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# TOWN SQUARE LIVE

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Your Guide to Easter in Delaware



Bill to Pump Money into Medicaid Set to Roll



Sexual Assault Prevention Training Could Be Required

# Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





# YOUR GUIDE TO EASTER IN DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

From a Bunny Bonanza in Lewes to egg hunts and special brunches up-and-down the First State, there's plenty to do this weekend to celebrate the day commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. While Easter is the holiest day in the Christian calendar, it's also the unofficial embrace of spring from much of the community. Here's what to expect:

### WEATHER

Beautiful days are expected throughout the weekend, with temperatures cracking a comfortable 60 degrees, according to the [National Weather Service](#). Friday will have a low of 38 and a high of 54, with sunny skies on a breezy day. Saturday will also bring sunshine and a high of 62. A windy evening will drop down to 45. Children can enjoy their chocolate bunnies and eggs outside on Easter Sunday, with clear skies and a high of 61.

### EGG HUNTS

Perhaps the favorite part of Easter for Delaware's youngest residents: egg hunts. Click on the event name for more information and to register.

#### Dover's Egg Hunt

The city of Dover's egg hunt starts at 9 a.m. Saturday. Attendees will gather at Wesley's Fellowship Hall and then head over to the Legislative Mall.

#### Eggstravaganza Easter Egg Hunt in Bridgeville

Lifeway Church, at 7046 Seashore Highway in Bridgeville, is having an egg hunt from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday. There will also be inflatables, games and food.

#### Dewey Egg Scoop in Dewey Beach

Starting at 10:45 a.m. on Saturday, search for Easter eggs in different hunts available for all age groups, including adults. The winning egg will receive a cash

prize. After, the Dewey Dogs Easter Parade will begin at 11:45 a.m.

#### Auburn Valley's Egg Hunt in Hockessin

Friday and Saturday, from noon to 3 p.m., Auburn Valley will have an egg hunt with an Easter Bunny meet-and-greet, train rides, children's activities and more.

#### Westminster Presbyterian Church Egg Hunt

Wilmington's Westminster Presbyterian Church on West 13th Street is having an egg hunt at 10:15 a.m. on Easter Sunday on the building's front lawn. The fun will take place in between worship services.

#### Scarlet Note Egg Hunt

From 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Easter Sunday, Scarlet Note Church is sponsoring an egg hunt at George Read Middle School in New Castle. The event is free and there will be food and other activities for children.

### BRUNCHES

#### Kate's Bunny Brunch

On Easter Sunday between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Klondike Kate's on East Main Street in Newark is having a brunch with face painting, balloon animals and a visit with the Easter Bunny. Reservations are required. The first seating is from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the second is 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Adults cost \$36.95 and children ages one to 10 cost \$21.95.

#### St. Annes' Easter Brunch

From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Easter Sunday, The St. Anne's Club in Middletown will have a brunch and an egg hunt. Reservations are required, adults cost \$59.95 and children ages four to 12 cost \$22.95.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



# DOVER SPEEDWAY ADDS MUSIC, GAMES, TRIVIA TO NASCAR WEEKEND

BY KEN MAMMARELLA


An AC/DC tribute band, a bagpiper, arcade games and trivia contests have been added to the **Fan Zone** during the **Dover Motor Speedway's** NASCAR weekend April 26-28. These free attractions are part of efforts to give racing fans, particularly those who camp out all weekend, something else to do besides watch the races. Guests will need to pass through the new security screening perimeter to access the Fan Zone. No grandstand ticket is required to access the Fan Zone.

There are about 40 Fan Zone events and attractions so far. Dirty Deeds, the tribute band, performs at 4 p.m. Saturday, April 27. The trivia runs 5-8 that night. Fireworks, presented by Kent County Tourism, is at 9 that night.

Ally, who is called “the most-followed bagpiper on the internet,” is the only item in the latest announcement that hasn’t been on property in the past, speedway representative Michael Lewis said. “Her showtimes will be announced at a later date.”

“This was likely the last major Fan Zone announcement before our race weekend,” he added.

The centerpiece of the Monster Mile Bash that day, the speedway says, is the third annual Monster Mile Cornhole Tournament. It starts at 4 p.m., with a \$50 fee for each two-person team, a limit of 100 teams and a \$2,500 guaranteed prize pool. Proceeds benefit **Speedway Children's Charities**.

