

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

photo link: Delaware Art Museum

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Contents

photo link: Longwood Gardens
photo by Candie Ward

Community	3
Business	8
Government	11
Education.....	18
Sports	23
Stay Connected	28



They Spend Weeks Lighting Houses for Christmas



Hearing on Housing and Homeless



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Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



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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WILMINGTON FRIENDS ENDS PLANS TO BUILD NEW LOWER SCHOOL

BY BETSY PRICE

With **Incyte Corp.** backing out of a deal to buy **Wilmington Friends'** lower school to build a new five-story building, the 275-year-old education institution this week told the Alapocas neighborhood that it will not build a new lower school. Instead, officials said in a letter to the affluent neighborhood, the school will renovate the current lower school building.

Incyte's agreement to buy the lower school for \$50 million in 2019 set off alarms in the community, which fought the plan, saying the size and lighting would disturb the neighborhood, as would a stream of cars driven by hundreds of employees to and from the structure. The biopharmaceutical company was interested in the site because it's close to the corporate headquarters on Augustine Cut Off, the former home of a Wannamaker's Department Store.

"The sale offered us an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine our school on a consolidated campus," said the letter from Ken Aldridge, head of school, and David Tennent, clerk of the board of trustees.

Area residents formed the group **Neighbors for Responsible Land Use** and fought the 400,000-square-foot project in government hearings, saying it was too big and too invasive.

"While we were pleased to have our right to build confirmed by the Delaware Supreme Court, unfortunately, Incyte informed us that they terminated the contract because New Castle County Board of Adjustments denied necessary approval of variances which were critical to their ability to move forward with their site plan," the letter said.

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'NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS' BICENTENNIAL DRAWS CELEBRITIES TO ODESSA

BY BETSY PRICE

The **Historic Odessa Foundation**'s celebration of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" on its 200th birthday brought two holiday celebrities to Delaware Friday, Dec. 1, to mark the anniversary.

The use of the Clement Clark Moore poem to decorate the Odessa's 249-year-old Corbit-Sharp House caught the attention of author Pamela McColl, who has written a book tracing the art and history of the Moore's classic poem, and "Mr. Christmas" Benjamin Bradley, who hosts Netflix's "Holiday Home Makeover." They'll be in Odessa to celebrate the bicentennial of "Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas," which is the real title of the enduring poem published anonymously in 1823.

McColl, a historian and author of "**Twas The Night: The Art and History of the Classic Christmas Poem,**"

was introduced by Bradley at 4:30 p.m. in the Corbit-Sharp House for her lecture about the book and research. She will sign books after her talk. The event was expected to end by 7:30 p.m.

McColl's book traces the evolution of the holiday and shows how the historic figure of Saint Nicholas evolves into the central character in the story. It also talks about how characteristics of today's Santa Claus originated with Clement Clark Moore. She uses dozens of vintage illustrations from the thousands of editions published over the last 200 years in her presentation.

McColl created a sensation in 2012 when she published "Twas the Night Before Christmas," edited by Santa Claus for the Benefit of Children of the 21st Century.

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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.

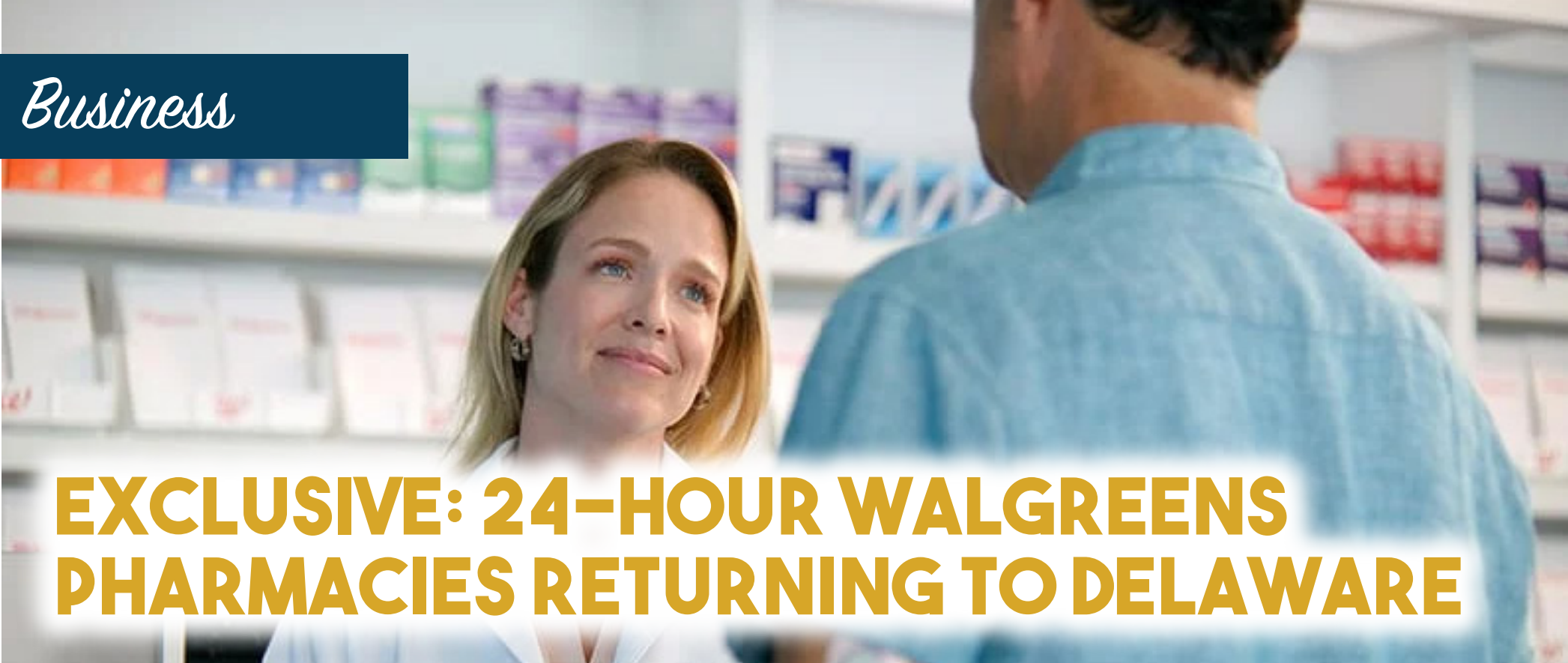
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photo link: Visit Delaware



