from the House Appropriations Committee they sit on. The bills were signed by the Democrat members Dec. 13, maybe during a caucus meeting, and then press releases were sent out saying they had been released by the committee, which never met.

Among them were a new version of the permit-to-purchase bill, which would require anyone buying a handgun to have both a permit and a training course before they could buy the gun, as well as a bill that would fine gun sellers for not keeping ammunition locked up.

Rep. Kevin Hensley, R-Odessa, and Rep. Charles Postles, R-Milford, both Republican members of the House Appropriations Committee, said Thursday they were not able to comment on the release of the permit bill, **SS 1 for SB 2**, “because they were never notified that the legislation was being considered by the House Appropriations Committee.” A vote to release the mea-

sure was taken without their knowledge, they said in the joint statement.

Delaware law allows legislators to sign the backs of bills rather than taking a vote in public.

Efforts to reach Hensley and Postles Friday or House Minority leaders Mike Ramone, R-Newark/Pike Creek, were unsuccessful.

The ammunition bill, **House Bill 270**, is sponsored in the House by Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, who is also chair of the Appropriations Committee. It was prefiled Dec. 14. The permit bill is sponsored by House Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown and Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman. Efforts also were unsuccessful to reach Williams or Minor-Brown for comment Friday.

## APPROPRIATIONS

The move comes as legislators continue to pay lip service to the idea of civil and cordial relations between the parties and working together for the good of the

state. With a Democratic Supermajority in the Senate, they can pass whatever they want, but need a few Republican votes in the House even though Dems are the majority there.

In a press release about the permit bill, House Speaker Valerie Longhurst said again that she is committed to passing SB 2 (S) when the General Assembly reconvenes in January.

“For the past decade, we have passed some of the most comprehensive gun safety laws in the country, making Delaware a leader by strengthening our background checks, closing loopholes, banning assault-style firearms and large-capacity magazines, and instituting red flag laws,” she said. “I’ve been proud to sponsor many of these bills and stand up to the gun lobby.”

One member of that gun lobby said the proper procedure would be to have held a meeting and a hearing and the release was a set up to meet that January promise.

“The process was not done in a normal way,” said Jeff Hague of the Delaware State Sportsmen Association. “To me that is underhanded. It is not democratic. What they did was just do it, regardless.”

In the last few years, any bills involving guns have invariably sparked long, well-attended and hotly contested hearings along every step. Hague’s group doesn’t like the bill and thinks it is discriminatory, among other things. Hague said Hensley and Postles both told him they had no idea the bills were under consideration and the first they knew was when they started getting calls about the bills.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

Lots of packages are arriving on the doorsteps of Delawareans. None are permitted to contain a certain adult beverage and a group of state legislators say it's time Delaware caught up with changes that happened elsewhere in the nation in the 20th century and allowed it.

Nearly 98% of Americans can have wine shipped to their homes, but in the First State, that's illegal. Utah and Mississippi are the only other states where it's outlawed—and this may be the rare occasion politicians are NOT saying “Thank God for Mississippi”. A bipartisan group of state legislators plan to offer two bills to change the laws.

Right now, Delawareans must buy wine at liquor stores. No alcoholic beverage can be ordered by a Delaware consumer for shipment directly to their residence, according to Joseph Fulgham, director of policy and communications for Delaware House Republicans.

## BILLS AIM TO OK ALCOHOL HOME DELIVERIES TO MODERNIZE SHOPPING

Those who want wine not found in local stores can only legally obtain it through a process that forces all sales of beer, wine and other alcohol through a system of distributors, wholesalers and retailers established following the repeal of Prohibition 90 years ago.

“It's an antiquated protocol that makes distributors and retailers the gate-keepers of all beer, wine and spirits sales,” Fulgham said.

The state will allow a winery to ship a bottle of wine if the customer purchases the product at a winery. However, the same customer is barred from ordering the same wine by phone or online. [House Bill 262](#), sponsored by Rep. Mike Smith, R-Pike Creek, seeks to modernize Delaware law by allowing direct-to-consumer wine sales under the following conditions:

- Carriers like FedEx and UPS would need to obtain special licenses to handle wine shipments
- Wine shipments would need to be specially labeled
- Wineries shipping their products to Delaware would need a state license
- Pay the same state alcohol taxes levied on retail sales
- Restrict deliveries to adults over the age of 21, who must sign for the package
- Limit households to no more than three cases of wine per year
- Not allow the re-sale of shipped wine

Smith and other supporters of the bill state that the

legislation would not result in any lost sales for Delaware package stores. In the states that have enacted similar laws, retail sales have gone up after the laws took effect.