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*Business*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# CHADDSFORD WINERY IS SEEKING A BUYER FOR 42-YEAR-OLD BUSINESS

BY RICH SCHWARTZMAN

It's been 12 years since Eric and Lee Miller retired from the [ChaddsFord Winery](#). Now, the Petrillo family of New York, the remaining founders and owners, are looking to sell. The asking price for the 5-acre property on Route 1 in Pennsylvania is \$4.5 million. The property is just over the state line from New Castle County.

If—when—it's bought, the winery will be the second Chadds Ford area winery sale in a year. Longwood Gardens bought the Galer Estate Vineyard and Winery in September.

Chaddsford Winery's General Manager Corey Krejcik said in a brief telephone interview the doors of the winery are not closing. It will stay open through the sale process and, hopefully, beyond.

"We have a legacy to preserve," Krejcik said and the owners' hope is that whoever buys it will keep it as a winery. He also said there have been some "great discussions" from possible buyers and that the Petrillos, brothers Gregory and Matthew, are selling simply to consolidate their portfolio.

## CHADDSFORD 'DESTINATION'

He called the winery "a destination to experience wine in a fun environment," and said he appreciates the loyal following the winery developed in its 42 years.

On the company's website, Krejcik wrote, "The winery is poised for a new generation of energized ownership, whether it be a small collective of high-net-worth local and loyal oenophiles, individual investors and partners, or a hospitality-focused private equity group looking for a strong, established brand with a powerful regional presence situated on five acres of prime real estate.

"Under new ownership, we believe the future is ripe and poised for growth."

During its 42 years, Krejcik wrote, the winery has "become a highly respected and award-winning winery, earning prestigious accolades including the Keystone Cup for Best White Wine in Pennsylvania, Best in Show—Sparkling Semillon at the Pennsylvania Farm Show and Pennsylvania Sommelier Judgement."




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# AVERAGE RESIDENTIAL BILL FOR VEOLIA GOING UP 4%

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Water rates for customers of Veolia are going up on Monday, April 1. The Delaware Public Service Commission has approved a net increase of 12.67% averaged across residential, commercial and industrial customers, the company announced.

“The average residential bill will be increased by approximately 4.02%, the equivalent of 5 cents per day or \$1.59 per month,” it said. That’s much less the company proposed a year ago.

In April 2023, Veolia filed a **proposal** that called for the average residential water bill in New Castle County to go up \$4.51 per month. The company, which serves more than 100,000 Delawareans, also then proposed a surcharge of \$5 per month.

Water rates are complicated things. Veolia’s **2023 application** takes 15 pages to detail variations. It all starts

with a fixed customer charge of at least \$14.25 a month in 2023 and going up from there, depending on the size of the pipe entering the building. Then there are the rates for each 1,000 gallons used, running in 2023 at least \$4.45 for public authorities and at least \$5.18 for residences. There’s also a fire protection charge.

### RATES FOR WVEOLIA CUSTOMERS IN PA

Wilmington Mayor Michael S. Purzycki earlier in March proposed a 9% increase in water/sewer rates and 6% increase in stormwater rates.

“This rate increase will cost an average household about \$5.98 more a month, assuming the use of 4,000 gallons of water,” DelawareOnline **reported**.

A Veolia **proposal** to raise rates in Pennsylvania, effective near the end of April, was put on hold by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. The Pennsyl-



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vania plan would increase the company’s total annual operating revenues for water services by approximately \$15.5 million (26.4%) and increase total annual operating revenues for wastewater services by approximately \$569,000 (34.8%).

In Veolia’s Pennsylvania proposal, the average monthly bill for a residential water customer using 3,500 gallons of water per month would increase from \$49.64 to \$60.79 (22%). For Veolia wastewater customers, the average monthly bill for a residential customer would increase from a flat rate of \$56.20 to \$77.00 (37%).

Veolia serves 69,800 water customers along with 1,600 wastewater customers in 11 counties across Pennsylvania.