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



EXCLUSIVE: 24-HOUR WALGREENS PHARMACIES RETURNING TO DELAWARE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Good news for Delawareans who need prescriptions overnight: Walgreens has reopened its 24-hour pharmacy in Bear. And its “Seaford and Lewes locations are planned to return to 24-hour Rx services,” said Samantha Stansberry, manager of retail merchandising and marketing communications. DelawareLive.com is the first media outlet to report the news.

The **Bear** store is at 1120 Pulaski Highway (Route 40) and will be open 24 hours Monday through Friday, but only 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends. The pharmacy closes 1:30-2 a.m. for lunch.

The **Seaford** store, 22898 Seaford Highway (Route 13), is already open 24 hours and the pharmacy is now open until 10 p.m.

The **Lewes** store, 17239 Five Points Square (on Savannah Road/Route 9) is already open 24 hours and the

pharmacy is now open until 10 p.m.

“At this time, there are no plans to move other locations to 24-hour operations in Delaware, but operating hours are reviewed on a regular basis,” Stansberry added.

A Walgreens at 4098 Edgmont Ave. (Route 352). **Brookhaven**, PA, also has a 24-hour pharmacy (closed for lunch 1:30-2 a.m.) and is near Delawareans in the Claymont area.

WALGREENS CHANGES

It’s good news, considering Delaware **had** lost all its 24-hour pharmacies and chances of them returning seemed bleak. That was especially a problem for people who ended up in urgent cares or emergency rooms late in the afternoon or evening and couldn’t find a place to get prescriptions like steroids, inhalers, pain meds or antibiotics filled for another 12 hours.

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Complicating the loss of the pharmacies were labor shortages and other industry ills.

Rite Aid filed for bankruptcy in October, **closing** stores in Chestnut Hill Plaza near Newark and at 3209 Kirkwood Highway, near Prices Corner. And then a few weeks later it suddenly closed another store in Claymont. Pharmacies trying to surmount national staffing shortages and burnout tried **cutting** store hours, buying **robots** to sort meds, using **remote** pharmacists, offering **bonuses** as high as \$75,000 and changing how pharmacists are **evaluated**.





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photo link: City of Newark, Delaware



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



HEARING ON HOUSING, HOMELESS LEADS TO PROMISE OF ATTENTION

BY BETSY PRICE

A joint legislative hearing held by Delaware Senate and Housing committees Wednesday started picking threads out of the tangled wad of factors affecting affordable housing and homelessness in Delaware.

The convening of the joint session was clearly a shot across the bow of the state political ship and a forerunner to more state, local and community action on the topic. Among other things, the 20 members of the Senate Housing & Land Use Committee and the House Housing Committee heard:

- The last time the state convened a task force or group to look at the statewide problem was before 2017, and maybe as far back as 2007, said [Dr. Stephen Metraux](#), director of the University of Delaware's Center for Community Research & Service. It's time for the state and the stakeholders to reconvene, look at research and all try to get on the same page instead of going in different directions.

- The pandemic showed stakeholders that there were many more homeless than the state realized when people surviving in the shadows came forward for help as COVID shut or hindered services. Some homeless have faded away again.
- At the same time, inflation soaring last year—and largely blamed on federal COVID 19 handouts—sent housing and rental costs soaring. Rental prices alone rose 40% in recent years. And the state's move to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour by Jan. 1, 2026, will not help with that level of price hikes.
- Ideally, a family pays 30% or less of its income toward housing costs. However, in Wilmington, the median household income is \$50,000. That means the household rent should be \$1,250 or less per month and rents at the level are difficult to find for small spaces, much less a two-bedroom apartment.
- A lot of interest was expressed in government legis-

lation or programs that might create a housing trust fund giving developers incentive to help create duplex, townhouse and other spaces that are more affordable to rent and buy. Most new home construction is single-family detached homes, which are also the most expensive to buy and run.

