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photo link: Delaware Children's Museum



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photo by Carol DeGuseppi

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Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



OATHS OF OFFICE OPEN MOST DIVERSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY EVER

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware's **152nd General Assembly** officially began Tuesday, as Delaware's 62 representatives and senators were sworn into office in what is the most diverse legislature yet.

"We're finally looking like Delaware's population," said Rep. DeShanna Neal, D-Wilmington. The first nonbinary and first Buddhist to serve in Delaware's legislature, they are starting their first year in office.

"One of the most amazing parts of being elected for the first time was being at the polls and seeing little Black and Brown girls coming up to me knowing this is something they can achieve too," they said.

In the first meeting of the House, several representatives from both sides of the aisle talked about unity, community and leadership in regard to their duty in the state legislature.

"It's a pleasure to be working in one of the most inclusive, not just diverse but inclusive, bodies that we've had in the state of Delaware and perhaps even in the nation," said Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, to the 40 other representatives and their respective family and friends in the House Chamber.

"What we're doing here is the work of the people," she continued. "It's not the legislation we pass or the legislation we stop, it's what we do each and every day in our district for that person that has the smallest need or the biggest concern."

PLANS FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, pointed out that just two years ago, the General Assembly had zero legislators who were in the LGBTQ+ community in its 244-year history.

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE

MEALS ON WHEELS DELAWARE

Since then, it has added five members who are in that community, which Morrison called a historic feat.

Neal said her goals as a first-year lawmaker is to make education and healthcare as affordable, accessible and inclusive as possible, especially for underserved families in the city. Others are focused on creating better economic opportunities for Delaware's residents.

Rep. Ron Gray, R-Selbyville, said that during this session, he'll work for small business legislation to help stimulate the economy in this time of recession. He's already working on a bill to reduce fees for small business licensing.

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January

LONGHURST STARTS HOUSE DAY TWO BY APOLOGIZING TO MINOR-BROWN

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware House of Representatives majority leader started the second day of the 152nd General Assembly Wednesday by apologizing to the new minority leader for the way she phrased a description of her. On Tuesday, Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, had introduced Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown as “the first colored woman in leadership in the House of Representatives.” They hugged after Longhurst singled out Minor-Brown. The arcane phrasing drew criticism, Longhurst said Wednesday.

“Unfortunately, I horribly misspoke when trying to say women of color,” Longhurst said. “I know how hurtful that word is, that it’s so closely associated with one of the bleaker times in our history, Jim Crow. It’s a derogatory term, and the exact opposite of what I was trying to express to my friend. I’m really sorry.”

Longhurst said she intended to honor Minor-Brown. “It was a day of celebration for all new members being sworn in for the first time and especially for my good friend, Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, who made history by becoming the first Black person to hold a leadership position in the house,” Longhurst said Wednesday. “I wanted to celebrate Mimi and her accomplishments, which is so important not just for her, but for every young person who aspires to do great things.”

Longhurst said she had spoken to Minor-Brown and others, but wanted to publicly apologize to the House members and the guests they brought with them Monday for the annual swearing in.

“So many people came to Dover yesterday to celebrate their loved ones accomplishments,” Longhurst said. “And I’m sorry my mistake distracted from that. I am truly

proud of this House and its diversity, and I’m honored to lead it. That includes being called to account when I messed up, whether it’s intentionally or not.”

Minor-Brown, who sits next to Longhurst on the House floor, thanked her.

“I do understand why people were upset by Valerie’s word choice, particularly in the political climate that we’re in today,” Minor-Brown said. “The difference here in Delaware is that we do like to extend grace to our colleagues when they make a mistake.”

Minor-Brown told Longhurst that she knew Longhurst’s intent “was not negative or coming from a bad place.”

“I know who you are,” she told Longhurst. “Even though the word choice was not the greatest, it’s important that we extend grace when we all make mistakes, and I’ve seen that happen out here on this floor.

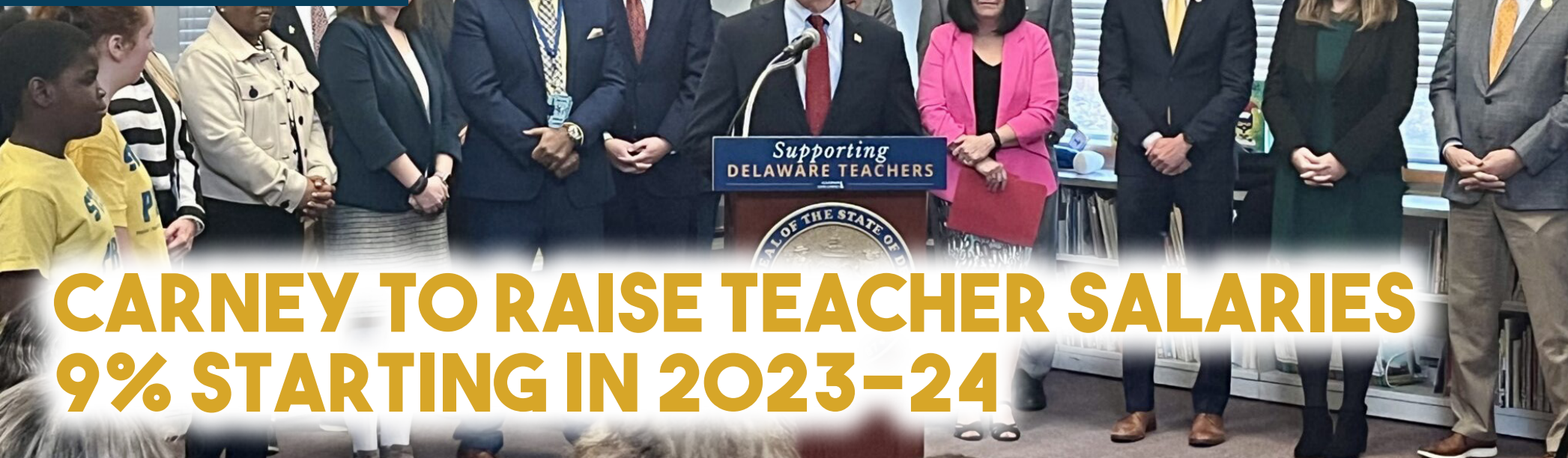
“We as a caucus are ready to move forward as we continue to become more diverse.”

Minor-Brown ended by saying, “My hope is that we all continue to evolve our understanding that we will make mistakes, but it’s important that we educate ourselves and we educate our colleagues and that we be patient and we are providing some understanding when we interact with each other.”

See Longhurst’s apology in this House [video](#).



January



CARNEY TO RAISE TEACHER SALARIES 9% STARTING IN 2023-24

BY JAREK RUTZ

Classroom teachers in Delaware’s public schools will receive a 9% increase in their salary next school year. Others who work in education will receive a 3% raise.

Those announcements came Tuesday from Education Secretary Mark Holodick during an event in which Gov. John Carney detailed the money he was investing in public education in next year’s budget, which starts July 1.

“We can’t afford to wait until November,” Holodick said. That’s when salary recommendations are due from the Public Education Compensation Committee, a group created to review and develops suggestions about enhancing Delaware’s educator compensation structure.

Its goal is to attract teachers to work in Delaware—and to keep them in the state—by paying them salaries that are competitive to neighboring states. Most notably, Maryland passed a law that would give teachers a starting salary of \$60,000, which is nearly \$20,000 more

than the base pay for Delaware teachers.

“If we want to recruit and retain quality educators, we need to provide them with a respectable salary at the beginning of their career,” said Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, chair of the House Education Committee. “Educating our children is one of the most important jobs one could ever hold, and we should pay the educators a salary showing that we believe that it’s the most important job,” she said.

Stephanie Ingram, president of the **Delaware State Education Association**, the state teachers union, was happy with the investment. The union supports all public school employees, whose salary is what the Public Education Compensation Committee is reviewing. It previously asked the committee to take immediate action on increasing teacher salaries since the shortage of teachers is the most pressing matter.

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Ingram and the DSEA have also asked the committee to increase teachers’ starting salaries to \$60,000 to compete with Maryland, since teachers could simply cross a border and make significantly more.

Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, a former educator and chair of the Senate Education Committee, said that people become teachers to make a difference, not for the pay.

“But your ability to make that difference in the lives of your students is seriously impaired when your school is short-staffed, which creates ballooning class sizes and impossible caseloads, and diminished wraparound supports,” she said. “Today we began to right this ship.”

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February

EASTSIDE BREAKS GROUND ON \$25 MILLION COMMUNITY STEM HUB

BY JAREK RUTZ

EastSide Charter's new \$25 million STEM hub boils down to one word: accessibility, said Chief Executive Officer Aaron Bass. That hub was one step closer to reality Wednesday after the charter school held a groundbreaking ceremony for the 24,000-square-foot building scheduled to open in fall 2024.

"The number one industry in Delaware is STEM," Bass said, but many students don't know where to start if they want to be an engineer, chemist or doctor. The hub is designed to help make those connections, in class and out.

Early last year, Chemours became EastSide's lead donor in the venture, giving \$4 million to the project. Since then, **Barclays US Consumer Bank** donated \$1 million, and EastSide received \$3 million in federal funding and \$5 million in state funds to build the hub.

The donations go to **First Community Foundation**, the group that funds EastSide Charter.

The hub will benefit far more than just the EastSide community, Bass said.

"You have the same access to the hub as you would public libraries because it is for all children and adults in Delaware," he said. "We have people at Chemours already committed to leading ongoing classes to adults and to young people to enter into STEM careers."

Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long said during the ceremony that while 52% of Delaware's workforce are women, only 29% of them are in a STEM-related job. Black workers make up less than 7% of the STEM workforce, and Hispanics make up less than 1%, she said.

"It starts when we're young and with the exposure that we have today, change is common," she said. "Today, opportunity is coming for the young men and the women in this community."

WHAT TO EXPECT

In addition to classes, the hub will feature a maker's



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space, a 3D printing lab, computer coding labs, experimental science labs, and a music and tv studio.

"Engineering and math are all part of making music and that's one of the things we're looking to do," Bass said, "**DETV** is one of our partners who is going to be teaching people how to do television and learning those skills in media and journalism."

Ideally, the STEM hub will help young folks in the Riverside community someday cure diseases, Bass said, but someone needs to be telling the world about it, which is why the DETV partnership will help build young journalists. EastSide also partnered with NASA, which will provide some hub programming.

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CARNEY BUDGET CUTS INCOME TAX, FOCUSES ON EDUCATION, WORKERS

BY BETSY PRICE

Cutting straight to the “what does it mean to me” point: Gov. John Carney’s \$5.5 billion budget proposal for 2024 will let Delawareans keep more of their hard-earned cash. The budget, which the governor detailed in an 11 a.m. speech Jan. 26, will increase the standard deduction on Delaware income tax by 75% to \$5,700 (\$11,400 filing jointly) from \$3,250 (\$6,500 filing jointly). It also will increase the amount of refunded tax for those who meet federal Earned Income Tax Credit requirements to 7.5%.

Those credits are designed to refund tax to lower-wage earners and are based on tax-filing status, income and number of children. In 2023, the federal credit will be worth \$600 to \$7,430. The state’s rate is lower. An example of a group that qualifies would be a three-child household with an income of \$60,000.