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*Food & Dining*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# VEG CURIOUS? NINE PLACES TO SAMPLE PLANT-BASED FOOD

BY PAM GEORGE

Curiosity killed the cat—or so they say. But when it comes to today’s most popular diet trend, curiosity is a good thing. Integrating plant-based foods into your life can help reduce the risk of illnesses related to diets high in fat and red meat. Since spring produce will likely hit the shelves early, it’s an ideal time to turn over a new leaf.

Here are 10 ways to explore plant-based eating without a trip to the grocery store. After all, curiosity may have killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back.

## VEG OUT IN DOWNTOWN WILM

Wilmington has several vegan restaurants, two of which are in the business district’s food halls. For instance, Nikita Thomas’s **Rooted AF** is in **The Chan-**

**cery Market Food Hall & Bar** at 1313 N. Market St. The Facebook photos and menu descriptions might lead you to believe you’ll find beef, chicken and shrimp, but the restaurant maintains that it’s all vegan. The restaurant’s star attraction—vegan empanadas—is also sold in **Janssen’s Market**’s and in **ShopRite** freezer cases.

**Delectablez** is in **DE.CO**, the food hall at 111 W. 10th St. The menu mines the familiar. For instance, there are burgers with cheddar “cheeze,” a special sauce, tomato and onion, as well as owner Tamara Earl’s version of a hot pocket. Earl also makes pizzas, which are available at local ShopRite stores in the freezer cases.

A short stroll from DE.CO is **Green Box Kitchen**, a plant-based Market Street restaurant mostly devoted to

fruit bowls, smoothies and cold-pressed juices. However, there is also a menu section for munchies, including a vegan “tuna” sandwich.

## VEGGING IN THE ‘BURBS

The city isn’t the only place where you will find vegan restaurants. Daily Veg is a Pike Creek eatery with a 100% vegan menu, including acai bowls, Beyond Burger, Chick’n sandwiches and gluten- and dairy-free milkshakes. The bowls and smoothies are a carryover from owner Dan Mckelvey’s first business, Pure Raw Juice, in Baltimore.

Philadelphia-based **Honeygrow** has locations in Brandywine Hundred, Christiana and Newark. The health-oriented fast-casual restaurant specializes in customizable stir-fries and salads. Choose from composed dishes, such as the red coconut curry with rice noodles, pineapples and roasted tofu, or create your own. Start with a rice or noodle base and add vegetables.

In the Rehoboth area, Seed Eatery recently rebranded as **Seedbol Kitchen**. Fortunately, the mission to cater to various dietary needs remains the same. The kitchen is gluten-, sugar-, egg- and dairy-free. There are vegan and vegetarian options.

A bit farther down Route 1, **Grandpa Mac** worships noodles in all shapes and sizes. However, owners Orion and Hari Cameron, also feature a vegan Caesar salad that tastes like the real deal and gluten-free pasta. Topping options include tofu and vegan mozzarella.