- A few people suggested programs that set aside certain space for affordable houses for workers near the jobs and schools they need to be near, but acknowledged that zoning is usually a county or town matter.
- A lot of the money supporting people who need emergency shelter through hotel vouchers and more comes from the federal government, and there's so many needy people—especially as the weather turns cold for winter—that few beds are available, even with a voucher.
- Those most at risk for homelessness include Black individuals and families; immigrant families; households with disabilities; and single parent households. Domestic abuse also is a large factor in causing homelessness.

A LOOK AT HOUSING

Four groups who focus on housing and homelessness, clearly with an eye toward finding ways to join forces, establish connected community groups and pass more legislation related to the topics, talked about recent studies:

- Sequoia Rent, chief of the Bureau of Health Equity with the Department of Health and Social Services, who talked about data in its [Delaware State Health Needs Assessment](#) survey.

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24 BUILDINGS SHARE \$140K IN DELAWARE PRESERVATION FUND GRANTS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Two dozen historic structures—15 houses, four churches, three commercial buildings, a school and a lighthouse—have received grants from the Delaware Preservation Fund. Several are open to the public as museums, including **Rockwood Park and Mansion**, **Barratt’s Chapel**, **Lydia B. Cannon Museum** and **Parson Thorne Mansion**.

The grants totaled \$140,000—a bigger pot than usual over the fund’s 22-year history—thanks to a \$100,000 contribution from the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. The grants ranged from \$2,450 to \$10,000. The Delaware Preservation Fund is a subsidiary of **Preservation Delaware**.

Even small grants like that can make a large and timely impact. The Buttonwood Mansion in New

Castle, for instance, received \$10,000 to replace its leaky roof. “The mansion was seriously threatened,” said Michael Emmons Jr., a program manager and a staffer of the Center for Historic Architecture and Design at the University of Delaware. “The grant allowed the owners to replace the roof immediately and bought it some critical time for full preservation work to be planned and executed.”

While the Delaware Preservation Fund has historically supported bricks-and-mortar projects, it has begun considering applications for preservation planning project. “Often times, an engineering assessment or a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places is a crucial first step toward saving a historic building,” said Cate Morrisey, also a center staff member.

The fund received 30 qualified applications for the 2023 grant program. The fund just opened applications for the 2024 cycle, and they’re due Feb. 1 at the Preservation Delaware webpage for the fund.

2023 DELAWARE PRESERVATION FUND GRANTS

New Castle County

1005 N. Broom St., Wilmington, \$5,000; 1110 N. Broom St., Wilmington, \$5,000; 16 N. Van Buren St. Wilmington, \$4,050; Archmere Academy (“The Patio”), Claymont, \$10,000; Buttonwood Mansion, New Castle, \$10,000; Church of the Holy City, Wilmington, \$4,000; Dairy Palace, near New Castle, \$10,000; Polk House, Odessa, \$5,000; Rockwood (wash house), near Wilmington, \$2,450; St. John the Baptist Church, Newark, \$5,000

Kent County

Barratt’s Chapel, Frederica, \$4,000; Parson Thorne Mansion, Milford, \$6,300; Smyrna Sporting Goods, Smyrna, \$10,000

Sussex County

514 Railroad Ave., Lewes, \$5,000; Cannonball House, Lewes, \$6,500; Captain William Russell House, Milton, \$5,000; Georgetown Icehouse, Georgetown, \$6,500; Harbor of Refuge Breakwater Lighthouse, Lewes, \$5,000; Hitchens House, Laurel, \$5,000; Lydia B. Cannon Museum, Milton, \$6,250; Magee Farms, Selbyville, \$5,000; Metcalf House, Lewes, \$5,000; Prospect AME Church, Georgetown, \$4,950; Rosemont, Laurel, \$10,000



MORE FINES FOR POKORNY, WHOSE RENTALS WERE CLOSED IN 2022

STAFF WRITER

The city of Wilmington had imposed \$33,000 in fines against the man whose seven Adams Street properties were summarily shut down in 2002, dumping dozens of people onto the streets. The move against Adolf J. Pokorny's property shocked much of Wilmington and Delaware.

Now, the city says, the property owner has made virtually no progress in 18 months to correct structural code violations in apartment units spread across seven buildings. Pokorny was originally fined \$5,000 earlier this year for failing to make timely structural repairs to his properties, a city press release said. Pokorny and the city then agreed that the landlord could avoid paying additional fines if he corrected the code violations within 45 days, or by Oct. 28.

The city has determined that Pokorny made only a few repairs and that he remains in violation of the code. The city began imposing weekly additional fines beginning Nov. 1 and will continue to impose weekly fines until the code violations are corrected.

When the city declared Pokorny's properties unfit for human habitation on May 16, 2022, an extensive code inspection process followed that eventually uncovered 372 building code violations, including serious structural issues.

Some of the displaced Adams Street residents found shelter at the County's Hope Center while others stayed at a local motel or with family or friends.

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WILMINGTON CITY, COUNCIL LASH OUT IN FIGHT OVER JOB RESIDENCY

BY PETER OSBOURNE

Mob rule? Or B.S.? A weeks-long debate over Wilmington residency requirements for non-elected city employees has deteriorated into what might generously be described as “frosty” exchanges between Mayor Mike Purzycki and a pair of City Council members.