The change in taxes reflects the state’s third year of \$1 billion surplus, fueled largely by federal COVID-19 ini-

tiatives and rises in the real estate transfer taxes with home sales soaring after the pandemic started. Those huge surpluses are not expected to end with the 2024 budget.

Carney’s bill is largely focused on improving education, the environment, raising state worker pay, funding programs that help attract jobs and put people to work through tax breaks and child care assistance, he said.

The budget bill, which must be adopted by the General Assembly before it ends June 30, includes a lot of historic proposals, largely because of those surpluses. It recommends putting \$59.8 million into grants-in-aid, which supports nonprofits; \$1.23 million into bond and capital improvements, which provides the state’s infrastructure; and a one-time supplemental allocation of \$324.9 million that will go to healthcare issues.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET REACTION

Republican members of the Joint Finance Committee,

a bipartisan group that will take Carney’s 2024 budget, said they largely were pleased with it, citing the additions to state funds that help when the state faces deficits, the increase of tax deductions, a focus on affordable housing, increase in programs to help lower-income workers pay for child care, increasing state worker pay and money for water and environmental issues.

Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, said Carney showed fiscal restraint by adding to the budget smoothing fund. That and the rainy day fund now contain about \$1 billion, which Carney said will help when the huge surpluses slow.

Rep. Kevin Hensley, R-Townsend, said it made him nervous that the operating budget increase was a percentage point higher than the [Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Committee](#) recommended and he worried that the state should be putting more aside. He said he was surprised that Carney didn’t put more money into the nonprofit grants-in-aid budget. Many are still coping with losses and expenses related to the pandemic, he said.

“These nonprofits provide critical services to Delaware and throughout the state. They do a fabulous job doing it,” he said. He said he was hopeful that the grants budget could be increased by the Joint Finance Committee.

King said she would have liked to see more money go to public safety. Traffic accident deaths and pedestrian deaths were up again last year, she said. Schools need more safety money, too.

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BY BETSY PRICE

NOTE: This story corrects a statement to say that it costs \$100,000 per mile to lay broadband cable and install equipment. A previous version incorrectly said it cost that much per house.

Delaware state computers had to contend with 567 billion—billion with a B—cyberattacks in the last quarter of 2022, the director of the Department of Technology and Information said Tuesday. Most are caught and blocked by security software, but the staff had to investigate 4,000, said Jason Clarke, Delaware’s chief information officer. Some of the attacks briefly shut down school computers and other programs, he said.

“It is a constant battle of blocking and tackling,” he said.

Clarke was testifying before the General Assembly’s Joint Finance Committee. It has been holding hearings all month before deciding the state’s budget. It has to be passed by June 30 in order for the state’s fiscal year 2024 to start July 1. Among other things Clarke said:

- The department expects a budget of \$158 million to fund the installation of broadband technology in the state’s internet deserts.

STATE FENDS OFF 567 BILLION CYBERATTACKS; ADDING BROADBAND

- DTI continues to lose employees to private companies and those employees are being paid an average of \$50,000 more a year. “We are competing not just with Delaware and the banks like we have traditionally done here in Delaware, but we are competing with the whole nation,” he said.
- Schools returning to in-person classes meant that students brought back devices that had not been in school before, stretching the state’s service and forcing it to add capacity. “Schools 10 years ago were 10% of the traffic across the state’s network. Today, they are 90%,” Clarke said. “It’s literally the tail wagging the dog when it comes to managing the network.”
- Inflation is hitting the department hard as it renegotiates contracts for various services, with one contract rising \$267%.

The department is asking for a slight increase to the \$59,087,100 recommended in Gov. John Carney’s proposed budget. Clarke asked for \$60,040,800, mostly for more employees. He said the department request was small because it’s still managing \$125 million in multiyear projects funded by federal COVID and American Rescue Plan money.

Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, said he personally knew someone who had more than doubled their salary when they left the department. Clarke said he left three positions that doubled or more than doubled their salaries out of his calculations because they skewed the numbers badly. He pointed out that he does all the exit interviews and asks to see actual job offers to confirm the salaries.

BROADBAND DESERTS

Several lawmakers questioned Clarke about the state’s program to **expand** broadband access. He said the state is using a variety of resources to fund the multiyear project: \$33 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act money; at least \$100 million in Federal Communication Commission grants expected this summer; \$12 million in federal digital equity grants;

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BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware House unanimously passed a bill on Tuesday that would require Delaware insurance plans to cover epinephrine auto-injectors for everyone. Today in Delaware, epinephrine is only guaranteed to people 18 years or younger. If **House Bill 54** passes the Senate, all Delawareans would be guaranteed at least one injector in the lowest tier of their insurance. The bill would not take effect until 2024. There is no fiscal note attached to the bill.

HB 24 is sponsored by Kimberly Williams, D-Stanton, along with 19 other sponsors, 18 Democrats and one Republican, Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown. The bill follows 2021's **House Bill 95**, also sponsored by Williams, which established epinephrine coverage for those 18 years and younger.

Following passage of HB 54, Williams said in a press release that epinephrine shouldn't cost as much as it does. The drug is used to counteract allergic relations, which kill people by closing airways and making their tongues swell, among other symptoms.

DELAWARE HOUSE PASSES BILL TO MAKE EPIPENS MORE AFFORDABLE

EPIPENS BECAME EXPENSIVE

“We have seen how much drug prices have gone up in recent years, forcing many of our constituents to make unthinkable decisions about whether they can afford this life-saving drug,” Williams said. “It costs less than a Capriotti’s bobbie to manufacture an EpiPen, but a two-pack of EpiPens can cost more than a car payment.”

Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, said in the release that EpiPens are the only medication that will save the life of a person suffering from anaphylaxis, but they are among the most expensive medications on the market.

“No one who is at risk of a severe allergic reaction should forgo carrying an EpiPen simply because they are too expensive,” she said.

The cost of epinephrine has increased dramatically in the last decade, from \$106 in November 2004 to \$608 in May 2016. After the rights to EpiPen’s were purchased by Mylan in 2007, that company dramatically raised prices, even though the core cost of the pen’s **components** are about \$34.

Delaware isn't the only place to try to make medication more affordable. As part of the federal **Inflation Reduction Act**, Medicare will put a \$35 cap on the price of insulin.

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EDUCATION LEADERS FIGHT BILLS ADDING DAYS OFF FOR TEACHERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Bills that would expand the reasons and days for teachers to take days off from work divided legislators and public commenters in the Senate Education Committee Wednesday.

Senate Bill 60, sponsored by Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, who is chair of the committee, would give teachers and other school employees the same protection to be absent without a loss of pay as other state employees to:

- Appear under subpoena to testify in a matter, unless they are one of the parties in the case or if the trial is directly related to that employee’s work.
- Report to serve on a jury.

The backlash came from heads of educational organizations.

“I’ve been on many juries and many jury duty assignments, and it’s usually a two-week assignment,” said John

Marinucci, executive director of the **Delaware School Board Association**. “Two weeks out of the classroom is a long time, especially now, when we have so many needs in the classroom. Now is not the time to identify ways to help teachers not to be in a classroom.”

Tammy Croce, executive director of the **Delaware Association of School Administrators**, said it was unlawful for the General Assembly to rule on this subject. “Those rules should and currently do fall under the purview of the local boards of education,” she said.

Woodbridge School District Superintendent Heath Chasanov, speaking on behalf of the 19 district superintendents, said he was against the bill for the same reason.

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MARIJUANA LEGAL IN DELAWARE SUNDAY; CARNEY WON'T SIGN, VETO

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney said Friday that even though he disagrees with legalizing marijuana and creating a regulated and taxed industry, he will allow the two bills that do that to become law without his signature.

“I want to be clear that my views on this issue have not changed,” he said in a Friday afternoon press release. “I understand there are those who share my views who will be disappointed in my decision not to veto this legislation.

“I came to this decision because I believe we’ve spent far too much time focused on this issue, when Delawareans face more serious and pressing concerns every day. It’s time to move on.”

House Bill 1, which decriminalizes marijuana possession for personal use, will become law at the end of Saturday night. It takes effect Sunday, April 23.

House Bill 2, which creates a taxable, regulated industry for the growing and selling of marijuana, will become law at the end of Wednesday night. It takes effect Thursday, April 27, but it’s like to be months to a year before the regulations are put in place that allow the industry to take root.

Carney made his announcement one day too late for marijuana advocates to celebrate when they light up on April 20, also referred to as 4/20. That day has become a kind of holiday for those who want weed legalized across the country.

“As I’ve consistently said, I believe the legalization of recreational marijuana is not a step forward,” Carney said in his press release. “I support both medical marijuana and Delaware’s decriminalization law because no one should go to jail for possessing a personal use quan-

tity of marijuana. And today, they do not.”

Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, has repeatedly introduced versions of the bill to legalize marijuana use. The one that passed last year was vetoed by Carney and could not be overcome by the state House.

When he reintroduced the bills this year, Osienski said he thought there was a chance that he would have better luck in the governor’s office.

The governor’s office suggested changes on the industry bill, which passed in an amendment.

And earlier this week, Carney told a town hall meeting that he thought the state had more pressing problems, including lost learning because of COVID-19 and the opioid epidemic, and had spent too much time focusing on marijuana.

“After five years of countless meetings, debates, negotiations and conversations,” Osienski said, “I’m grateful we have reached the point where Delaware has joined a growing number of states that have legalized and regulated adult recreational marijuana for personal use. We know that more than 60% of Delawareans support the legalization of marijuana for adult recreational use, and more than two-thirds of the General Assembly agreed.”

He said he understood the governor’s personal opposition to legalization.

“So I especially appreciate him listening to the thousands of residents who support this effort and allowing it to become law,” Osienski said. “I am committed to working with the administration to ensure that the effort to establish the regulatory process goes as smoothly as possible.”

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SHE WANTED TO HELP. NOW WINGMOM SERVES 5,000 CLIENTS

BY BETSY PRICE

After Kate Maxwell's firefighter fiancé died in the 2016 Canby Park fire, she crawled into a tunnel of grief and substance abuse. Nine months later, when she got sober with the help of her parents, she was overwhelmed with the amount of love and support she had been shown during that time.

Her best friend, Meg Hurst, and others came to check on her, cooked for her and her kids, cleaned the house and did a number of chores and errands on her behalf while Maxwell sat on the sofa "comatose with grief" after the death of Capt. Chris Leach.

"The community totally surrounded me and showed me so much love and support," Maxwell said. "When I kind of got back on my feet my thought process was 'I've got to find a way to give back.'"

The result was Wingmom, a company that offers all kinds of services including giving kids rides, doing laundry, cleaning, organizing, senior care and even cooking a dish for an overwhelmed mom to take to a party.

The six-year-old company had total sales of \$1.1 million in 2022, all while employing an army of moms who are able to work as much or as little as they want for wages that start at \$19 an hour.

"We have this amazing byproduct that I never thought about in that we're taking women that wouldn't traditionally be employable because they are stay at home

moms or they are trying to support their family through a second job and we are giving them jobs because of our flexibility," Maxwell said.

Wingmom has franchises in Middletown, serving all the way to Dover; southern Pennsylvania; Bucks County, PA; Catskills, NY; and, soon, Washington Township, NJ.

In total, the franchises serve more than 5,000 customers with 250 Wingmoms—and as of 2020 some Wingdads. The original north Delaware franchise alone has 125 Wingmoms and Wingdads on their payrolls.