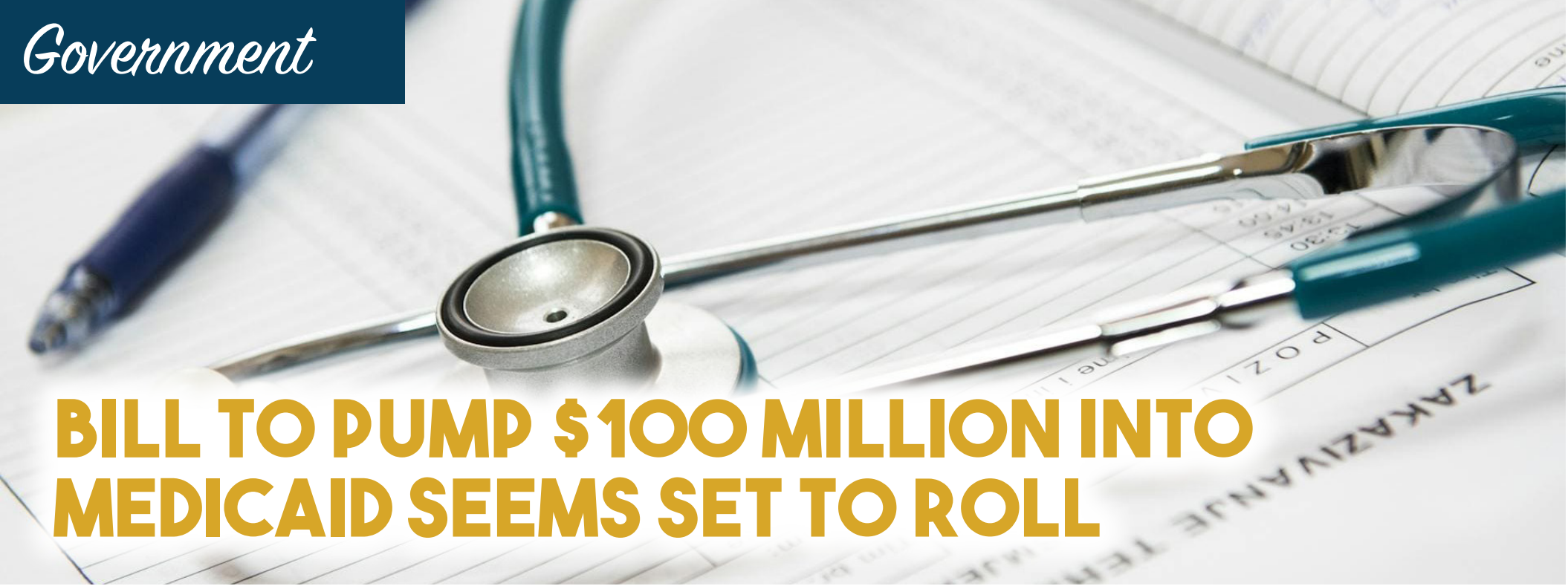
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photo link: Town of Middletown, Delaware



*Government*

**TOWN SQUARE LIVE**



# BILL TO PUMP \$100 MILLION INTO MEDICAID SEEMS SET TO ROLL

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware hospitals have agreed to fork over a 3.58% tax on patient revenues so the state can qualify for another \$100 million more in federal Medicaid funding. The deal they agreed to will help expand Medicaid programs at a time when state officials have sounded alarms about the \$2 billion—and rising—cost of healthcare to the state. It's one-third of the Delaware's annual budget.

Right now, \$1 billion of that is Medicaid money, which largely aids poorer families with acute and long-term care, but also the elderly, disabled and some people with severe health problems or medical needs, regardless of their income. The arrangement will see the state send some of the new federal money back to the hospitals in direct lump-sum payments, according to the agreement cut with Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington, head of the Senate Health Committee, and Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, head of the House Health Committee.

**Senate Bill 13**, dubbed the Protect Medicaid Act of 2024, would mark the largest ongoing infusion of funding in Delaware's Medicaid program since the Affordable Care Act, which went into effect in 2010, McBride has said. She detailed the provisions of the bill in Wednesday's meeting of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee. Committee and public comments were enthusiastic, with the exception of some questions from Republican members.

The bill seemed destined to be passed on to the Senate, but Senate committees do not vote in public. They wait until members have signed the back of the bill and then post on the state website what the votes were. As of 5:30 p.m., those votes had not been posted.

Delaware's Medicaid program now serves 1 in 3 people in Delaware, McBride said. It pays for the care by using \$2 from the state to match \$3 from the federal government.

But the state has not been taking advantage of a federal program used by 46 other states, which required an assessment on hospitals to access more federal money. McBride said in a recent press release that 49 states have at least one **healthcare facility assessment** in place, including Delaware's on nursing homes, while 34 states and Washington, DC, have three or more provider taxes.

## MEDICAID DEAL

The agreement essentially allows the state to borrow money from the hospitals to qualify for the additional federal money, McBride said. The hospitals' money will go into a new Medicaid special fund called the Hospital Quality and Health Equity Fund that the state will use to trigger the release of the federal matching funds.

The directed funds sent back to hospitals are designed to help the hospitals better serve Medicaid patients, which organizers hope will improve the health of Delawareans. SB13 will require that the new money "isn't just utilized to maintain the status quo of the Medicaid system, but rather is felt by patients here in Delaware," McBride said. It requires that any money not sent in directed payments be used to enhance current Medicaid programs and benefits or establish new benefits within Medicaid.

"So that could be increasing reimbursement rates. It could be expanding coverage to new populations. That could be expanding coverage for new forms of care that Medicaid doesn't currently cover," McBride said.