After a month of bitter debate, the 13-member council on Nov. 16 passed a five-year residency law for new hires that will continue to give preference to hiring city residents. It also allows new hires a year to move into Wilmington (vs. six months previously), and establishes a residency assistance fund to help new hires afford housing. The vote was 8-4, with three members voting “present” and one member failing to attend the vote.

Purzycki had been trying for more than a year to rescind the residency rule based on the City’s ongoing struggles to find qualified candidates willing to move to Wilmington for open positions.

Purzycki issued a scathing 1,328-word [statement](#) Nov. 27 to say that while he would not veto the bill, “the legislative process that unfolded was an embarrassment to this government [featuring] grandstanding, catcalling, badgering and political bullying.”

“There was never a sober debate about the merits of retaining residency,” said Purzycki, who is not running for re-election.

“The compromise ordinance that included New Castle County boundaries never even made it to the floor for a vote when one cowed member of Council failed to vote the ordinance out of committee,” the statement said. “The intimidating and uncontrolled mob that was encouraged to show up at the committee meeting and Council meetings literally scared members of Council into changing their votes.”

Bill sponsor Shane’ Darby responded in kind. “I don’t care what the mayor or anyone else has to say for that matter. The people see and smell the BS! He can move back to being a Republican and move to the beach or something.”

RESIDENCY VOTE

Only five council members attended the Nov. 16 meeting in person, with the rest participating virtually. Darby was among those who voted for the resolution, including Vincent M. White, Zanthia Oliver, Michelle Harlee, Yolanda McCoy, Chris Johnson, Latisha Bracy and Council President Ernest “Trippi” Congo. Council members Bregetta Fields, Nathan Field and James Spadola voted present. Maria Cabrera did not attend. Al Mills voted no, which was no surprise because he earlier had proposed the city drop the requirement altogether.

Congo offered a slightly more measured [response](#) to Purzycki’s statement than Darby.

“I disagree with the misleading and disrespectful press release issued by Mayor Purzycki and feel it was uncalled for and extremely divisive,” he said.

Congo thanked Wilmington residents for “coming out in unprecedented numbers” to voice their concerns over the possibility of ending the current residency requirements for city of Wilmington employees.

“I do not believe that our residents deserve that from their elected officials,” he said.

The debate was ignited by an Oct. 16, 2023, [press release](#) by Purzycki that said the city is no longer enforcing what he called the “former” residency requirement because it was undermining the efficiency of city government.

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VIRTUAL EVENT TO CONNECT VETERANS TO NEW BENEFITS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Military families will have a three-day opportunity to explore Veterans benefits and new eligibility requirements at a one-stop-virtual-shop. From Dec. 12–14, between the hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Delaware vets can take advantage of 1-on-1 assistance and can connect with Veterans Affairs, state and community partners to obtain claim status updates, file claims, enroll in VA health care, schedule appointments and explore military transition services. They can also check if they have new benefit eligibility through the federal Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act.

That law was passed in summer 2022 and expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxic substances.

The PACT Act also:

- Expanded and extended eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War and post-9/11 eras.

- Added more than 20 presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxic exposures.
- Added more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation.
- Requires a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA healthcare.
- Helped the agency improve research, staff education and treatment related to toxic exposures.

When registering, participants will have the option to schedule a virtual appointment that best fits their availability and a VA representative will call the Veteran during the scheduled time to provide assistance.