Maxwell said she never expected the growth that the company has seen.

"I thought that Wingmom was just going to be a way to make some extra cash while helping moms with their day-to-day while I figured out my next move," Maxwell said. "And it ended up becoming this large company."

The company has a lot of vocal fans praising it on social media. Sarah Goldfarb Weeden hires Wingmom to clean her house and has found Vickey Smith, who runs Wingmom's home management department, to be remarkably more reliable than other cleaning companies.

But Goldfarb Weeden's favorite Wingmom story took place on her first day back at work after taking leave when her youngest daughter needed major surgery at CHOP in Philly.

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DIVISION OF ALCOHOL STARTS PROCESS TO CREATE LEGAL POT INDUSTRY

BY SAM HAUT

The legalization of marijuana in Delaware will mean the state's police agencies stop ticketing people for having it, but they'll continue to pull people over for appearing to be under the influence.

Police already had stopped charging people with criminal possession for small amounts of pot in 2019, when Attorney General Kathy Jennings said she would no longer prosecute for misdemeanor possession of marijuana or paraphernalia. Now, agencies will stop giving out the civil citations which had replaced the criminal charges.

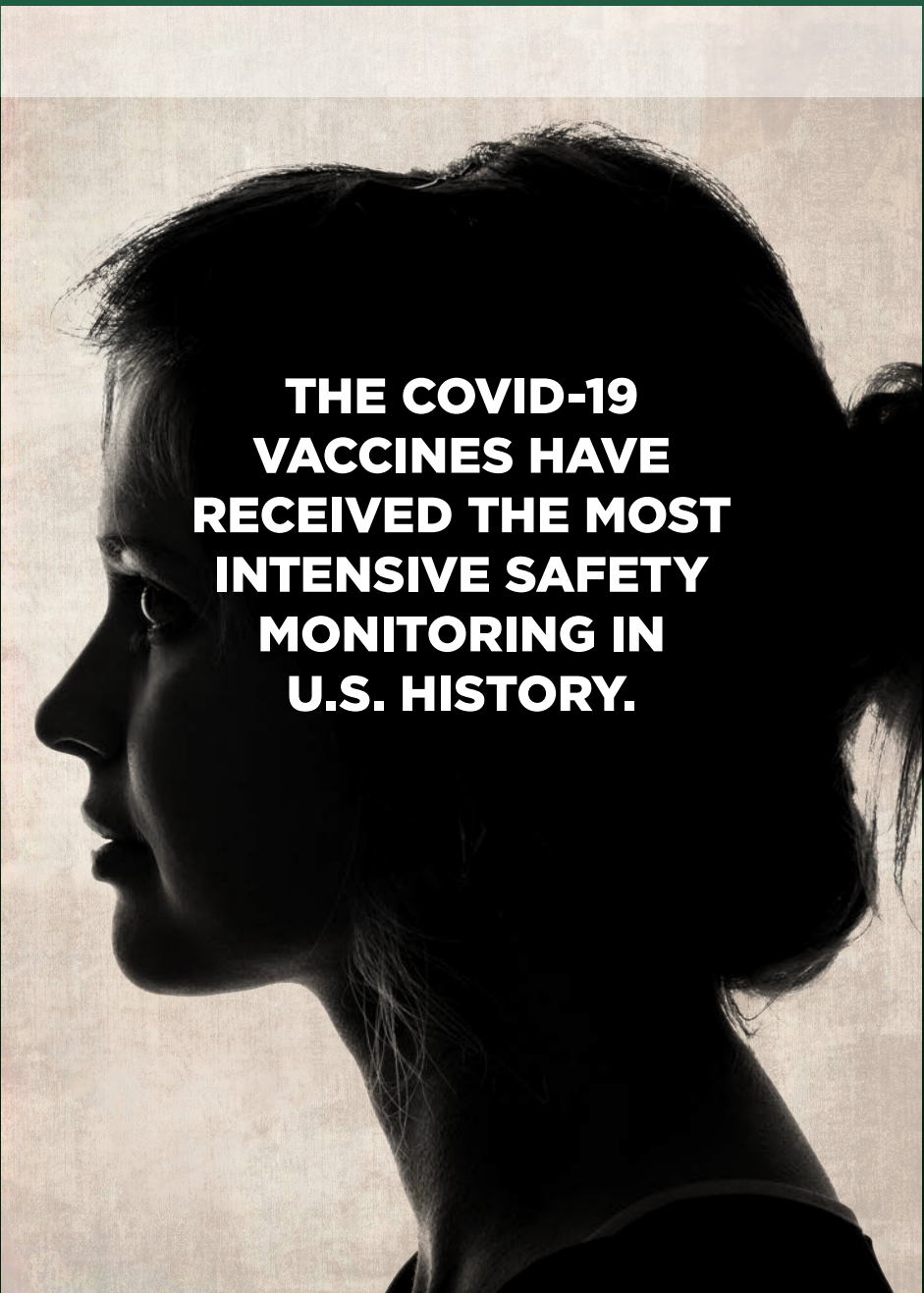
In the meantime, all eyes will be on the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement, charged with writing the regulations under which Delaware plans to set up a taxable, regulated industry to grow and sell

marijuana. It requires the appointment of a marijuana commissioner and three members of an appeals commission within 90 days of the bill becoming law.

After House Bill 2 officially became law, the division posted on its [Facebook](#) page that it will be working with the Department of Health and Social Services to implement the two bills and that they'll hire new staff to help with enforcement.



Arshon Howard, public information officer for the state Department of Safety and Homeland Security, which includes the Division of Alcohol, did not elaborate further. Howard said no schedules for public meetings or proceedings have been published.

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MARIJUANA BANNED FROM DE WORKPLACES AFTER LEGALIZATION



BY SAM HAUT

With the legalization of recreational marijuana, workplaces in Delaware will now have to contend with the increased usage that will bring. In response to the bills, the state of Delaware implemented a **new policy** May 3 for all executive branches to ban smoking or being under the influence of marijuana, similar to the use of alcohol. Claire DeMatteis, secretary of the Department of Human Resources, said that marijuana in all forms is banned in state workplaces.

“The state of Delaware, private corporations are updating existing policies to add the fact that the workplace needs to be marijuana free...That policy includes marijuana in any form,” DeMatteis said. “Because we know there are some people that make brownies out of marijuana, and cookies. And none of that will be tolerated in a state building.”

The Delaware Department of Human Resources also encouraged other non-executive branch agencies to adopt and administer the same policy.

While recreational marijuana may be banned at work, people with a valid medical marijuana card will still be able to smoke or use edibles in state workplaces, except for those working in the Department of Corrections or in law enforcement. DeMatteis said there are no plans at this time to change that policy, due to safety.

“You can’t, in a prison, allow a correctional officer to smoke marijuana because he or she medically needs it. And that has always been the case...First and foremost, it’s a state safety issue,” DeMatteis said. “And you just can’t have first responders, particularly in a prison setting, bringing in marijuana, medical or otherwise.”

The state isn’t the only employer updating its policy. DeMatteis said that companies like JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America and colleges in Delaware are also banning marijuana in their offices.

“University of Delaware put out a big statement,” DeMatteis said. “Think about companies like JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America. They already have policies that now will be effective in Delaware since they operate in other states that have quote, unquote, legalized marijuana. So a lot of our private employers in the state have similar marijuana- and alcohol-free workplace policies.”

Adam Cantley, the dean of students at the University of Delaware, sent out an email May 1 reminding students

that the use, sale, manufacturing, distribution, possession or facilitation of the use of marijuana on campus is still prohibited. Under the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, colleges like the University of Delaware must ban the use of drugs like marijuana in order to receive federal funding.

The Delaware Society for Human Resource Management did not respond to requests for comment.

Jeanne Kress, the membership sales manager with the New Castle Chamber of Commerce, said that chambers of commerce don’t have conversations with businesses about their policies, so she doesn’t know if any companies updated their policies following marijuana legalization.

Ayanna Khan, president of the Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce, said they haven’t talked with their members about updating their policies following legalization, but know several companies with second-chance initiatives. Those initiatives involve companies hiring people who’ve previously been convicted of crimes.





FIRST NEW WILMINGTON SCHOOL IN 50 YEARS TOPPED OFF WITH JOY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Dozens of Wilmington elementary school students chanted “raise it up” and a drum team played while the ceremonial last beam on the first new city school in 50 years was lifted into place by a construction crane.

The new \$84 million **Bancroft School** in **Christina School District**, which will span several blocks in Wilmington, is expected to open for students by fall 2024. The topping-off ceremony was the centerpiece of a joyous scene that resembled a festival with music, tents and party food. It seemed to serve as a proof of hope for

a group that’s been largely overlooked by the state for half a century.

About 200 children, teachers, construction workers and government officials gathered May 25 on the 7th and Lombard Streets construction grounds. The building will be two floors and serve about 600 students. Most of the staff will transfer to the new building in what George Wicks, supervisor of facilities and planning for the Christina School District, called a “pretty smooth and seamless transition.”

A new name might also be in store, as Gov. John Carney suggested naming the new building the Maurice Pritchett School, after the principal of the Bancroft School from 1975 to 2005. He died in April.

“We’re honored to have the Pritchett family sitting here up front because Maurice was the long-term principal,” said Carney. “He was a symbol of all the educators who poured their heart and soul into this building and the children who attended there.”

“Of all the leaders who’ve worked to improve the lives of the children on the East Side...Mr. Pritchett was on top of that list,” said Dan Shelton, Christina’s superintendent.

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki announced 7th Street will be renamed Maurice Pritchett Way to honor the former principal.

The old school, which serves grades one through eight, was built in the 1970s, the decade desegregation efforts began to move city students into the suburbs and vice versa. The new Bancroft School campus will be bounded by East 6th and East 8th Streets, and between Lombard and Spruce Streets. Every penny that went into the new building was funded by the state.

“We are so excited about the future of our students,” said Keeley Powell, longtime president of Christina’s school board, “as they learn and grow in this amazing, brand new and state-of-the-art educational space, which is what all of our students deserve.”

To pay homage to the old school’s library, there will be a large display at the entrance of the new auditorium with memorable tokens of the original building.

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JEEP TO STOP SENDING GAS-POWERED WRANGLERS TO DE DEALERS

BY SAM HAUT

As DNREC mulls proposed electric vehicle regulations, Jeep dealers in Delaware may see the flow of new cars altered immediately. Santosh Viswanathan, CEO of Lakeshore Motor Co. in Seaford, said dealers were told by Jeep about two weeks ago that soon they will no longer get regular orders of gas-powered Jeep Wranglers. Instead, dealers will be sent Jeep Wranglers 4xe, the electric version of a Wrangler.

Viswanathan said dealers expect the same thing to happen with other Jeep models.

“They haven’t spoken too much about the rest of the models, but I’m sure others will follow,” Viswanathan said. “Our main concern was, and many of my fellow Jeep dealers’ concerns, was the Wranglers because they are the best selling lineup in the Jeep brand.”

The cheapest 2023 Jeep Wrangler Lakeshore Motor

Co. has available costs \$48,895, while the cheapest 4xe Wrangler costs \$59,130. The reason for the change, Viswanathan said, is because Delaware agreed to follow the lead of California on the Advanced Clean Car II rules, something he thinks should have gone through the legislature.