About 10% could be used for budget smoothing, a term lawmakers use for cash that helps out when times are lean or unusual demands are made on a program.

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# BILL WOULD OK USING TAXPAYER \$\$\$ TO HELP DELAWAREANS BUY EV CHARGERS

BY JAREK RUTZ

After pushback about how Delaware will pay for it, a bill creating a rebate program to help residents buy electric vehicle charging equipment was approved unanimously in a House committee Tuesday. The lower the buyer's income, the larger the rebate would be, according to **House Bill 13**, sponsored by Rep. Sophie Phillips, D-Christiana.

The bill did not have a financial note attached that spelled out how much the program could cost the state, a fact that Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, and Rep. Jeff Hilovsky, R-Millsboro jumped on. Fiscal notes indicate the state cost of implementing a specific law over one or more fiscal years. Andrew Slater, executive director of **Energize Delaware**, said a state program already has the funds to issue the rebates.

“It’s funded 100%” through **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative** funds, “so we already have the money for this, which is why you don’t see any fiscal note,” Phillips said. Buyers would have to apply for the rebate, which would be administered by the director of the **Sustainable Energy Utility** program. About 80% of charging for electric vehicles happens at home, according to the Department of Energy.

For a low-income applicant—up to 300% of the federal poverty level for household income—financial assistance would cover up to 90% of the purchase and installation costs. For all other applicants, the program could offer assistance to cover up to 50% of the costs.

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# REZONING PLAN WITHDRAWAL ISN'T END OF LAND USE DEBATE

BY KARL BAKER

New Castle County’s biggest political firestorm in recent years erupted last fall when hundreds of concerned residents packed into government offices and local fire halls to denounce proposals for mega warehouses near Middletown, a multi-story office building in Alapocas, and hydrogen fuel facilities between Delaware City and New Castle. In response, County Executive Matt Meyer, who is running to be Delaware’s next governor, pulled his support for a controversial land-use plan that sat at the center of the uproar—an ordinance to rezone 87 properties across northern Delaware with a single vote of the New Castle County Council.

Despite the plan originating within his administration’s own county planning department, Meyer in January called for the comprehensive rezoning ordinance to be withdrawn. A month later, the county council followed Meyer’s call.

Yet, despite the apparent victory for the activists, the battle over what should go where in Delaware—a question that will impact people’s lives for decades—is continuing. And, at the center of battle are further questions of whether a boom in warehouse construction in Delaware is in the best interest of residents.

### A SWITCH IN ZONING PROCESS

During the past month, opposition to new land-use proposals has already sprung up, with the New Castle County Council voting against an open-space zoning classification and showing continued suspicion toward the construction of new warehouses.

Those include a massive 2.4 million-square-foot warehouse complex proposed in 2021 for a plot of farmland next to the Bayberry community north of Middletown and a separate plan introduced Tuesday for a more modestly-sized warehouse near the Port of Wilmington.