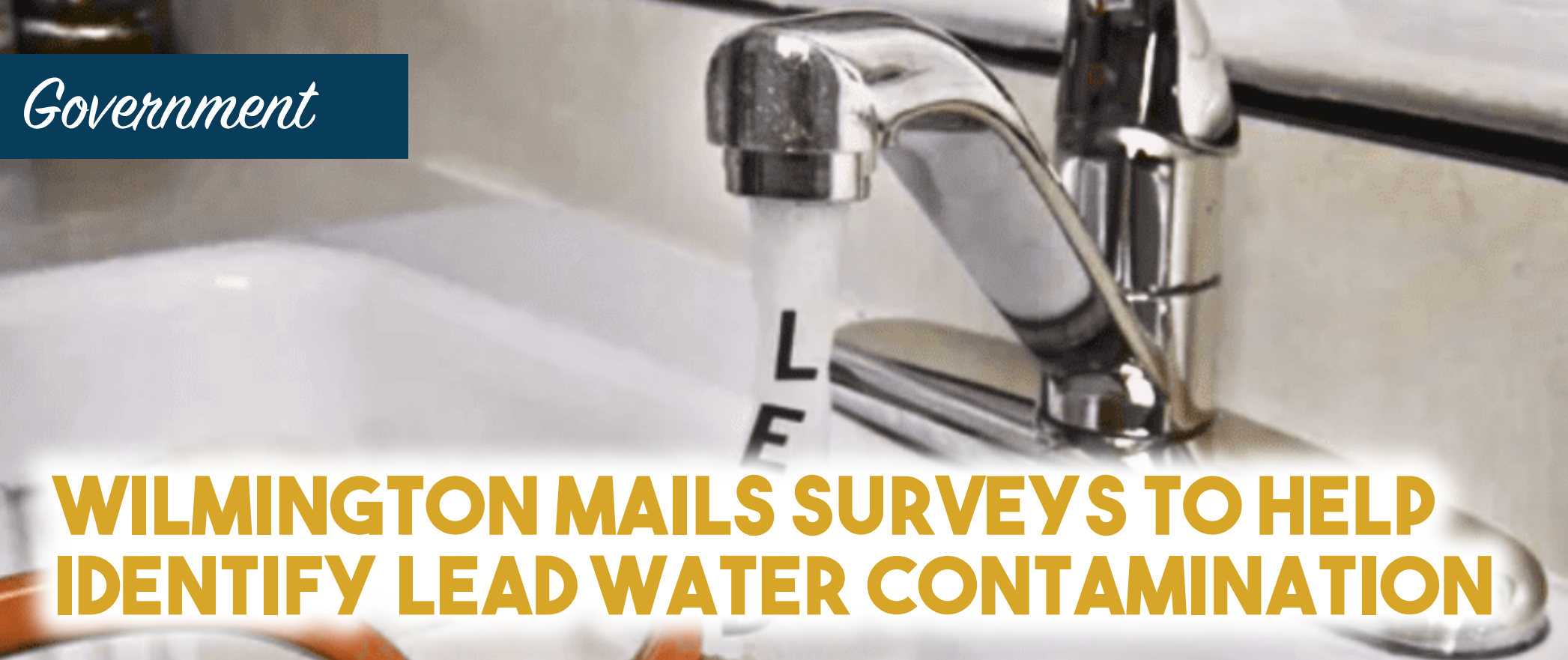
Appointment availability is limited, and Vets **must register** before Dec. 10. The event is only for residents of Delaware and the New Jersey counties of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem.



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WILMINGTON MAILS SURVEYS TO HELP IDENTIFY LEAD WATER CONTAMINATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

The city of Wilmington is asking the public to help crack down on lead contamination in water. City water customers in Wilmington and New Castle County will be receiving a postcard with a QR code that links them to the survey to help identify and report lead water service lines on their private properties or inside their homes and businesses. For those eager to report and have not received the mailed survey quite yet, they can participate in the survey [online](#).

The survey has information to help residents distinguish the type of metal their pipes are made from (lead, copper, galvanized steel or plastic), as well as facts on why lead is harmful and how it's historically been used in plumbing materials, how lead contamination ends up in water, the contamination levels that are healthy and dangerous to drink, and more. The survey also tells

parents how they can protect their children. Young children are especially susceptible to lead poisoning, which can have terrible effects on their cognitive development.

Wilmington's Water Division is currently conducting an inventory of its municipal water service system, looking for lead lines and will report the results to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) by Oct. 16, 2024.

The issue of lead contamination is not new in the First State. In October 2022, dozens of schools were identified as having dangerous amounts of lead in their water. This was the result of a \$209,000 federal grant that allowed the Department of Education to begin a sampling initiative in 2020 to identify the levels of lead within drinking water at schools.

Although in many cases, the harmful water was found in bathroom sinks and non-drinking water, several

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TWO HOURS TO BRING A SMILE

schools had to shut down their water supply and instead provided water bottles and water coolers for drinking.

Anything water with more than .015 milligrams of lead per liter of water is dangerous, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Last year's school water testing report drew some backlash and criticism, however, because it used untrained school staff members to conduct the sampling.

So, in December 2022, the state used \$1.5 million to conduct a new round of sampling, with a completed, published report released in September, this time with more accurate data.

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photo credit: Christina School District



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE

LONGWOOD FOUNDATION GIVES DSU \$1.75M TO DOUBLE NURSING PROGRAM

BY BETSY PRICE

Hoping to help ease nursing and public health worker shortages, the **Longwood Foundation** has given Delaware State University a \$1.75 million grant to help double the size of its nursing program. Delaware's only Historically Black College and University plans to significantly increase the number of nursing graduates through 2026 and then further increase that through 2030. Half of those graduates are expected to be Delawareans, a university press release said. The DSU Nursing Program had 75 graduates in May 2023.

The Longwood investment will help fund a second clinical simulation lab, as well as a rehabilitation center and a nursing summer pilot program to help freshmen pre-nursing majors adjust to the rigors of the curriculum.

Those nurses still must pass the National Council Licensure Examination, but an influx of new nurses is expected to enter the workforce in Wilmington, Dover and throughout Delaware.

NURSING PROGRAM DETAILS

The DSU Nursing Program had an 83% license exam pass rate in 2023. DSU says the grant will help the program to increase that rate.

Dr. Gwen Scott-Jones, dean of the University's Wesley College of Health and Behavioral Sciences, said she is pleased that the Longwood money will help expand the pilot program to help pre-nursing freshmen and sophomores. The goal is to make sure pre-nursing students make it into the professional nursing program and DSU



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graduates highly skilled nurses who can pass the licensing exam, she said.

This is not Longwood's first grant. It gave DSU a \$1 million grant in 2020 to help DSU take over the former Wesley College. The University's renamed its health programs the Wesley College of Health and Behavioral Sciences and moved it to the 50-acre campus near downtown Dover, which is now called DSU Downtown.