Another proposed bill aims for an even broader modernization of alcoholic beverage sales. [House Bill 259](#), sponsored by Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Townsend-Clayton, would allow farm breweries, microbreweries and craft distilleries to conduct direct-to-consumer sales of wine, beer, spirits, mead and hard cider.

Spiegelman's bill also would allow state liquor stores to conduct home deliveries, while requiring the licensing and training of delivery workers and mandating that those receiving the order are identified and at least 21 years old. The sponsors expect their opposition to claim that will encourage underage drinking.

Not so, said Chuck Nunan, owner of the Harvest Ridge Winery in Marydel. Carrier services have so many checks and balances that wouldn't happen, he said. The state needs to reform its obsolete alcohol sales laws to reflect 21st-century consumerism, he said.

“Consumer buying habits have changed,” he said, citing Amazon, Chewy and Walmart. “You order it online and it shows up at your doorstep.”

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photo credit: Christina School District



*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

# WLC HIRES TWO, COMPLETES SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative has hired two directors and completed one element of school assessments needed to begin implementing programs to improve student outcomes. Laura Burgos, the executive director of the Wilmington Learning Collaborative, shared updates of recent work at the governing council's monthly meeting Tuesday night.

"I'm very excited to say that all nine of our WLC partner schools completed site visits [this month] and are completing the final data submissions which includes student surveys, family and staff surveys as well as student work products," said Burgos.

Created in November 2022, the **Wilmington Learning Collaborative** is a state agency, with millions of dollars in funding, aiming to improve the educational and societal outcomes for children in nine city elemen-

tary schools across Brandywine, Red Clay and Christina school districts.

"All of this information is going to be analyzed as we think about our teaching and learning systems," Burgos said. "What are those promising practices that we have to build upon? How can schools learn from each other? What can we scale and then what are those focus areas that we could really zero in on so we can deploy our resources responsibly and appropriately?"

The first set of final individual school reports are expected to be submitted by Feb. 23, followed by the district level reports as well as a Wilmington Learning Collaborative culminating report by late March.

Tuesday, the council voted to hire two new positions to the leadership team: a director of operations and a director of educator pathways.

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# Charter School

## CHARTER SCHOOLS HOPE REPORT SPARKS MORE TRANSPARENT FUNDING

BY JAREK RUTZ

Although they are not traditional district schools, Delaware's charter schools are still public, which means they will be affected by any changes from the long-awaited funding assessment released last week. The \$700,000 report by the [American Institutes for Research](#) was required as part of a settlement of a lawsuit charging the state was not adequately or fairly educating children.

Now the state must consider the overarching recommendation to pump between \$590 million to \$1 billion more into public education. Although presenters at the release event barely talked about the 200-page [report's](#) impact on the state's 23 charter schools, Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#), has some thoughts.

"Charter schools do not want to be charter schools to get rid of district schools," she said. "That it is not our intention that every school be a charter school. We are part of the public school landscape and if this formula is good for all public schools, we're in."

She said last week's report release was encouraging because it acknowledged that charter schools do not receive the same amount of funding as district schools.

### FUNDING FOR CHARTERS

Charters do not receive capital funding and the amount of local funding they receive is based on the home district of their students, not the location of the school itself. In addition, that allotment is based on how much local funds the district spent the prior year.

If a student resides in Cape Henlopen School District, but attends Newark Charter, Newark Charter receives an allotment this year based on how much Cape Henlopen spent locally last year. And that funding would be different from a student who lives within Christina School District but attends Newark Charter.

Essentially, the funding charters get is a cumulative amount based on the spending of each student's residential district.

This creates problems.

The graphic features the DCSN logo (Delaware Charter Schools Network) and the text "School Choice is Open!". It includes a small photo of children in a library. Below the text, it states: "The families of 18,455 students made the charter school choice for the 23/24 School Year! Next year's choice window is open through Jan 10, 2024." It also provides a link: "www.DECharterNetwork.org/school-choice/" and a photo of five young girls smiling.

In the prior example, if Cape Henlopen spends a ton of local money one year, but then cuts their spending of local funds the next, Newark Charter would have to prepare their school year knowing, on relatively short notice, that their funding will drop.

"You have to move things around," Massett said. "If you had a capital project that you had been saving up for, that gets pushed off."