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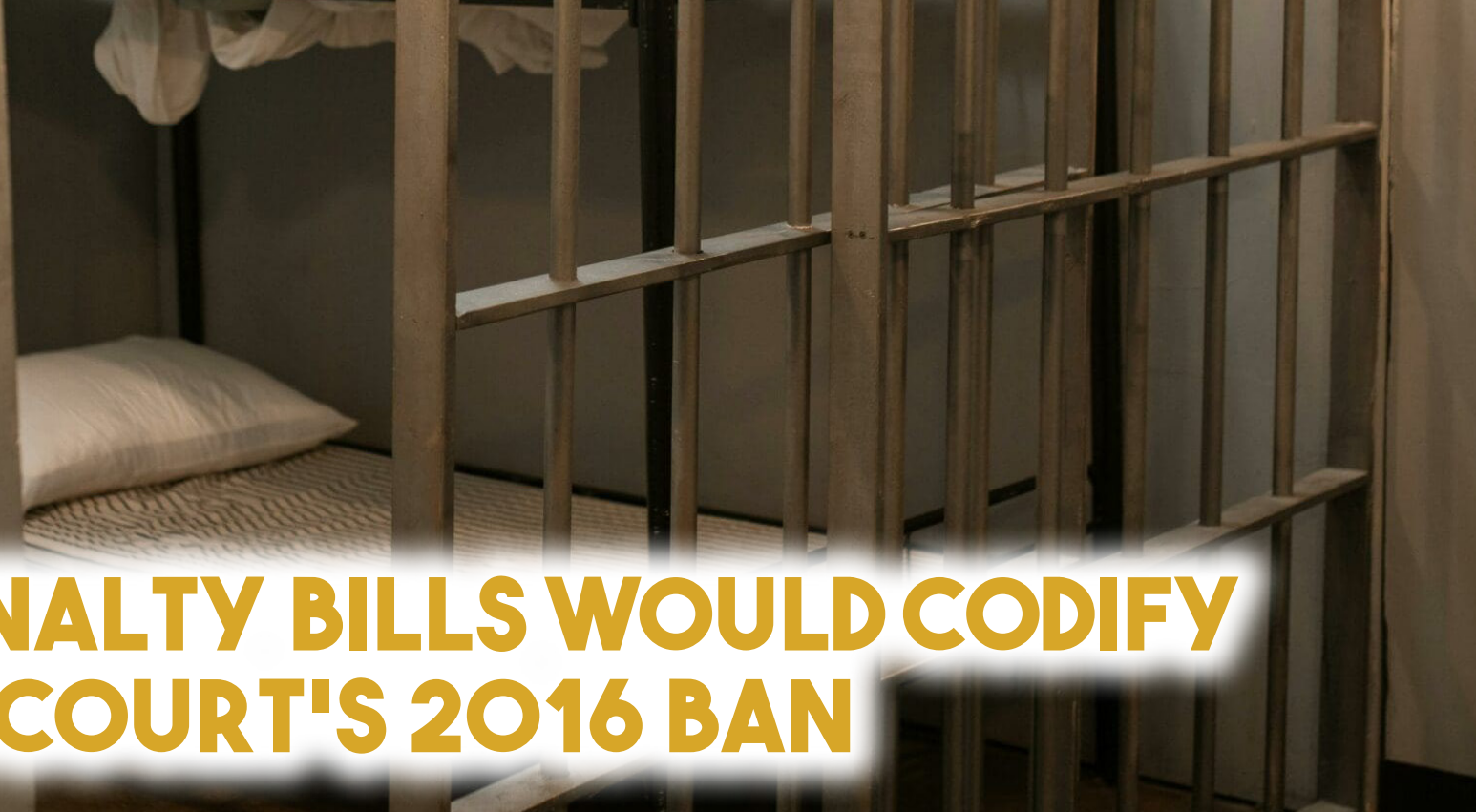
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# DEATH PENALTY BILLS WOULD CODIFY SUPREME COURT'S 2016 BAN

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Two bills moving through the General Assembly officially will ban the death penalty in Delaware. Both are sponsored by Sen. Sean Lynn, D-Dover.

The state Supreme Court in 2016 ruled that Delaware's death penalty was unconstitutional and effectively banned it, but state laws are still on the books. **House Bill 70** would eliminate the death penalty. Instead, it would establish a life sentence without probation, parole or other reductions for anyone 18 or older convicted of first-degree murder.

His **House Bill 301** would start the process to remove the death penalty from the state Constitution. That bill must be passed by 2/3 of the Senate and House twice — first in one session of the General Assembly and again in the next session of the assembly. The governor's approval is not necessary. The 52rd session is running now. The 53th starts in January.

"Before us is a bill that I think goes to the very essence of justice," Lynn (D-Dover) told the House Judiciary Committee Wednesday. It passed there with no opposition and goes to the full House for a vote.

House Bill 301, which would amend the constitution, passed in the House Administration Committee.

Former correction officer Robert O'Mast, a member of the execution team at Delaware Correctional Center in Wilmington, spoke against the bills at both committee meetings March 20. He pointed to James "Red Dog" Allen, a mob member known to have killed approximately 50 people, who was executed under O'Mast's tenure.

"He promised us correction officers he would kill one of us," O'Mast said. "And he was hoping it would be a female. All he saw was blood in his eyes. He had no interest in rehabilitating himself. That's why we need the death penalty."

## DEATH PENALTY COURT DECISION

The Supreme Court decision in 2016 came in *Rauf v. State*, when the court ruled the capital defendants' Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial had been violated. Then, a judge, rather than a jury, determined whether the prosecution proved all facts necessary to impose a death sentence.