With the acquisition, DSU also inherited Wesley College's nursing program and students. Started in 1975, the DSU Nursing Program is recognized by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing.





CAESAR RODNEY LIBRARIAN NAMED SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF YEAR

STAFF WRITER

A paraprofessional/library specialist who opens the school library during lunches so students can have a space where they

feel safe and cared for has been named Delaware’s 2024 Delaware Educational Support Professional of the Year.

“The library has an open-door policy so students can take a break, check in or have someone listen to them,” said Sinead Ronan of Caesar Rodney School District’s Magnolia Middle School. “This supports the development of self-regulation and provides an outlet where students can feel heard.”

She was one of 19 paraprofessionals nominated for the state honor by school districts and charter schools.

Ronan immigrated to the U.S. from Ireland 16 years ago and has 11 years of experience as an educational support professional. She considers forming successful relationships with students, families and colleagues her most important responsibility. Relationships form the foundation of a successful school environment in the short-term and strengthen the community for the long-term, she said.

“The prefix ‘para’ means beside and individuals in our school community know I will walk their journey be-

side them,” Ronan said. “My role is to support, empower and encourage them. I believe the personal relationships I establish create a ripple effect across the school environment, creating lasting positive relationships for students.”

Ronan also facilitates and hosts school community events such as Family Literacy Night, Month of the Military Child Celebration and STEM Night to provide additional connection points.

“As a parent, I know that communication with families is effective. I prioritize calling and meeting with families, focusing on the positive and encouraging student growth and family-school trust. Adults are not perfect and we shouldn’t expect students to be, either,” Ronan said. “I utilize an asset orientation that shifts the focus from student compliance to personal growth.”

The Delaware State Educational Support Professional of the Year program recognizes outstanding service by school employees who provide direct or indirect services to students and their families. It includes paraprofessionals, custodial staff, secretaries, nutritional staff, bus drivers, bus aides and information technology staff. From those nominated at a building level, one educational support professional of the year moves forward to represent each district or the charter school community in the state program.

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UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE PRESIDENT PAINTS ROSY PICTURE TO BOARD

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

University of Delaware President Dennis Assanis offered a grab-bag of ideas to the UD board of trustees at their semiannual meeting on Tuesday. They include increasing stipends for graduate students (reaching \$24,500 to \$36,000, depending on how much they teach and other factors), expanding the honors college (“now exceeding 17,000 applications for 600 spots”), “strengthening our entrepreneurship ecosystem” (hopefully increasing licensing fees and royalties, now running about \$2.3 million) and creating an office of national fellowships (“We need an official to marshal the troops,” he said).

“More of everything,” he said. “Obviously we are committed to being the flagship university of our state.”

He also went through a laundry list of boosterish news, coupled with his observation on something that’s not happening on campus: divisive protests about the

Hamas-Israel war. He praised the “feeling of safety around campus” during these days of protests across the world.

“Context matters, and I think we’re doing a phenomenal job,” he said.

Applications have been rising in most metrics for the last three years: overall, by Delawareans and by domestic non-white students (a record). Applications by international students are slightly less than they were last year. Applications, as of Nov. 30: 31,531 overall, 3,167 by Delawareans, 721 by international students and 9,127 by domestic non-white students.

“We’ve been firing on all cylinders” for funding research and development programs, hitting \$368 million in fiscal 2022, he said. “We do great work,” he said.

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UD WILL PAY \$6 MILLION TO JUMP TO CONFERENCE USA IN 2025

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

The University of Delaware will jump to Division 1 play in 2025 when it **ditches** its current conference to join Conference USA. The Blue Hens will become the 11th full-time member of the conference, following Georgia’s Kennesaw State as No. 10 when it joins at the beginning of the 2024 season.

The University of Delaware will also become the first FCS program to pay the new \$5 million reclassification fee inserted by the National Collegiate Athletic Association this year. The fee was \$5,000 in previous years but was raised in 2023, which many believe is designed to “prevent teams from making the jump.”

Delaware also will have to pay the \$1 million exit fee for the Colonial Athletic Association.

In doing so, though, the Blue Hens football will transition to the Division I Football Bowl Subdivision, the sport’s highest level of competition in the NCAA.

CONFERENCE USA TEAMS

Conference USA’s other members consist of Sam Houston State, University of Texas El Paso, New Mexico State, Louisiana Tech, Jacksonville State in Alabama, Florida International, Middle Tennessee, Western Kentucky and Liberty in Virginia.

The Blue Hens will play the conference in baseball, softball, men and women’s basketball, men and women’s golf, women’s soccer, men and women’s tennis, women’s cross-country, women’s indoor and outdoor track and field, and volleyball. The other seven teams are unsure of their placement within the conference.

“We are thrilled to be joining Conference USA and stepping up to the highest level of Division I football competition, which will elevate the reputation and visibility of our entire Blue Hen Athletics program and galvanize our loyal alumni and fans,” UD President Dennis Assanis said.

All UD varsity programs will remain in the Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) through their 2024-25 seasons, with all sports except football next season maintaining eligibility to compete for conference championships and NCAA postseason play.