“Normally things of this magnitude are run through the legislature,” Viswanathan said. “But in this particular case, we’ve farmed that job out to the Department of Natural Resources, whereby an appointed secretary of DNREC is going to impose, unilaterally, DNREC’s policies, rules and procedures on the public...People in the legislature are not going to have any say in this.”

Lakeshore Motor Co. now has five electric Jeep Wranglers and four plug-in hybrids available for sale out of 56 vehicles in its new inventory, and no electric

vehicles in its used inventory of 46 vehicles.

While Jeep will stop sending bulk orders of gas Wranglers, Viswanathan said they will still send dealerships Wranglers if requested, but it could take up to 90 days to receive the vehicle.

Under the **proposed regulations**, which DNREC closed the public comment period on May 26, car dealerships in Delaware would need to have 35% of new vehicles be electric by 2025, and then increase that by about 8% each year, until it gets to 100% by 2035.

Several other states, including Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington State already have adopted similar regulations. **Colorado** is holding stakeholder meetings throughout 2023 while it considers the rules.

Asked how he’d feel about the rule if it had been voted on by the legislature, Viswanathan said he didn’t want to speculate but that the legislature is more deliberative.

“Some of the outcomes that come from deliberation tend to be more of what the public might desire and want,” he said.

Viswanathan is also the chairman of the legislative affairs committee for the Delaware Automobile and Truck Dealers’ Association and a managing partner at Willis Ford Smyrna.

Elton Caballero, a sales representative with the Preston Auto Group in Wilmington, said they have heard the same thing from Jeep, but also don’t know when the change will happen.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

CARVERTISE OPENS HEADQUARTERS ON WILMINGTON RIVERFRONT



BY BETSY PRICE

A home-grown company that puts advertising on cars celebrated its sleek new headquarters June 15.

Carvertise's operations and dispatch crews moved under I-195 from its warehouse and production facility in Wilmington's Browntown neighborhood to a \$1.2 million, 15,000-square-foot home in the Shipyard Center on the Christina riverfront. The space, renovated in a modern industrial design with whites and grays and a touch of blondish wood beneath exposed black HVAC ducts, bears no resemblance to the outlet store and bank that once occupied at 974 Justison St.

Most importantly, said CEO Mac Mcleod during a Thursday tour of the space, the new offices will allow the company, which wraps cars in vinyl decal material, to continue growing. It's seen a 55% year-over-year sales growth in 2022—Mcleod won't say exactly what reve-

nues are—and the staff has grown from 20 in 2021 and then 30 in 2022, before hitting 55 right now. The building has room for 150, he said.

Carvertise wanted to stay in Delaware, where it began a decade ago when Mcleod co-founded it with Greg Star, while the two were students at the University of Delaware. One of their first customers was ShopRite grocery stores. CEO Chris Kenny remembers Alan Levin of the Delaware Economic Development Office asking him to take a chance on the two. Kenny, who also is owner of Delaware LIVE, did.

"I think the growth is amazing," he said June 15 before the grand opening. ShopRite's headquarters and flagship store now is just across the river from Carvertise's new headquarters.

"They never gave up. They kept pressing and charging

forward," Kenny said. "It's a really nice home-grown success story."

EXPANDING NATIONALLY

Even though Delaware business now accounts for only 5% of the company's revenues, and it boasts national work with Coca-Cola, Netflix, NBCUniversal, 7-Eleven, EA Sports, NASCAR and GlaxoSmithKline, Mcleod said they wanted the headquarters to stay local.

"This area is the heart and soul of our organization, and we're excited to invest and grow in the community that grew and shaped us," Mcleod said in a press statement. "It feels right."

After searching for the right space for a few years, Pettinaro showed the company the riverfront space and Carvertise spent the next 18 months planning the renovation with Mitchell & Associates.

The time spent picking designs and sourcing materials seemed to move like molasses, McLeod said. It was tricky to balance the design so it was elegant but not off-puttingly posh. The two-phase construction flew by, he said.

Pettinaro Construction did the remodel, sharing some of the expenses now. They will be loaded back into company's 10-year lease in a deal referred to as a tenant improvement allowance, Mcleod said.

Phase one was the front of the building, with executive offices down a dark corridor and dispatchers sitting in the windows fronting the building. Phase two was the back two-thirds of the building, with conference rooms and offices running along one wall and offices on the other. The space between them holds desks.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



HERE'S HOW MUCH COVID MONEY DISTRICTS, CHARTERS HAVE SPENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Districts and charters have until Sept. 30, 2024, to spend more than half a billion dollars that was provided for COVID-19 pandemic relief. Delaware received \$637,239,246 in the \$122 billion federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or ESSER Funds. Distributed in three separate rounds, ESSER Funds which were allocated across three separate rounds and part of the American Rescue Plan Act, better known as ARPA.

The first round of funds were distributed in March 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act, and Delaware received \$43,492,752. The second round of funding—part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations, or CRRSA Act—was allocated in December 2020, with Delaware receiving \$182,885,104. In March 2021, the third round gave Delaware \$410,733,965.

Data on how much each district and charter received as well as how they divided the funds and how much money they have remaining, can be found in a portal on the [Department of Education's](#) online [ESSER Financial Transparency Report](#).

Laurisa Schutt, executive director of advocacy group [First State Educate](#), critiqued the fact that it takes half a dozen clicks on the department's website and some practice using the portal for the public to be able to get to the information on how schools spent the enormous amount of money.

Schools divide the funds into a plethora of categories, such as learning loss, technology, mental health, facility repairs, air quality, equitable services, summer learning, sanitation, professional development and more.

The Delaware Department of Education and state schools are waiting for word about whether the federal

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debt deal will affect them. One part of the agreement requires the country clawing back about \$30 billion in unspent money from a COVID relief bill signed by President Joe Biden. It's unclear if that includes education money, said a DOE spokeswoman.

Here's the percentage districts and charters spent of their total pandemic relief allocation, as well as the money they have left to spend:

Districts

Appoquinimink: 91% of \$13,275,882.90 spent; \$1,145,525.13 remaining. Largest expenditures were \$4.9 million on learning loss and \$3.2 million on educational technology.

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July

WORST KEPT SECRET: LONGHURST IS NEW HOUSE SPEAKER

BY SAM HAUT

On June 30, speaker of the House Pete Schwatzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, choked up several times as he announced that he would be stepping down and that **Rep. Valerie Longhurst**, D-Bear, will succeed him as the new speaker. It will be the first time a woman has been elected the Speaker of the House in Delaware.

With Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long presiding over the Senate, it also will be the first time that women have presided over both legislative chambers at one time. Schwatzkopf called it a historic night for the state.

LONGHURST'S ELECTION

Longhurst thanked Schwatzkopf for the attention he had paid to her and for singling her out for leadership. She broke down into tears and said, "I love you, Pete. You're a great man."

The House recessed to have dinner and returned to pass **House Resolution 25**, officially naming Longhurst as speaker. After House Resolution 25 passed unanimously, Schwatzkopf called her to the dias amid booming applause. As she took the oath, lots of cameras were aimed at her.

Schwatzkopf said he has a gift for her, a gavel.

"It's the hammer that Gov. Ruth Ann Minner had," he told Longhurst, when Minner was lieutenant governor.

"Congratulations and carry that thing and beat everybody in the head with it," he said, to great laughter.

In accepting the job, Longhurst pointed out that the Delaware legislature was 300 years old, but it was only a century ago that women won the right to vote. The House will now for the first time have all-female leader-

ship, including Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, the first person of color elected to leadership, as majority leader and Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, the first LGBTQ member of House leadership, as minority whip.

Minor-Brown delighted in being the first to call Longhurst "Madam Speaker," and led the House members in picking up a white rose and handing it to Longhurst with a hug. Minor-Brown also noted that as she was being elected majority leader, the U.S. Supreme Court was announcing its decision to end affirmative action at colleges and universities.

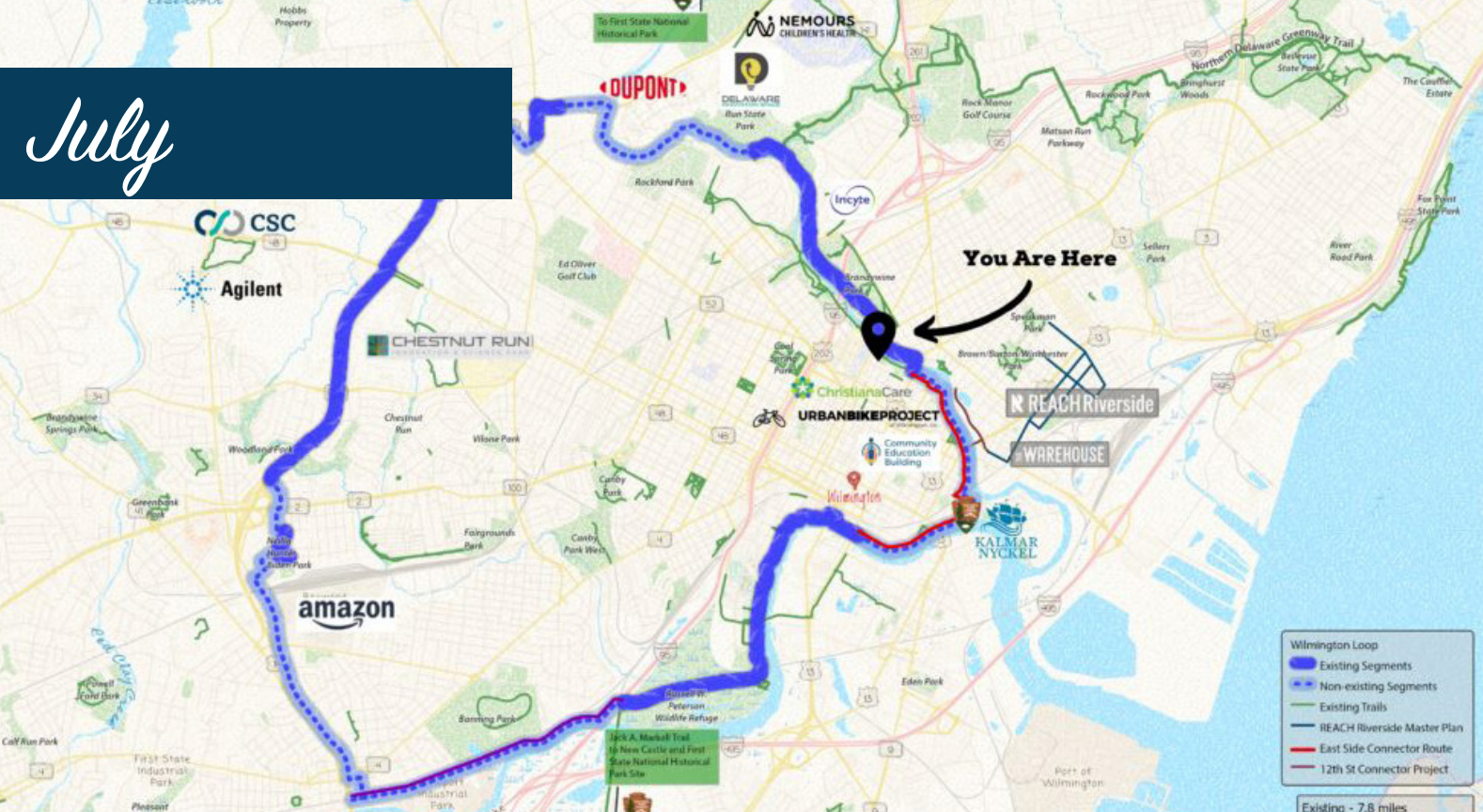
"But even in this historic moment, as we celebrate the first woman speaker and a majority-minority leadership team," Minor-Brown said, "we can't lose sight of the fact that we're living through the second wave of the civil rights movement... But while those challenges lie ahead, we know that there's hope. And this right here in this chamber gives us hope."