For bigger projects, she said, like a school upgrading its HVAC system, charters don't get state funding, so they have to save money. That's difficult when the charters budget fluctuates year to year and is dependent on the spending of other districts a year prior.

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## REDDING CONSORTIUM, WLC SET ALIGNED GOALS

BY BETSY PRICE

Two Wilmington organizations focused on helping city students excel—the **Redding Consortium** and the **Wilmington Learning Collaborative**—have started to determine how they will work together.

“We are at a point now where we really can give a high level introduction to what we think that’s going to look like,” said Sen. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, D-Wilmington, co-chair of the consortium.

The Redding Consortium was founded in 2019 to recommend policies and practices to the governor and legislators to improve education equity and outcomes in the city of Wilmington and northern New Castle County. Some of their work includes implementing school-based health and wellness centers as well as preschool programs.

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative was created in November 2022 and is made up of nine city elemen-

tary schools across Brandywine, Red Clay and Christina school districts. It aims to improve the educational and societal outcomes for those children while also giving Wilmington families more of a voice in policy decisions. Both receive millions of dollars of state funding.

Lockman and the WLC’s Laura Burgos, listed these areas of alignment:

- Empowering school communities
- Improving outcomes for students in the city of Wilmington
- Codesign of expanded learning activities with school communities
- Evidence-based support services
- State-funded programs focused on educational equity and access to high-quality teaching and learning for Pre-K to grade 12 students

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# ALL SIX CHARTERS UP FOR RENEWAL TO CONTINUE OPERATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

All six charter schools up for renewal this academic year have been renewed by the state secretary of education. In the state Board of Education’s monthly meeting Dec. 14, Education Secretary Mark Holodick gave the final OK on Kuumba Academy, Positive Outcomes Charter School, First State Military Academy, Sussex Montessori School, Freire Charter School and Great Oaks Charter School to continue operating.

Every five years, the state requires charter schools to apply for renewal. Applications include basic information about the school like leadership personnel, contacts, enrollment, district of residence, mission statements and more complex details like trends in enrollment, academic performance, graduation rates and proficiency rates.

There wasn’t too much action as Holodick made his announcements, as he takes strong consideration into the recommendations of the Charter School Account-

ability Committee. The state secretary renders a decision after the the accountability committee’s recommendation, but the final authority, per statute, rests with the state Board of Education, who voted for the renewal of all six.

That committee spent the last two months having renewal hearings for each of the charters, where they asked questions about areas of concern, allowed the school to present some highlights of student achievement and progress, and sometimes set conditions that schools have to meet in order to stay open.

For example, Great Oaks had a pretty hefty hail of 16 conditions it needs to meet heading into and through next school year, mainly in regard to steady student enrollment and educator certifications.

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*Sports*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



## COURTSIDE VIEW – WEEK 2 GIRLS' BASKETBALL TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

The girls' basketball season enters the final week before the Christmas holiday and the holiday tournaments start next week. I am looking forward to seeing how these teams fare before they get into their conference schedule in January.

Ursuline freshmen Jezelle Banks scored a career high 29 points in their 79-67 win over Bonita Vista High (CA) over the weekend. Banks had a great season last year as an eighth grader and continues to shine in the Raiders first six games this season.

The Conrad Red Wolves are off to a 4-0 start after a pair of wins last week. Junior Eva Walker is averaging 14 points a game to start the season. They faced their toughest test this year when they traveled to Saint Mark's on Tuesday night.

Here is the first new top 10 of the basketball season for our *Delaware Live* crew.

**No. 1 Ursuline** (5-1)(LW No. 1) The Raiders went 2-0 last week including a win over a California team. They are off this week before playing in the Diamond State Classic.

**No. 2 Caravel** (4-1)(LW No. 2) The Bucs are off till the Diamond State Classic on Dec. 28.

**No. 3 Sanford** (2-3)(LW No. 3) The Warriors lost a pair of games over the weekend in the She Got Game Classic to tough out of state teams. They play in the Governors Challenge after Christmas.

**No. 4 Cape Henlopen** (2-2)(LW No. 4) The Vikings went 1-1 over the weekend in the She Got Game tournament. They played at Dover on Tuesday and are home vs. Sussex Central on Thursday.

**No. 5 St. Elizabeth's** (3-1)(LW No. 5) The Vikings picked up a road win over Appoquinimink last week. They are off till the Viking Invitational after Christmas.