Under the Sixth Amendment, it must be a jury that unanimously and beyond reasonable doubt decides the validity of facts, and whether those facts are aggravating (reasons of death) or mitigating (reasons for life) circumstances, the court said.

Delaware still has a death penalty statute, even though it can't be imposed. Lynn's bills would prevent a future General Assembly from reimposing it without jumping through major hurdles. He cited some facts about the death penalty he described as "sobering":

- For every eight people executed in the United States, one is exonerated;
- In 2022, the countries with the largest amount of executions were China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United States and Iran;
- Prior to 2016, Delaware had the third highest rate of executions in the nation.

One reason the death penalty is flawed, he said, is race. As of 2012 in Delaware, black defendants who kill white victims were six times more likely to receive the death penalty than black defendants who kill black victims.

"Moreover, black defendants who kill white victims are more than three times as likely to be sentenced to death than white defendants who killed white victims," Lynn said.

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# DELAWARE 8TH STATE TO LEGALIZE NATURAL ORGANIC REDUCTION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A law that would put Delaware in a class with seven other states offering a unique burial method passed the Senate March 21. **House Bill 162**, sponsored by Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, opens the doors for cemeteries to begin offering increasingly-popular natural organic reduction after death. Natural organic reduction is the gentle, respectful process that accelerates the decomposition of human remains to soil.

The process uses large vessels to hold human remains together with straw, wood chips, or other natural materials for about 30 days. Human remains and organic materials, mixed together with warm air, are periodically turned and the process eventually results in reduction of the human remains to a soil material that can then be provided to the deceased individual’s family.

Natural organic reduction is considered a more eco-friendly cremation alternative, forgoing the usage of formaldehyde and the release of carbon dioxide and mercury into the atmosphere. The process also uses 1/8 the energy of cremation. In the seven other states where natural organic reduction is legal, studies have shown the soil turns out to be of high quality and is regenerative.

Those who have titanium hip or knee replacements, or something of the sort, would have those removed before the process.

“Imagine living an environmentally conscious and conscientious life, avoiding single-use plastic bottles, recycling what plastics and other materials you do utilize, composting table scraps and your fallen leaves, letting your lawn grow into a meadow, hanging your

clothes to dry instead of using the machine, driving an electric vehicle a longer distances and riding a bike shorter distances,” said Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin. “You tried to do everything in life to reduce your carbon footprint. But then when you pass away, you have only two environmentally unfriendly options: burial and cremation.”

The vote was 14 “yes” and seven “no.” The lone Republican that voted for the bill was Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover.

“I think I have a little bit more respect for the human body than to turn it into soil,” said Sen. Bryant Richardson, R-Seaford. “As far as turning my body into dirt, I just can’t, I can’t see this as something that I can support. I know that it can be an option for other people, but I just can’t support it.”

Sen. Stephanie Hansen, D-Middletown, took offense to that. “It’s interesting to me how we have such a bias against soil and compost when that is the basis upon which our life depends on,” she said. “The quality of your soil grows the plants that we need, that the bugs need to eat in order to support the mammals that we eat, that the plants grow in and produce the oxygen that we need. The basis of all of that is soil—soil is foundational.”

In a light manner, Richardson said he wants to say for the record that he is not anti-soil, he is just anti-becoming-soil.

Sen. Dave Lawson, R- Marydel, said the bill doesn’t comport with his upbringing and his religion. He also said he doesn’t like the idea of his body being composted into a tomato.