Harris said the legislature does something every session to make Delaware more equitable.

"Delaware is starting to heal the wrongs of this nation," Harris said. "Every time a general assembly is elected into office, over the last several years, we've seen change. Every time there's a leadership vote, every time we pass legislation that protects women's health care, that makes sure that there are more civil rights, to make sure that people are getting a second chances when they've made a mistake, that makes sure that we are a nation of the people, a state of the people."

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July



LOOP COALITION: FINISH WALKABLE BIKE TRAIL AROUND WILMINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BY BETSY PRICE

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

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

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

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



DELAWARE SYMPHONY STARTS SEARCH FOR NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Symphony Orchestra has announced the search for its next music director, expected to begin work in the 2025-26 season. The process started with forming a 13-member search committee for the person who will succeed David Amado, who served as the symphony's music director and conductor for 20 years before stepping aside and becoming music director laureate in the spring.

The committee will accept applications for the post through Sept. 29. The committee members expect hundreds of applications from around the globe.

“Because of the way information travels now, the pool of applicants is larger than it would have been in previous decades,” said J.C. Barker, chief executive officer of

the orchestra. “There are so few positions open at any one given time that an orchestra of the stature of the Delaware Symphony is going to receive a lot of attention.”

Detailed information is available on the symphony website and will be advertised in national and international industry outlets. It says the duties of the person who wins the job will include repertoire selection, programming and artistic production as well as active participation in the orchestra's fundraising initiatives.

Frank Clowes, president of the Delaware Symphony Association, said the orchestra is stepping forward into a new era and that musician and community support is a pivotal ingredient in the search.

“I am eager to witness the creative direction the DSO

will take under this fresh leadership,” Clowes said. “It's an exciting time, and we are all looking forward to the transformative journey ahead.”

SYMPHONY PROCESS

The committee—composed of five orchestra musicians, five members of association board, two community leaders and Barker—will review all candidates. They were told to expect two years of hard work.

Finalists will be announced in spring 2024 and will appear with the orchestra during the 2024-2025 season. Surveys will be distributed to members of the audience and orchestra after each performance to gauge their reactions.

“There will be a different energy with every conductor who appears,” Barker said.

The appointment of a music director is expected to come in summer 2025.

“The search for a new artistic leader is a crucial stage in the growth of any orchestra,” said Barker. “This is an exciting and busy time for our organization, and we are eagerly looking forward to the process.”

Amado was the 100-year-old-plus orchestra's fifth music director. He will conduct the symphony twice during the 2023-24 season, opening and closing it. In between, guest conductors will take the baton. They include Michelle Di Russo, an associate conductor with the North Carolina Symphony; André Raphel of Philadelphia, the former music director for the Wheeling, WV, symphony; and Scott Speck, music director of the Joffrey Ballet as well as the Mobile (AL) Symphony.

August



FAITHFUL FRIENDS: 50% MORE PETS SAVED IN FOUR YEARS WITH NEW HQ

BY JAREK RUTZ

Faithful Friends Animal Society is hoping to have the capacity to save 25% more animals in the next two years with its new headquarters, its founder said after a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 2.

“When we started Faithful Friends [in 2000], publicly-funded shelters in Delaware had a 90 percent kill rate, and today, Delaware is one of just three no-kill states in the country,” said Jane Pierantozzi, founder and executive director of the animal welfare nonprofit.

The organization moved from its previous location at 12 Germy Drive in Wilmington to 165 Airport Road in New Castle.

“We have space for about 65 dogs and about 200 cats and kittens, plus our foster care system which we support is another 300 animals,” Pierantozzi said. “We hope that the lifesaving will increase by 25% in two years because of the new location...and hopefully a 50%

increase in four years.” Based on the current numbers of animals being helped by the shelter, Faithful Friends wants to expand its services to about 140 more animals in the next two years and 280 more in the next four.

One challenge the shelter is facing, she said, is a slow-down in dog adoptions across the country, which she says is largely because of the struggling economy.

The shelter has an annual operating budget of \$3.9 million. “We rely on individual donors mainly for running this facility,” Pierantozzi said.

Construction on the new \$11 million facility began in May 2017 and was supposed to be done in 2021, but delays were inevitable with the pandemic. Through the legislature’s Bond Bill, the shelter received about \$1.4 million from the state over a few separate allocations for the new headquarters.

During the ceremony, three pet owners who adopted

from Faithful Friends shared their stories on the importance of saving animals and how their pets have become an integral part of their families.

One was a police officer, Rick Jones, in Pennsylvania who trained his adopted dog to become a certified police dog. He said his dog Jack is the first rescue police K-9 in Pennsylvania and he predicted that more rescue dogs will become members of the police force.

“Pets are essential to human mental health and sometimes physical health,” said New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer, who is running for governor next year. “This piece of land makes a tremendous statement about the values of our community.”

Among a slew of gratitude for individual and group donors, construction workers, designers and more, Board President Bob Wasserbach thanked Colonial School District for gifting the land to the shelter.

Some of what Faithful Friends has done since its inception to protect animals in Delaware include:

- Working with state officials on Delaware’s first spay/neuter legislation, which created a public spay/neuter fund for pet owners on public assistance and required all shelters to spay/neuter pets before adoption.
- Opening Delaware’s first free pet food and supply bank, which became a model for other organizations throughout the state.
- Leading the creation of Delaware’s Animal Shelter Standards Law, which overhauled how shelters manage animals that are in their care and required shelters to publish their animal outcomes.

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August

STUDY LAUNCHED TO FIND WAYS TO REDUCE FLOODING ON BRANDYWINE

BY BETSY PRICE

A study designed to find ways to reduce flooding along the Brandywine River will look at an area stretching from Honey Brook in Pennsylvania through a wedge of New Castle County that ends in Wilmington. The Brandywine Flood Study will begin with \$199,500 from **Chester County** government and \$25,000 from the **Delaware County Council**. An additional \$150,000 is expected to be announced soon.

“The flooding study will be a coordinated effort to better understand where and why flooding occurs and identify the best approaches to protect our communities from future severe flooding events,” said Grant DeCosta, director of community services for the **Brandywine Conservancy**. “Given the increasing likelihood of future severe weather events, the Brandywine Flood Study is key to our community’s health and safety.”

The project, expected to be completed by June 2024, will be overseen by the conservancy, **Chester County Water Resources Authority** and the **University of Delaware Water Resources Center**. Neither the city of

Wilmington or New Castle County have been approached for funding, organizers said, but may be as the project goes on.

Officials speaking at the launch announcement Tuesday at the Brandywine River Museum of Art, said the study was prompted by the devastating Sept. 1, 2021, ride of **Hurricane Ida** through the area. The deluge from that storm caused the Brandywine River to rise 21 feet, nearly four feet higher than it ever had.

Flooding caused \$100,000 million in damage in the region and \$10 million on the Conservancy’s 15-acre campus, which includes the museum and nine other buildings, DeCosta said.

The water from Ida rose quickly, at 49,000 cubic feet per second according to Chadds Ford gauges run by the United States Geological Survey, said Gerald Kauffman Jr., director of UD’s Water Resources Center. The previous record was 27,000 cubic feet in 1972, he said.

“This was the most serious flood that happened on the Brandywine in 200 years,” he said. “No one’s ever

lived through a flood like this...hydrological records just don’t get broken by that much.”

Kaufman said he had studied flooding for a climate report for the state of Delaware.

“The projections were that a flood like that wasn’t going to happen until at least 2030, maybe 2050,” he said. “But you know that with regard to climate, the future is now; I’m convinced of that...We don’t have to argue about the causes, but let’s get together and work together for the solution.”

The study will not only look at technical information, but also hold a series of public meetings, Kaufman said. “The public and the Public Work crews in both states know where it flooded better than any model could,” he said.

There will be a range of solutions, he said. They may be as simple as signs on waterways that point out what the high mark for water is so the public is aware. They are likely to include some infrastructure problems.

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17 SCHOOLS SHOW LESS THAN 10% PROFICIENCY ON STATE TESTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Seventeen Delaware schools had single-digit proficiency rates in math, reading or the SAT on state-administered tests. More than 200 public schools take part in the Smarter Balanced test, which measures the knowledge of students in grades three through eight in math and reading, and the SAT for all juniors in high school. Ten of those grammar and middle schools had less than 10% of their students score as proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment. Another seven had single-digit proficiency in the SAT, which once stood for Scholastic Aptitude Test, but now just goes by its initials.

Delaware is one of eight states that give the SATs to all 11th graders, which lowers the state's scores. In most states, it is usually taken only by students headed to college.

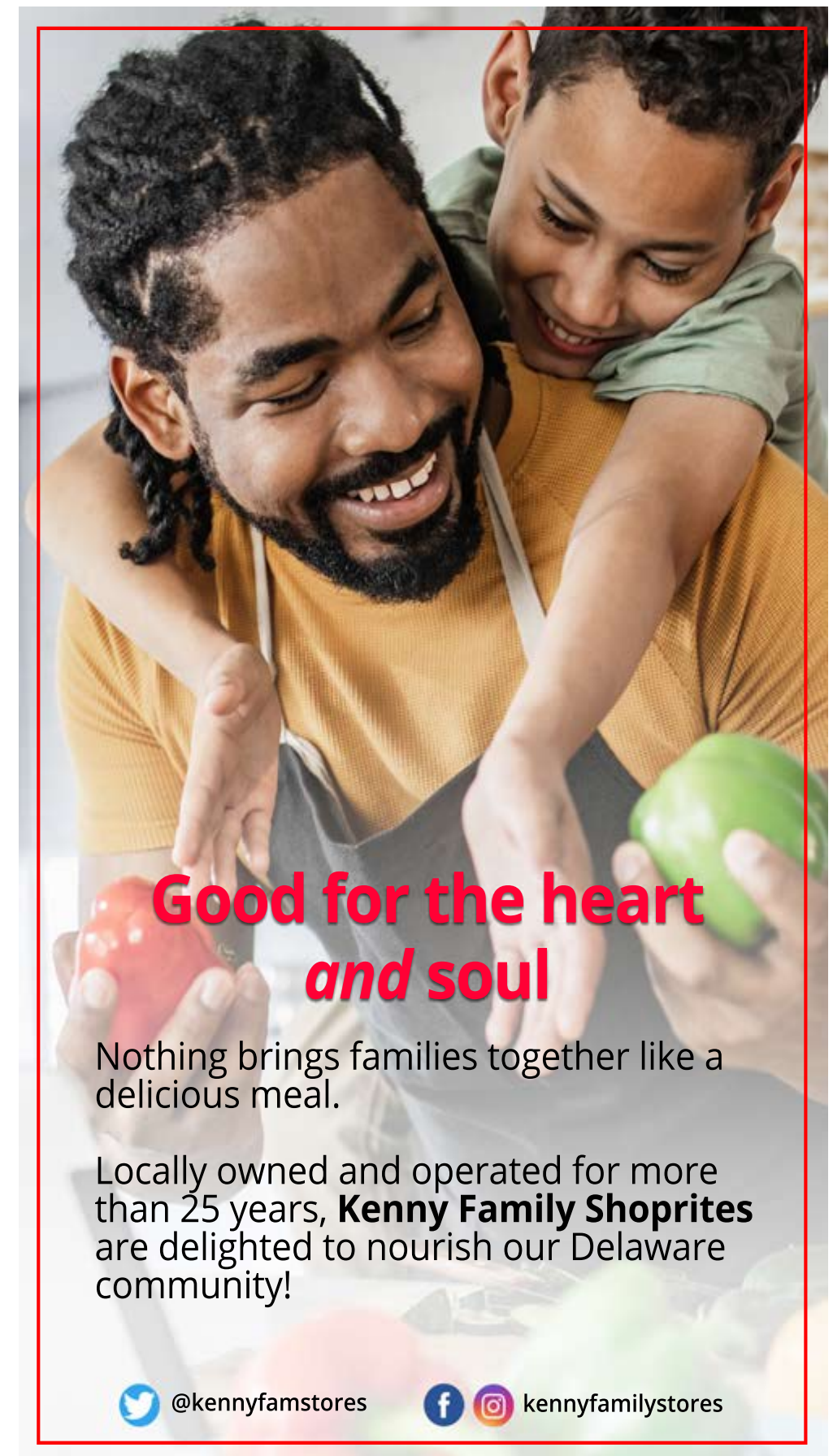
If a student is not proficient, that means they do not meet grade-level expectations and standards in a given