**No. 6 AI Dupont** (5-2)(LW No. 6) The Tigers split a pair of games in the She Got Game Classic. They played at Mount Pleasant on Tuesday and host Christiana on Thursday.

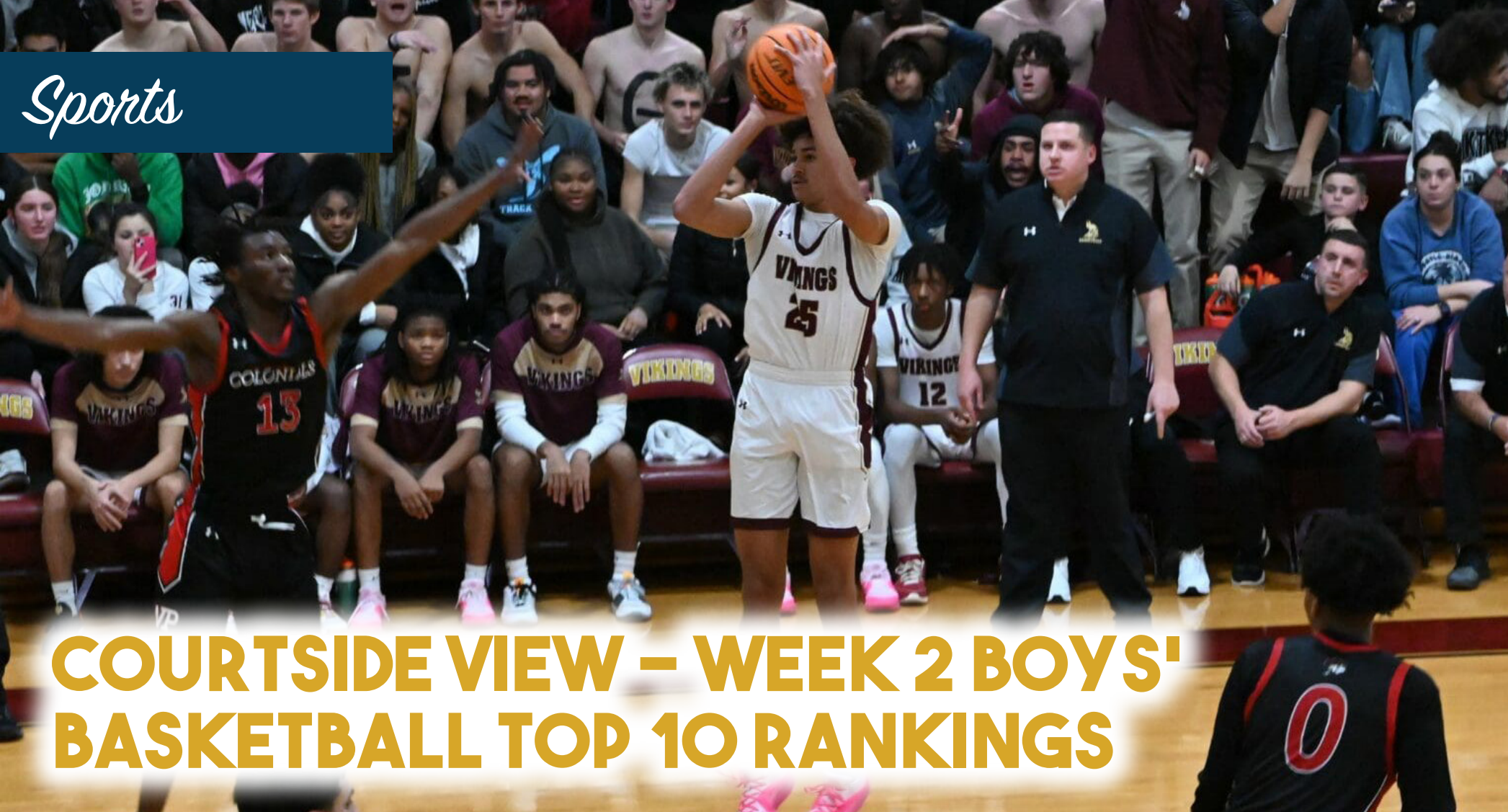
**No. 7 Saint Mark's** (3-1)(LW No. 7) The Spartans defeated Wilmington Charter last week. They hosted Conrad on Tuesday night.

**No. 8 Padua** (3-2)(LW No. 8) The Pandas picked up a win over Sts. Peter and Paul last week. They play in a tournament in Wildwood (NJ) after Christmas.