The Blue Hens, who played their first football games in 1889, have won six national championships. The program ranks seventh in wins among current Football Championship Subdivision programs and 34th among all Division I programs.

“The opportunity to join Conference USA is a very proud moment for our entire university,” said Chrissi Rawak, director of athletics, community and campus recreation. “With this step forward, we will continue to offer an incredible student-athlete experience and elevate the visibility of all that is remarkable about UD. We couldn’t be more excited for the entire state of Delaware.”

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photo credit: Dennell Henriquez



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



CARAVEL RUNS TO SCHOOL'S FIRST TITLE SINCE 2012

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Caravel Buccaneers completed a perfect season with a convincing 35-13 DIAA Class AA championship win against Archmere Saturday.

The Bucs broke open a close halftime game with a stout running attack powered by the “O” line, scoring two touchdowns on four plays early in the third quarter. Senior running backs Jordan and Craig Miller led the way, as the team totalled 414 yards rushing. The offensive line consisted of Dwight Williams, Ian Smith, Owen Kamether, Priest Jones and Zavion Tuck.

Jordan Miller scored on the second play from scrimmage in the second half on a 51-yard run. Barely two minutes later, Craig Miller (no relation) sprinted 62 yards to the end zone to put the Bucs ahead 21-0.

Archmere had struggled against the Caravel defense until late in the third frame, when quarterback Miles

Kempski threw a “perfect” pass to Gavin Lee for 31 yards to put the Auks on the board. That score sliced the Caravel lead to 21-7 with 1:41 left in the third quarter. However, coach John Reed’s Bucs answered early in the final quarter as Trey Hamlin ran for a 34-yard TD and a 28-7 advantage.

Kempski engineered the longest scoring drive of the game as he guided the Auks on an eight-play, 75-yard possession. The drive culminated with a pass of 11 yards from Kempiski to Drew Duncan. At that point, Archmere trailed 28-13 with 7:33 left. Jordan Miller completed the scoring with a 24-yard touchdown run and a 35-13 Caravel lead. The Buccaneer defense made that score stand up for the final.

The championship is the fifth for Caravel Academy and the first since 2012. Archmere was appearing in the

title game for the 15th time dating back to the 1970s.

Caravel scored the only points in the first half with 7:22 left in the second quarter. Following an Archmere punt, fullback Craig Miller burst through a hole at the line of scrimmage and raced 52 yards for the 7-0 halftime lead. Three of the Bucs five scoring drives took two plays or less. With the defenses dominating the opening half, the two punters put on an exhibition. Archmere’s Cole Fenice averaged 35.7 yards on his seven punts, while Truman Auwerda averaged 37.3 yards on his three punts for the Bucs.

Jordan Miller carried the ball 31 times for 215 yards, Craig Miller gained 146 yards on 11 “touches”, and Trey Hamlin added 55 yards on just three attempts. Defensively, Caravel was led by Amir Myers and J-D Devane with seven tackles each. Brock Rhodes added six tackles and Ian Smith had five stops including two sacks. The Bucs held Archmere to 57 yards rushing.

Archmere received a stellar “two-way” performance from junior linebacker Christian Wittmeyer as he had a game-high 10 tackles, four were solo, plus he added a “tackle-for-loss”. Wittmeyer was pressed into action offensively in the second half, leading the team with 33 yards rushing on just four carries. Auks quarterback Kempiski completed 12 of his 24 pass attempts for 140 yards and both of the team’s touchdowns.

Caravel was the only team in Delaware to finish unbeaten with an overall record of 13-0. Archmere started the season 1-3 and put together an eight-game winning streak before falling to the Buccaneers in the final game.



BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association Division 1A football state championship featured two teams who have never won a football state championship nor competed for one. The Tatnall Hornets and Wilmington Charter Force faced off Saturday afternoon in both teams' first-ever football championship competition. Which meant one of these teams was gonna be crowned a state champion.

The Tatnall Hornets defeated The Force to win their first football state championship. The Hornets were led by their all-star quarterback RahShon LaMons as well as their stingy defense that locked down The Force.

LaMons, even though he was hampered by an ankle injury, was able to affect the game in other ways than just using his running abilities like usual. LaMons was 8-of-9 on passing attempts for 149 yards and two touchdowns. Normally he diced up defenses with the run, but showed off his passing abilities when it counted most.

TATNALL WINS FOOTBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

He did rush the ball 15 times for 66 yards, but was mainly used on first down opportunities.

On the receiving end of LaMons passes, Micah Stamper led all receivers catching all four of his targets for 88 yards and two touchdowns. Stamper made some amazing catches, especially in the fourth quarter, as LaMons hit him in the corner of the end zone for a 19-0 Tatnall lead. Jayden Minor and Chris Gordon each caught two passes well for Tatnall.

The Tatnall defense was throwing a shutout for 45 minutes until about three minutes left in the game when The Force were able to score on a two-yard rush from their quarterback Roman Paoli. Tatnall held The Force to just 92 total yards in the game 63 passing yards, and 29 passing yards. They were able to hold them to just 1-of-8 on third down conversions which played a pivotal role in the victory. Lineman Justin Smith was the anchor for the defense totaling five tackles with four of them being solo.