subject, but it doesn't necessarily mean they cannot read, write or do math.

"While we want to see all schools at or above the state average for proficiency, we need to remember that these scores are just one data point," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). "Students and schools are much more than one test score, which is why our Delaware report cards have multiple measures for schools."

However, Massett said, it is encouraging to see a decrease in the number of schools with single-digit proficiency over the last few years. Last year, 10 schools had single-digit proficiency scores for SAT, and 16 for the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

Christmas came a couple months early for the teachers of Wilmington’s **EastSide Charter School** Sept. 14. School Chief Executive Officer Aaron Bass, the school’s eagle mascot and volunteers from **Barclays** popped into rooms rolling a speaker blasting “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year,” as they dropped off gifts to 45 different classrooms.

Teachers often make Amazon wish lists each year to collect donations in order to pay for classroom supplies or materials that they would normally have to pay out-of-pocket for. For the first time, Barclays—which has had a partnership with EastSide for years to both financially support the school and create a mentorship program—collected funds to fulfill each teacher’s wish list.

“These kinds of gifts I would not be able to afford in this classroom without this kind of significant assis-

BARCLAYS FILLS EASTSIDE TEACHERS' CLASSROOMS WISH LISTS

tance,” said Yvonne Thomas, who teaches sixth graders and just started her second year at EastSide. Her favorite item she received was a big bean chair for students to sit on. “Sometimes the students who come into my classroom need to relax or settle or calm down and this will help,” said Thomas, who teaches students with special needs.

Barclays wanted to relieve the stress and financial burden of teachers. This meant not only giving items they need to teach, but also items they want for their class in order to create a better learning environment.

RELIEF FOR TEACHERS

“Even if it’s just a portion of the supplies, it just offers some relief for our educators,” said Peri Hutt, senior paralegal vice president at Barclays. “Some of the supplies are maybe not a need but a want, which still helps limit the amount of money teachers are paying out of their own pockets to fill the classroom.”

Teachers were asked to submit their wish lists by Aug. 31, so Santa’s Factory—aka the gym of EastSide—was getting package after package delivered the past two weeks. Each wish list hovered around \$300 in cost. Employees from Barclays, a global financial company, created fundraising teams to pay for the gifts.

“There might be other stuff that they would like to do or like to introduce to the class, but they just don’t have the resources in which to do so,” Hutt said. “This is enabling them to do so.”

On top of the expected necessary supplies like pencils, pens, markers, crayons, books, notebooks, boxes were also filled with gifts like Legos, toy cash registers, games and more fun items for the class.

Mary Shenko, a special education teacher who has 27 years of teaching experience, said this is the first time she’s been able to focus on not just her needs, but wants for the classroom.

“This is the first time I had such an extensive dollar sign I could utilize and order what I wanted,” she said, “without there being criticism or rules on what I can and can’t ask for.”

Her favorite item she received is professional portfolios for each of her students, which she says will help them stay organized. Each one has paper, binders and dividers. Since she teaches 11 students, getting each one a nice portfolio would have cost her hundreds.

Shenko was also gifted with a colorful area rug of a map of America.

“There’s so many expenses for teachers, even the color pen, pencils or markers can be so pricey,” she said. “I am just so grateful and feel such a sense of gratitude, appreciation and love.”

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WINTERTHUR'S ANN LOWE EXHIBIT: HISTORY, FASHION ON PARADE

BY BETSY PRICE

A dazzlingly elegant new exhibition at [Winterthur Museum](#) celebrates the work of the largely unheralded Black designer who created Jacqueline Kennedy's wedding dress, among other society haute couture pieces. "[Ann Lowe: American Couturier](#)" features 40 of Lowe's dresses, opening with a glittering white fairy tale ball gown the owner liked so much she rewore it as her wedding dress. Many of the dresses in the show have never been on display before.

The centerpiece of the exhibit is a recreation of Lowe's 1953 silk taffetta dress for the marriage of Jacqueline Bouvier to John Kennedy, meticulously remade by University of Delaware professor Katya Roelse and three of her students. The original is in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, MA. It is too fragile to display or move. When the Winterthur exhibit ends, the copy will be sent to the library for future

visitors to see.

The simple but highly effective arrangement of gowns in the exhibit will leave onlookers with a deep appreciation of Lowe's creativity, but not a strong understanding of the Alabama native, her life or what it must have been like to have been the first Black designer competing in a world that was not. Elizabeth Wray, associate curator at The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City and guest curator of the Winterthur exhibit, fills in some of those gaps in a new book based on the exhibit. It will be the first scholarly look at Lowe's career, Winterthur said.

Wray said she hoped those attending the exhibit will come away understanding that Lowe was a significant and impactful American designer.

"And when we tell the story of American design," Wray said, "she needs to be in that story."

WHO WAS ANN LOWE?

Lowe was born in rural Clayton, AL, the great-granddaughter of an enslaved woman. She learned to sew from her mother and grandmother, who ran a dress-making business, and dropped out of school at 14. When her mother died, she took over the business.

In 1917, she moved to New York City, where here she enrolled at S.T. Taylor Design School, according to a *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* story. The school was segregated and Lowe was made to attend classes in a room alone. She still excelled, completing the course in six months.

Lowe's own career began to take off after she was spotted in a department store in Dothan, AL, by a Florida woman, Wray said. Josephine Lee, who had grown up in Alabama but lived in Florida, thought the outfit Lowe was wearing was so chic that Lee asked Lowe where she had gotten it, Wray said. When Lee found out that Lowe had designed and made it, Lee convinced Lowe to move to Florida to make clothes there, Wray said.

Lowe's career would take her to New York, where she worked at first uncredited for major department stores. One example: She designed the dress that actress Olivia de Havilland wore to accept the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1946, but the name on the dress was Sonia Rosenberg, according to the book "Women Designers in the USA, 1900–2000: Diversity and Difference."

Lowe eventually opened her own business, catering to generations of famous families, with name such as du Pont, Auchincloss, Rockefeller, Roosevelt, Lodge, Post, Bouvier and Whitney.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

September



TASK FORCE: EXPAND PROGRAM GIVING PREGNANT WOMEN \$1,000 A MONTH

BY BETSY PRICE

A pilot program that gave 40 pregnant New Castle County women \$1,000 a month for 24 months had greater than expected health and other benefits, the sponsors said. The program saw a 324% return on investment, organizers said at a press conference announced the result.

Among its outcomes:

- \$229,520 in reduced hospital stays
- \$21,600 in reduced emergency department visits
- 50% of the monthly stipend went directly toward groceries/food, household items/basic needs, and gas/auto/transportation; 30% of which went directly to groceries/food
- 89% of the participating moms received prenatal care
- 81% of their babies had no complications at birth

The \$1,000 a month was in addition to being eligible for the federal [Supplemental Nutrition Program for](#)

[Women and Children \(WIC\)](#) and [Supplemental Nutrition and Assistant Program \(SNAP\)](#), once called food stamps), and seemed to stimulate interest in the programs.

Expanding the Guaranteed Basic Income program could help reduce both infant and maternal deaths, while helping women take better care of themselves and their children, said Delaware House Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D, New Castle.

“At this time, we are focused on sharing the strong results of this pilot with our partners and the public in the hopes that we can all advocate for supporting sustainability of the program,” Minor-Brown said. “The ultimate goal would be a continuation and expansion of the GBI program throughout Delaware.”

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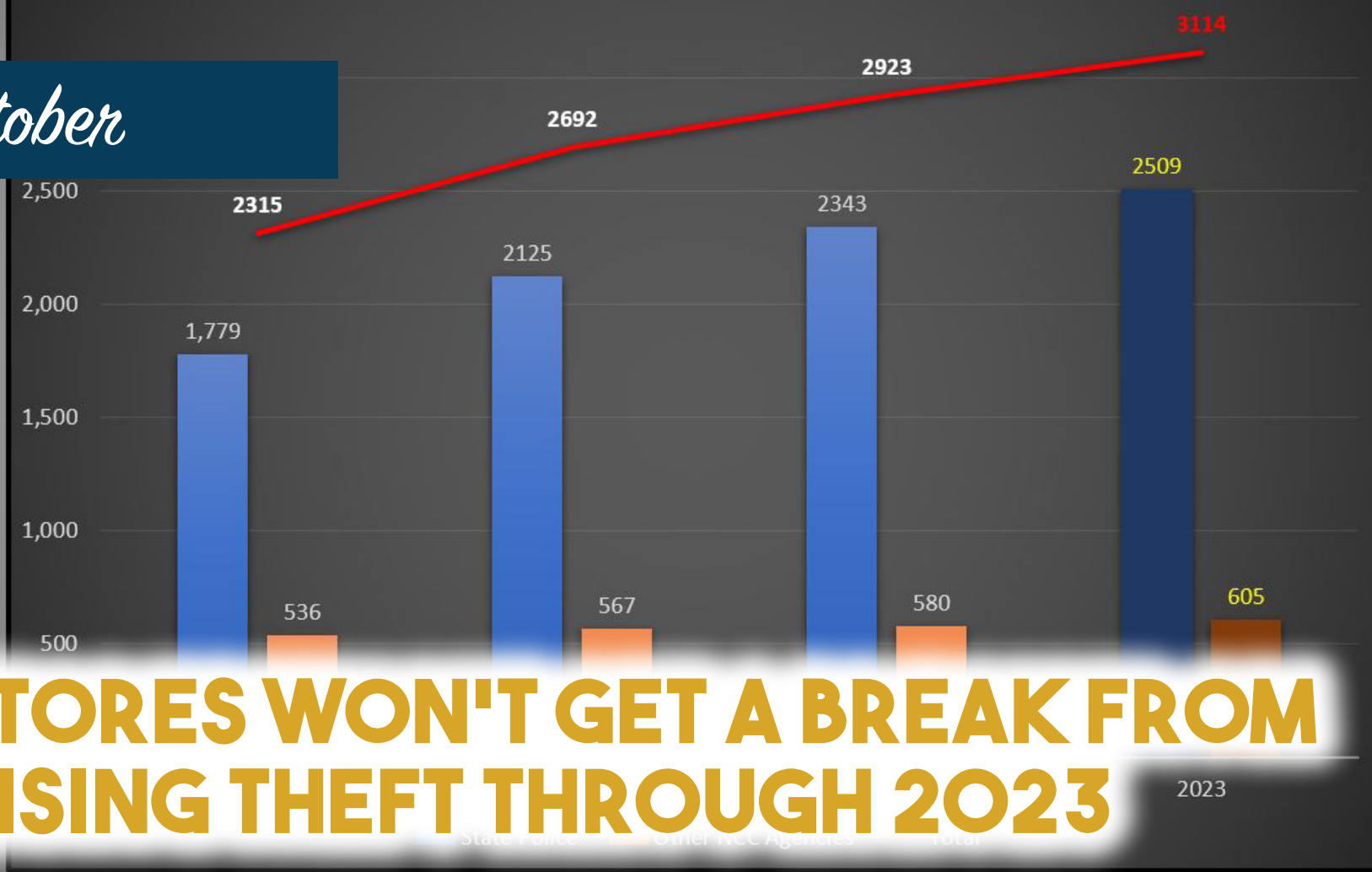
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STORES WON'T GET A BREAK FROM RISING THEFT THROUGH 2023