**No. 9 Middletown** (4-0)(LW No. 9) They hosted Newark Charter on Monday and then DMA on Thursday night.

**No. 10 DMA** (3-0)(LW Unrank) The Seahawks defeated Odyssey Charter last week. They play at No. 9 Middletown on Thursday.





# COURTSIDE VIEW – WEEK 2 BOYS' BASKETBALL TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

The boys' basketball season enters the final week before the Christmas holiday and the holiday tournaments start next week. I am looking forward to seeing how these teams fare before they get into their conference schedule in January.

The Henlopen North and South both kicked off their conference schedule last week as they play each team in the conference twice. Seaford, the defending Henlopen South champions, picked up a pair of wins over ECHS and Sussex Academy.

Saint Mark's is off to a 5-0 start this season as coach Lonny Wright has his team clicking on all cylinders

They are averaging 67.2 points per game while only giving up 43.4 points per game. They play at Red Lion this week before heading to Florida over the Christmas break.

There are four teams at 5-0—Mckean, Saint Mark's, MOT Charter and Odessa. Last year these teams had a combined 33-47.

Here is the final top 10 before the New Year.

**No. 1 Sallies** (1-2)(LW No. 1) The Sals fell to Archbishop Wood (PA) on Saturday night. They traveled to Appoquinimink on Wednesday before they head to Lewes for the Slam Dunk to the Beach tournament.

**No. 2 Middletown** (1-1)(LW No. 3) The Cavs beat Sanford last week. They have a pair of top out of state teams over the holiday break.

**No. 3 St Elizabeth's** (2-0)(LW No. 5) The Vikings defeated then No. 2 William Penn 86-67 last week. They travel to St. Georges Tech on Thursday.

**No. 4 Dover** (1-0)(LW No. 4) The Senators defeated Caesar Rodney last week to kick off their season. They traveled to Cape Henlopen on Tuesday and host New Town (MD) on Saturday.

**No. 5 William Penn** (1-1)(LW No. 2) The Colonials went 1-1 last week with a win over St. Andrews and a loss to St. Elizabeth's. They will participate in the Governor's Challenge next week.

**No. 6 Sanford** (2-1)(LW No. 6) The Warriors lost to No. 3 Middletown 53-51 last week. They hosted Delcastle on Tuesday.

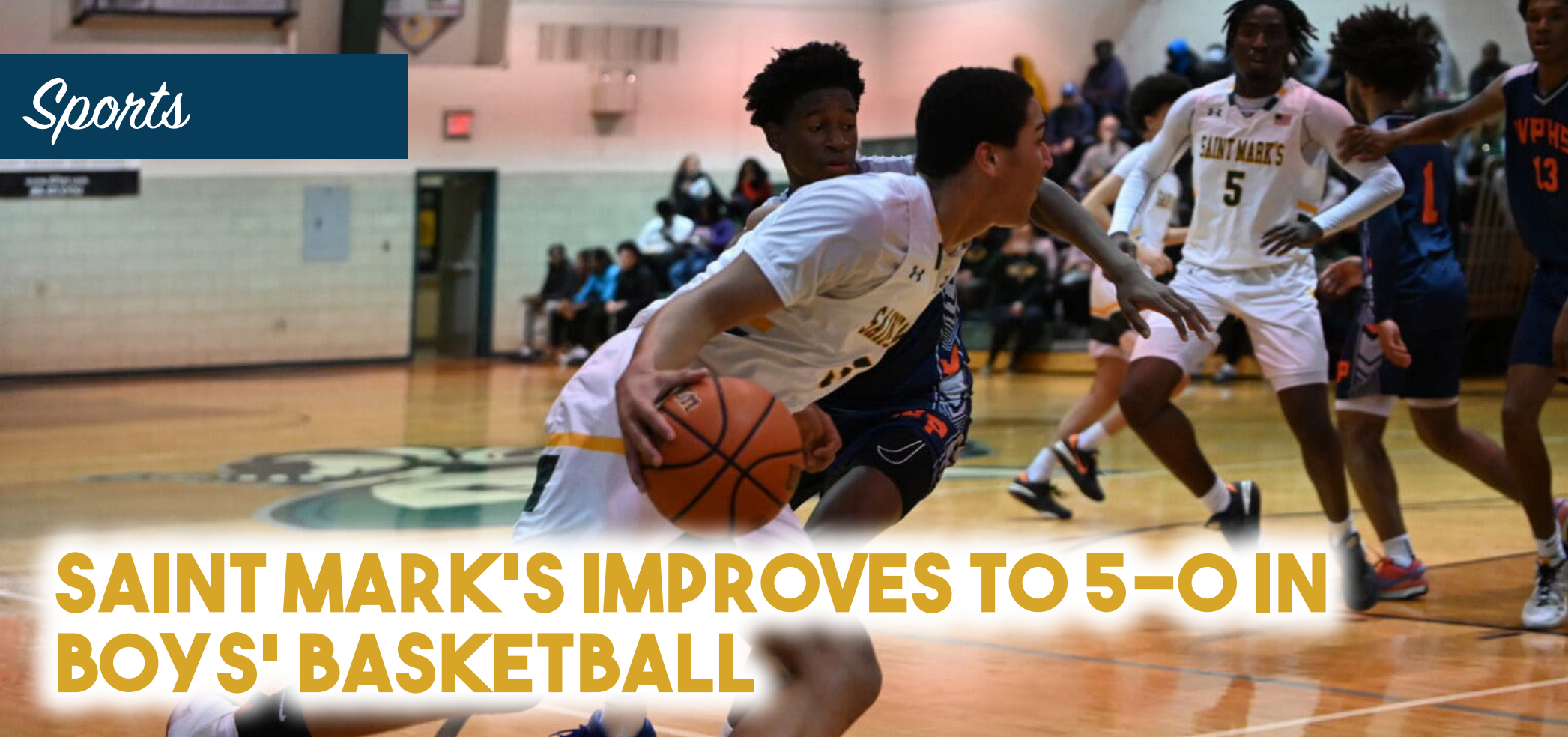
**No. 7 Howard** (2-0)(LW No. 7) The Wildcats went 2-0 last week with wins over Hodgson and St. Georges Tech. They travel to Newark on Thursday.