The Hornets defeated The Force by a score of 26-7. The reclassification of division has been a great thing for high school football, making the games more competitive as well as giving more schools the opportunity to compete for a state championship as you see the evidence in this game for the Tatnall Hornets.



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THIRD QUARTER SURGE PROPELS SALESIANUM TO 3A STATE TITLE

BY BENNY MITCHELL

Cape Henlopen and Salesianum came into the DIAA Class AAA championship game statistically even. After the first half the two were tied 10-10. Then Salesianum erupted for 21 unanswered points in the third quarter on its way to a 45-17 victory, winning its first Class AAA state championship and its eighth overall title. It was also the first title for first-year Salesianum head coach Gene Delle-Donne.

“I’m speechless, so happy for the community and the boys. They deserve it for all the hard work they have put in since January,” Delle-Donne said.

The game didn’t start out on a positive note for Salesianum. After forcing Cape Henlopen to punt on the opening possession, Salesianum took over at the Cape

47. On the first play, B.J. Alleyne took a direct snap and rolled out to the right and was hit by Jukai Payn, forcing a fumble that was recovered by the Vikings at the Salesianum 44-yard line. Six plays later, Jameson Tingle connected with Maurki James on a swing pattern for a four-yard touchdown pass. Wilson Ingerski added the kick as Cape Henlopen took a 7-0 lead with 3:21 to play in the first quarter.

“Watching film on Cape’s season, we saw that they like to come out fast and are well prepared and come out smoking, and they did that tonight and we had to temper that. We were lucky enough to do that and get the win,” Delle-Donne said.

Salesianum forced another Cape Henlopen punt in the second quarter at midfield. Salesianum capped off the scoring drive with a nine-yard touchdown pass from Brady McBride to Will Neumann. Collin Maradick added the kick as Salesianum tied the game at 7-7.

A second Salesianum fumble, this time a muffed punt, giving the Vikings the ball at the Salesianum 18-yard line. Ingerski hit a 38-yard field goal to put Cape Henlopen up 10-7 with 2:27 to play in the first half.

Salesianum took over at their 25 and drove to the Cape Henlopen seven-yard line, where Maradick kicked a 24-yard field goal to tie the game at 10-10 at halftime.

Salesianum opened up the second half on a third and 11 when McBride connected with Benjamin Anton in stride for a 73-yard touchdown pass. Maradick’s kick gave Salesianum their first lead of the game at 17-10.

The third quarter surge continued when L.J. Smith intercepted a Tingle pass and returned it nine yards for a touchdown and then Alleyne added a 24-yard touchdown run as Salesianum extended its lead to 31-10 midway through the third quarter.

Alleyne added two more touchdowns in the fourth quarter. A two-yard run and a 57-yard run sandwiching a three-yard touchdown pass from Tingle to Lucas Stevenson for Cape Henlopen. Alleyne led Salesianum with 197 yards rushing on 20 carries and three touchdowns.

“B.J. is an amazing kid, he’s been a well-oiled machine, he has been the Secretariat that we rode all week,” Delle-Donne said.





ALLEYNE, MILLER AND LAMONS NAMED PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Brian (BJ) Alleyne, Jordan Miller and RahShad LaMons are named players for the year in their respective divisions. They all have a couple things in common—they are all running backs and they all led their teams to a state championship. Alleyne from Salesianum was named 3A Player of the Year, while Miller from Caravel was named 2A and LaMons from Tatnall was named 1A. All three are the top players in their division and all three led their team to state championships.

On behalf of the Delaware Football Coaches Association, we would like to thank the media for your com-

mitment and continuous support to Delaware high school football. Below you will find the All-Class Teams from each classification voted on by Delaware football coaches.

The 1A, 2A, and 3A Coach of the Year honorees will be announced at the All-Class Banquet on Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, at the Modern Maturity Center.

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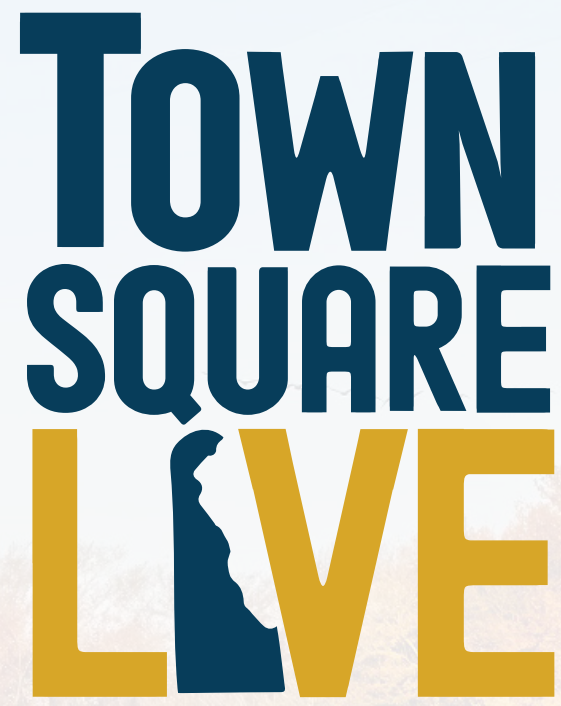
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