BY BETSY PRICE

Retail theft in Delaware is causing concerns among local families and business owners. The economic impact, according to industry experts, could result in store closings. One mom posting recently in a Delaware moms' Facebook group described how outraged she was as she stood in a store and watched people grab merchandise and run.

A deluge of comments followed with dozens of moms talking about how they were flabbergasted to see the same thing in stores they were in and almost all the stores were different. Many talked about how it frightened them and made them feel unsafe to be there when it was happening. They're likely to see more.

The number of retail thefts reported in New Castle County—including theft by people working together or targeting specific items—is expected to rise 16% over last year and it's been rising since the middle of 2020, according to a Delaware State Police analysis. From January through August, more than 10,000 cases of retail theft were reported in New Castle County alone, the analysis said.

"If the level of theft continues increasing, I would not be shocked or surprised to see retailers close in Delaware," said Julie Miro Wenger, executive director of the Delaware Food Industry Council, which represents grocery and drugstores with a total of 12,000 employees. Miro

Wenger said she couldn't be certain who might close. "But I would not be surprised if we saw a general retailer close," she said.

Finding an estimated dollar value to put to those thefts is near impossible, but the numbers land in the millions in lost revenue and products and put a staggering pressure on store staff and management, industry members say. It also affects shoppers.

The average customer has seen the byproducts of retail theft: increased security, some items locked up, entrances closed in the evening to force all traffic in and out through one door. Giant Food, CVS, Acme and others have locked up popular items and closed secondary entrances in the evening and at night.

Theft at department stores make up the highest category of thefts, according to Delaware State Police statistics. In New Castle County, those stores include Target, Old Navy, Boscov's, Kohl's, Ulta, Walmart, Lowe's, The Home Depot, Walgreens, Wawa, Macy's, Dick's and JCPenney, according to a recent State Police presentation at Food Industry Council Retail Theft Symposium.

These aren't kids stealing a candy bar or a mom down on her luck stealing a can of infant formula. Organized retail theft—groups of people who target specific stores or items—is a growing problem in Delaware, retailers, police and prosecutors say, although everyone says it's not at the level of last week's mass looting in Philadelphia. Some organized groups are essentially taking orders for products that will be resold, police said.

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CRAFTERS RACE TOWARD DEADLINE FOR FESTIVAL OF TREES WREATHS, DECOR

BY BETSY PRICE

T-minus 23 days until the New Castle County Festival of Trees opens Nov. 17, and Kris Hable is calmly gluing berries on a tiny wreath in the basement of a Parkwood home. The chairman of the festival’s Marketplace, which offers wreaths, decor and gifts for sale, Hable is one of a handful of designers and crafters who make the bulk of the items for the store.

“We are without question the best Christmas decorations secret anywhere because we try to make everything as original as we can,” said Hable, who’s surrounded by piles of holiday materials waiting to be made into another wreath lining the walls of the basement. “Don’t even try to organize anything,” she said. “It just doesn’t work.”

The bonus for Festival of Trees shoppers is that each item is individually made and almost all are one of a kind. “So you’re not going to see these wreaths and decorations in any store,” she said. “You’re not going to see 50 of the same thing or anything of that nature. And quite frankly, our prices are fantastic.”

The most popular size for wreaths, she said, is 24 inches. Those will fit well on doors and over fireplaces and go for \$30 to \$50, she said.

Marketplace sales account for about a quarter of the festival’s total profits, with the majority coming from its decorated trees. Most of those are sponsored by businesses or philanthropists and decorated by volunteers

before they go to those companies or a nonprofit for the holidays.

This year’s New Castle County festival will take place Friday, Nov. 17, through Sunday, Nov. 19, at Brantwyn Estate. Admission is free. In addition to shopping, the weekend features musical entertainment and the fun of seeing all the trees.

Hable got involved with the Festival of Trees about a decade ago helping create gift baskets for the Marketplace. “A friend of mine said, ‘Kris is good at putting baskets together,’ so I went to help them,” Hable said.

She liked the operation, the people and the cause and gradually became more involved. In the last decade, she said, the number of crafters supporting the event has fallen, mostly because of attrition.

FESTIVAL OF TREES CYCLE

Now a core group of about six, mostly retired, starts meeting in March to create the majority of the wreaths in the basement of Tom and Linda Brennan Jones’ home. “They lock us in,” Hable jokes. “They don’t even feed us.”

They try to make items in a variety of holiday styles, so everyone who walks in can find something they like, Hable said.

“Every year we start the day after Thanksgiving, right after the festival ends and we go everywhere and start purchasing our supplies for next year.” That’s when Christmas decorations, ribbon and other materials start doing on sale for 50% off.

“We buy right through February,” she said. “Sometimes we’re lucky enough to get bulk items because the store purchases too many of them or something of that nature.”

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October

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

BY JAREK RUTZ

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

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

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

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

Summer Academy – \$3,000,000

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

Spring Break Academy – \$750,000

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

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JANVIER JEWELRY STORE'S STUNNING MURAL WOWS CUSTOMERS

BY BETSY PRICE

Joseph Janvier Jewelers doesn't go out of its way to call attention to itself—from the outside. The Elsmere business is housed in a nondescript brick building on Kirkwood Highway. Customers walk from a modest parking lot to the front door and press a bell to be admitted.

They walk in, and their mouths drop open. “Wow” is usually the next thing they say, or maybe, “No way.”

They're not reacting to the store's fine jewelry, glittering before them from brown and black wooden cases. They are talking about a dramatic 110-foot black, white, gray and red mural that wraps around the walls of the store. It's the work of landscape designer turned muralist Kent Krech of Wilmington.

“I wasn't trying to do an exact recreation by any means,” Krech said. “I just kind of make it up as I go along.”

The mural starts by depicting a swank jewelry row in a teeming metropolis (a fictional Philly?), shifting into a shopping and dining area in a smaller city (a fictional Wilmington?). It continues along a river waterfront (the Delaware? the Christina?) leading to a marshy bird sanctuary ([DuPont Environmental Education Center](#)?) with a biplane flying over the water in the direction of twin bridges (the Delaware Memorial?) that end with a scene featuring a sign pointing toward the beach.

Joseph Janvier had long told friends he didn't want big photos of jewelry on his wall. He wanted a mural of some kind. Then he met Krech at a networking event. Krech was subbing for a friend who couldn't make it and asked Krech to take his place and talk about his business.

“So what that means,” Janvier translates, “is he had the opportunity to give a 30-minute commercial about himself.”

Janvier invited Krech to his shop. “I want to show you something,” he told Krech.

When Krech walked in and saw the blank gray walls, the artist said, “Man, here we go. I like this idea.”

The original piece that Krech and store owner Joseph Janvier agreed on was the swank jewelry row, which takes up about 20 feet behind one counter. Krech showed him a crude sketch, complete with stick figures, and said he'd be back with a more detailed one.

“Yeahhhhhh. That's the idea,” Janvier said, when he saw it. “You might as well make this your gallery,” Janvier told Krech, reasoning “that way, he'd have time to do more than just my ideas. His ideas, too.”

They chose the color scheme from a piece of Riley Rae art already hanging on the wall, partly to be set off by the store's red carpet. Krech started in late February 2020, intending to work mostly on weekends because of his landscaping jobs. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and Krech was suddenly able to devote more time to it.

As the mural's jewelry row took shape, it was getting a lot of attention from customers, and both Krech and Janvier liked it so much that Janvier told him to do the next wall, then the next. Then the next.

Finally, “he was like, nah, let's do the whole store,” Krech said. The artist has been working on the mural for almost four years.

As COVID-19 restrictions relaxed, Krech's landscape jobs picked up and he's more limited to work on weekends.

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November

ST. HELENA'S CANCELS ITS LONG-RUNNING CARNIVAL

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The springtime carnival at St. Helena’s Church, a tradition in North Wilmington that dates back at least to the 1960s, has been canceled. The parish council made the decision “with great reluctance and sorrow,” said Monsignor Stanley Russell, who has served the Bellefonte Catholic church since 1994.

The carnival was damaged by unfounded reports of trouble one night in 2022 and the parish increased security in 2023. But on May 6, the last night of the 2023 carnival, a group of young people climbed the fence surrounding the carnival, Russell said. When they were discovered without wristbands denoting that they had paid admission, they were ejected.

They then walked over to a nearby Wawa, ransacked the store and threw items from the store at vehicles moving along Philadelphia Pike, he said.

“Apparently, conditions are such that we cannot continue without fear of violence,” Russell said. “We came very close to having something terrible happen.”

Fundraisers like the carnival—rides, games, a food court, a beer garden and other draws—were a significant part of the parish budget. The fiscal 2019 budget totaled \$832,000 in operating income and “parish fundraising activities, less related expenses” totaled \$202,000, with the carnival generating more than half of that.

At least the parish is getting some steady income from the Brandywine School District renting part of its old elementary school building, he said.

The parish is working on how to turn the convent on its compound from an expense into an asset. The Sisters of St. Joseph moved out in 2016 and “we continue to incur the maintenance and repair costs for this aging building,” the 2019 budget said.

“A crowd of people at the event became alarmed April 30, [2022] when rumors of a person with a weapon circulated among carnival-goers,” The Dialog, the diocese newspaper, **reported.**

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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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THEY SPEND WEEKS LIGHTING HOUSES FOR CHRISTMAS—HERE'S WHY

BY BETSY PRICE

John Schatzschneider does it to keep Christ in Christmas and to dazzle the kids. Stephanie Raffa does it for the joy of seeing other people enjoy it. Both spend weeks putting up over-the-top holiday lighting displays for the pleasure of total strangers, he in Harrington, she in Clayton.