**No. 8 Appoquinimink** (2-0)(LW No. 9) The Jags hosted No. 1 Sallies on Wednesday night on Delaware Live Sports.

**No. 9 Odessa** (5-0)(LW No. 10) The Ducks won a pair of games against Concord and Newark Charter last week. They played at DMA on Tuesday and then Caesar Rodney on Thursday night.

**No. 10 Cape Henlopen** (3-0)(LW Unrank) The Vikings defeated Sussex Central 48-47 last week. They hosted Dover on Tuesday and then Lake Forest on Thursday.





# SAINT MARK'S IMPROVES TO 5-0 IN BOYS' BASKETBALL

BY JOE SINGLES

Game number four at the boys' basketball Winter Showcase hosted by Mount Pleasant High School was between the Saint Mark's Spartans and the West Philadelphia High School Speedboys. Saint Mark's, who came in the contest touting a 4-0 record in state, started the game in a 3-2 full court zone press which proved to give West Philly some difficulty, causing two turnovers in their first three possessions of the game. The Spartans took an early 6-0 lead on consecutive threes in the first minute. The 1-6 West Philly squad would only put six points on the board in the first quarter as Saint Mark's patient half-court offense ate up the clock and provided good looks at the basket, getting them out to a 16-6 lead at the end of the first quarter.

The Spartans changed it up at the beginning of the second quarter, coming out in an extended 2-3 zone. The Speedboys continued to struggle, missing layups and making questionable decisions, moving too fast and settling for off-balance shots. However, West Philly showed some toughness of their own on the defensive end, forcing Saint Mark's to work hard for their shots in the second quarter. The Spartans went into launch mode against the Speedboys' zone, throwing up double digit three-point shots without sinking one. The quarter ended 22-12 with the Spartans maintaining their 10-point lead headed into halftime.

The Speedboys came out of the locker room at the beginning of the third quarter and knocked down two

quick three-point shots, but Spartans answered with two threes of their own, making the score 30-20 at the 5:27 mark. Both teams tried to push the pace, attacking the basket at every opportunity as the energy level in the gym intensified. West Philly's success came in large part to their 1-3-1 half court zone that proved to speed up the Spartans in the half court along with earning them better looks at the basket at the offensive end. With 1:06 to go in the third, West Philly pulled within three points, forcing the Spartans into poor decisions with their 1-3-1 zone, trapping the corners. 39-34 at the end of the third.