They are some of the hundreds of Delaware home decorators whose outdoor displays light up cold winter nights as the year winds down and these two homes should be must-see stops on any Delaware light lovers' personal tour.

If you're among the many who love, love, love the tradition, but also wonder why anyone would go to all that trouble, Schatzschneider and Raffa can offer some answers about why they avoid a measured approach in decking the house. And porch. And windows. And lawn. And driveway. And gardens. And trees. And roof.

They approached their holiday passion differently. He jumped in to swim with the sharks. She started small seven years ago and has just kept building.

SCHATZSCHNEIDER'S HOBBY

Schatzschneider, an electrician by trade, spent most of his life working seven days a week, including as a boy on the family farm. As he was coming to the end of his career, he decided he needed a hobby.

He had started following holiday lighting maestro Tom BetGeorge of California on YouTube. BetGeorge is one of the lighting designers who uses computer-controlled RGB pixel lighting that can create up to 100,000 colors and also make lights dance in sync with music.

"We gotta do this," he told his wife, Rhonda.

But year after year passed and somehow he never had time. Then last March he sold his business. "You don't have any excuse now," Rhonda told him.

Schatzschneider had come to realize that BetGeorge was part of a national community devoted to setting up those kinds of light displays, He decided to attend one of their shows in Biloxi, MS. "I didn't know a soul," he said. "I felt like a duck out of water."

He and Rhonda were waiting for one of the sessions to start when he noticed a young couple behind them. He went to introduce himself and saw that the man's name tag said "instructor," which surprised Schatzschneider, because the man seemed so young. He was only 19, but Andrew Wilhelm was already making a name for himself and for his company, [Tangled Lights Productions](#). He'd appeared in several television competitions and runs his own YouTube channel.

Wilhelm later told Schatzschneider that he had just said to his sister, "I wonder who the Lord is going to send this year for me to help" when Schatzschneider sat down and said hello.

"I just get chills about that," Schatzschneider said. "It was definitely a blessing from the Lord to put us together."

They hit it off and Wilhelm came to Delaware for three days last year to help Schatzschneider set up his first display at his home at 705 Andrewville Road in Harrington. They worked for 42 hours to put everything together, partly because Schatzschneider was running behind, with good reason. His mother had just died and he had needed knee surgery.

The first year the Schatzschneiders put out 17,000 lights, which Wilhelm told him was the level most people reach at about five years. This year they have about 37,000 lights, which is the level most people reach at eight or nine years, Schatzschneider has been told.

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NEW CASTLE COUNTY CREATES ARTS COMMISSION, WILL SEEK FUNDING

BY JAREK RUTZ

New Castle County is taking a page out of the city of Brotherly Love’s playbook in an effort to add art and creativity to its streets and neighborhoods. The County Council last week unanimously passed Councilwoman Dee Durham’s **Ordinance 23-160** to create a Public Arts Commission. The legislation took inspiration from Philadelphia’s **1% for Art** program, which requires new city construction or major renovation projects to include site-specific public art in the amount of up to 1% of the total budget.

Each member of a new nine-person Public Arts Commission will come from museums, foundations, universities or will be artists themselves, and will have a strong interest to bring more art into public spaces, according to Ken Hemphill, Durham’s legislative assistant.

Although there is no funding element attached to the

commission, Hemphill said the County Council will be working with New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer to phase in several steps which will provide funding and opportunities for public art. “The creation of the Public Arts Commission was the first step,” he said.

The board members would be unpaid, he said, but there is a proposal by several council members to pay all county boards and commission members.

The commission will:

- Serve as an advisory body for the procurement and location of visual public art on county property
- Acquire works of art for public spaces by the county
- Review conservation and relocation plans for county-owned sculptures and public works of art, installations and exhibitions
- Play a significant role in shaping policies and strate-

gies to integrate permanent and semi-permanent visual arts into county community spaces and development projects.

Five of the commission’s members will be appointed by the County Council with the advice and consent of Meyer. The executive will appoint the other four members with the advice and consent of the County Council. Specifically, the commission will consist of:

- At least one representative from visual arts organizations, including art museums within the county
- At least two county residents who are visual artists or who have a demonstrated involvement in public art
- At least one seat from the faculty/governing body of an institution with art or architecture programs
- At least one representative from a non-profit organization engaged in supporting the visual arts
- At least one registered landscape architect
- The director of the Delaware Art Museum or their designee

“By encouraging public art, the commission will serve as a civic catalyst, create a welcoming sense of place and enhance the quality of life of all community members, especially underserved populations,” Durham said. “By equitably engaging in the development and promotion of public art activities, the commission will stimulate neighborhood revitalization while helping to address social and economic inequalities in our communities.”

Hemphill said that “public art” refers to permanent and semi-permanent types of pieces such as murals, statues, sculptures, paintings, installations and more, displayed in or on government buildings, properties, parks, libraries and new developments where feasible.

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December

WILMINGTON'S OFFICE-TO-HOUSING CONVERSIONS ADD ENERGY TO CITY

BY PETER OSBORNE

Chris Buccini bristles when he hears people talk about sky-high **vacancy rates** and slow demand in downtown Wilmington.

“When I look at the Northern Delaware market, we have probably had our best year ever,” says one of the three founders of **Buccini/Pollin Group** (BPG). “We’ve always been a big corporate town with companies like DuPont and MBNA, so we have some big blocks of corporate space that have been vacant in the past few years but are either being repurposed, or [buyers/big tenants] are taking a second look.”

Some of that repurposing includes converting the space from office to residential and those changes are helping turn the city into more of the liveable, walkable space that proponents have long advocated and sought.

“Creating a density of residents downtown helps increase the foot traffic to support local businesses and we find that as more people are on the streets, the more comfortable people feel,” says Sean Park, director of the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development. The influx of new residents adds to city wage tax revenue and encourages additional development, he said.

“Downtown Wilmington is a 25-year-old overnight success,” Chris Buccini says he tells people. “I think it’s healthier today than it’s been in half a century. It’s a disconnect to say otherwise.”

BOLD GUESS ABOUT DOWNTOWN HOUSING

Adding more apartments in downtown Wilmington has been underway for two decades. Between 1999 and 2017, BPG purchased DuPont’s five-property headquar-

ters buildings, including the Nemours, DuPont and Brandywine buildings, and two parking garages. It has rebranded the complex as **Market West** and added the I.M. Pei building at 1105 North Market to the mix.

Heading into 2000, Chris and his brother Rob predicted demand for 5,000 apartments in downtown Wilmington based on an unscientific assumption that 10 percent of 50,000 downtown workers would be interested in living in a vibrant, affordable downtown. Rob Buccini said Tuesday that BPG-owned residential units will be at the 5,000 number within the next 18 months and then at 6,000 units shortly thereafter.

“The first apartments we ever did in Delaware were at the Nemours Building,” Chris Buccini says.

There, BPG repurposed 85 furnished corporate apartments into smaller unfurnished apartments.

“We just delivered the first 92, and we’ll be at a total of 250 units by next September and 350 in 2025,” he says.

As a result, the Nemours conversion to a mixed-use complex reduced the available office space from the original 800,000 square feet first to 450,000 square feet of office space and now to just 150,000 square feet earmarked for coworking and flexible space.

UPSIDE TO LOSING DUPONT, MBNA

Buccini concedes the loss of DuPont and MBNA has been a negative in many ways for downtown.

“But for the long-term sustainability of the city of Wilmington, it’s the greatest thing that could have happened” because MBNA and DuPont were islands within the city, he says.

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ADDING \$500M+ MORE INTO EDUCATION LIKELY MATTER FOR LEGISLATURE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A long-awaited report released from the American Institutes for Research on school funding has shown that Delaware needs to allocate anywhere from \$590 million to \$1 billion more into education. That’s between a 27% and 46% increase from the multi-billion dollar investment the state already has in public education, which is typically about a third of the state budget.

THE REPORT

Drew Atchison, a senior researcher at the [American Institutes for Research](#), presented to a crowd of educators, advocates, parents and legislators the findings from the report, which cost Delaware \$700,000. One of the main recommendations of the report is to transition to a weighted funding system, rather than the current resource-based system that converts student enrollment into “units” and bases part of the funding on the experience level of teachers.

Some problems arise from this, including the fact that students with disabilities, English language learners or low-income students do not receive the additional funding to support their specialized needs.

The report focused on three areas: adequacy, equity and wealth neutrality with emphasis on transparency, flexibility and stability. In its recommended weighted system, each student receives a base amount of funding and then gets a multiplier if they are low-income, an English language learner or have a disability. Then, there is an effective weight—an adjusted weight accounting for the proportion of students for which a given weight applies.

For example, a low-income weight of 1.81 for a school where 31% of students are low-income results in an effective weight of 1.20, whereas a school where 70% of students are low-income would have an effective weight of 1.51.

The state of Maryland uses single weights for economic disadvantage, students with disabilities and English learners, multiplied by the base amount. New Jersey uses multiple economic disadvantage weights differentiated based on concentration, with the base amount differentiated by grade level.

Another issue with the current funding formula, Atchison noted, is some districts cannot raise local funds as much as others because of lower property values and a higher population of impoverished families. The state usually funds around 70% to a district or local share of 30%. But richer districts utilize more local funding—about \$2,000 more per student on average.

Because Delaware’s current resource-based formula follows teachers more than students, low-income districts tend to have the least experienced teachers for a variety of reasons. Atchison and other advocates have said there’s a direct correlation between the amount of money invested in education and student outcomes.

And while Delaware historically has been in the top 15 states of funding per student, the outcomes fall much short of the state’s goals to have 76% of students proficient in English language arts and 70% proficient in math by 2030. Just 40.76% of students are proficient in English language arts and 30.91% are proficient in math, according to the Delaware Report Card.

Also, more than one out of five students are chronically absent, which means they miss 10% or more of the school days in an academic year.

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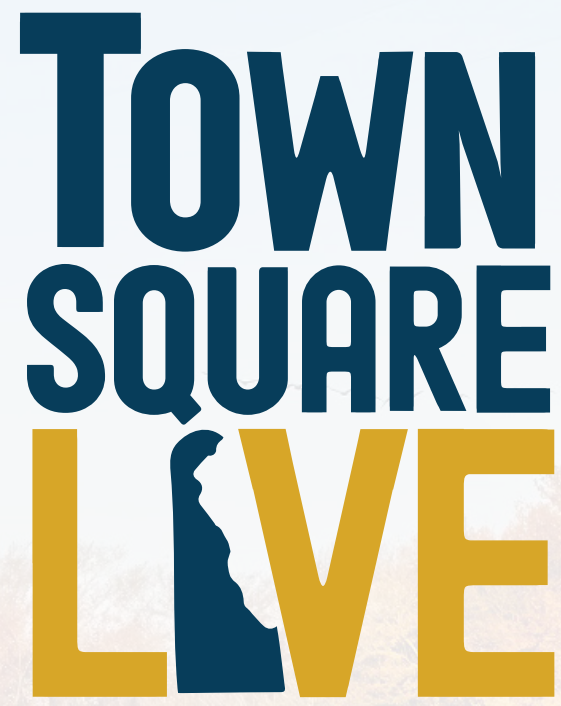
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