The West Philly zone continued to cause problems for the Spartans early in the fourth quarter, but the hard work of Chris Taylor kept St. Mark's one step ahead. With 1:38 to go in the game, Taylor had yet to take an offensive or defensive possession off. His relentless energy and ability to attack the boards proved to be the catalyst the Spartans needed to move to 5-0 on the season. The aforementioned Chris Taylor for the Spartans finished with a loud 16 points along with his teammate Alassan N'diaye who dropped 17 points in the win. Saint Mark's played at Red Lion on Tuesday before heading to Florida for three games over the holiday break.





## RADECKI AND TILL REACH GIRLS BEAST OF THE EAST FINALS

BY BENNY MITCHELL

The Second Annual Girls' Beast of the East wrestling tournament was center stage Friday night at the Bob Carpenter Center on the campus of the University of Delaware. The event attracted 140 girls from 12 states including 12 girls from Delaware.

The first state had a pair of finalists as Natalie Radecki of Caravel Academy returned to the finals to defend her 2022 Beast of the East championship at 100 pounds and Addie Till of Saint Mark's reached the finals at 105 pounds.

Radecki lost her bid to repeat, falling to U17 world bronze medalist Jaclyn Bouzakis of Wyoming Seminary

by technical fall 17-2 in 4:30. Bouzakis was named Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament.

Radecki earned her return trip to the championship match with an impressive 12-1 major decision over Jamie Hearl of Mt. Airy, NC.

Till also took home second place, losing by pin in 3:57 to Julia Horger of Conwell Egan Catholic. Till reached the finals with a thrilling 5-2 decision over Kloie Tighe of Gloucester, NJ. The match was tied 2-2 at the start of the third period. Till scored an escape and a takedown in the third period to win the match.

"I had to fight my way through a few tough matches

today. It was my choice in the last period, I took down so I could escape and get at least one point," Till said.

Sussex Tech's Logan Flood took fourth place at 140 pounds to round out the three Delaware wrestlers to reach the podium on Friday night.

Two others just missed taking home a medal as Olivia Natarcola of Smyrna finished fifth at 105 pounds and Milford's Autumn Littleton took sixth at 115 pounds.

Blair Academy of Blairstown, NJ, won the team title scoring 179 points while Gettysburg took second place with 151 points.

While finishing in 23rd place overall, Caesar Rodney and Sussex Tech were the highest placing Delaware teams finishing with 49 points followed by Caravel Academy with 41 points and Saint Mark's with 36 points.

"I'm excited to see the growth in girls wrestling. We brought four girls here tonight and in only the second year the tournament is really growing as has girls wrestling in Delaware." said Trey Mitchell, Caesar Rodney head coach.

Mitchell said he credits his assistant Brandy Dolt for helping bring the Riders program along.

"Brandy wrestled at Missouri Valley College, she not only coaches our team, but in the offseason she runs an all girls practice for younger girls from around the state," Mitchell added.

The Girls' Beast of the East is the prelude to the boys tournament. The 31st Beast of the East wrestling tournament begins on Saturday morning at 8:30 and continues through the championship matches on Sunday afternoon.

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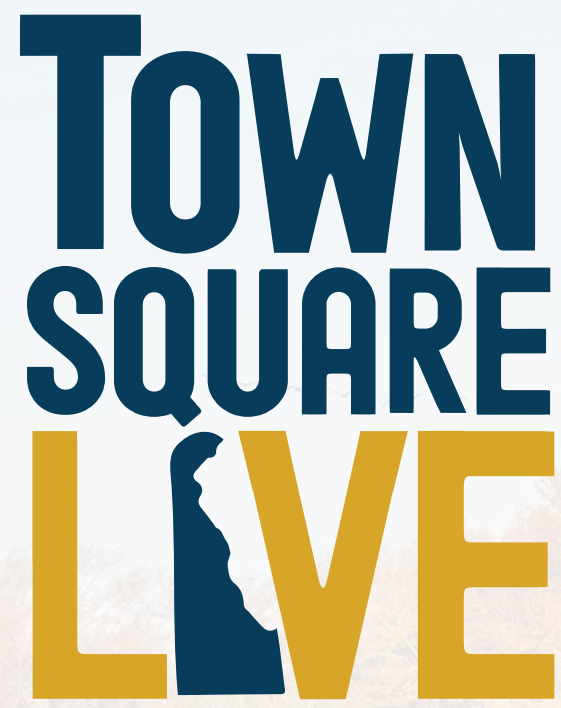
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