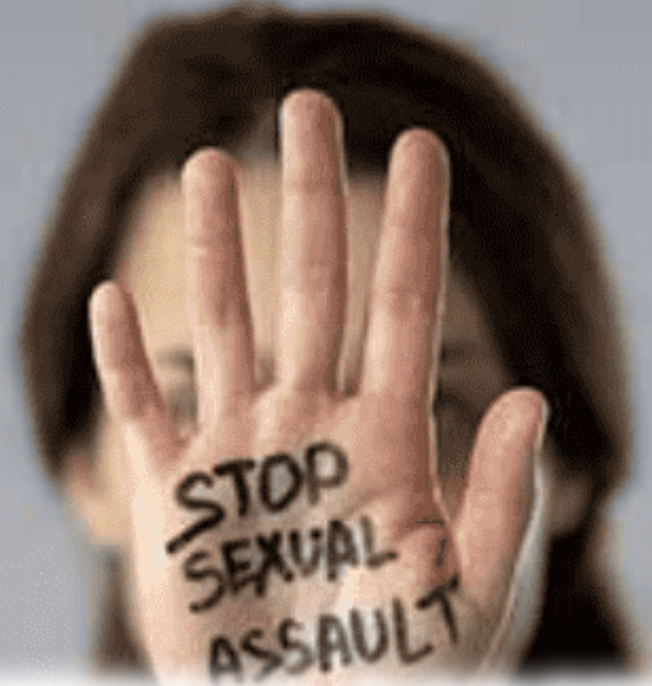
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photo credit: Cab Calloway School of the Arts



*Education*

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



# COLLEGE SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION TRAINING COULD BE REQUIRED

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill aimed at reducing the widespread problem of sexual assault on college campuses soared through the House Education Committee Wednesday. **House Bill 308**, sponsored by Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton and committee chair, mandates that employees of institutions of higher education and students receive training in sexual assault prevention. Although the current law makes training available, it has not been required. Refresher training would be required for employees at least every two years.

HB 308 also changes the reporting period in which academic institutions must report information on campus sexual assaults from the calendar year to the academic year. Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, didn't understand the change.

"When you do the training during academic years, you can actually see it," she said. "When it's done by calendar year it's split up so it's hard to see if they're actually 100% or only 50% and this will make that more clear."

Under the bill, the **Department of Justice** must post the annual reports from the previous five years on its website and to include the aggregate data from the previous five years in each report so that data trends are easily identified.

Becca Cotto, director of racial and social justice and advocacy at **YWCA Delaware**, a social change advocacy group, gave several statistics about the prevalence of sexual assaults and violence on college campuses:



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- College-aged women are four times as likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the general population.
- Among U.S. undergraduates, 23% of women and 5% of men experience rape or sexual assault, and the majority know their attacker.
- More than 90% of campus sexual assaults go unreported.

"Sexual violence is a serious public health problem that affects millions of people each year," Cotto said. "Prevention could help."

Leadership at **Delaware State University** was under heat in their Joint Finance Committee hearing in 2023.

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# MANY HAPPY WITH MANDATORY SCHOOL BOARD FINANCE TRAINING BILL

BY JAREK RUTZ

School board members, who are in large part responsible for the spending decisions of millions of dollars from school districts, could soon be required to undergo financial training. **House Bill 312**, sponsored by Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton and chair of the House Education Committee, which requires school board members to undergo training in financial responsibility.

Legislators in the Senate Education Committee meeting Wednesday liked the bill, and so did those affected. Don Patton, president of the **Christina School District** Board of Education and former member of the **Wilmington Learning Collaborative's** governing council, said he appreciates the intent of the bill and believes it is a good starting point.

Patton, and other board presidents, would be tasked with informing each new member of the board of the training obligation. A school board president must also

send a letter by Jan. 15 of every year to any school board member who has not fulfilled the training obligation by Jan. 1 following that member's election or appointment.

Patton has been a big proponent of training school board members, and he thinks the bill actually doesn't go far enough.

"My ask would be taking HB 312 wider and deeper," he said.

One of the most expensive financial costs to taxpayers is education, he said, and the state wants and needs its children to receive high quality instruction in a wholesome, safe and secure learning environment.

"We need to maintain great teachers and support staff," he said, "yet we elect well-intentioned individuals to lead school boards, with very little training or a comprehensive understanding of the responsibilities required."

During Wednesday's hearing, it was pointed out that all 23 charter schools in the state already require their board members to undergo financial responsibility training. Kendall Massett, executive director of the **Delaware Charter Schools Network**, said the organization supports the legislation.

"We know that the number one reason that schools fail is for lack of governance at the board level, and that can show in many ways, including financially," she said. She noted that the 271 charter board members are held accountable for completing this training.

Unrelated to the bill, she also said that all charter boards are required to have at least one current teacher at a charter, as well as at least one parent of a student attending a charter. There's been a lot of discussion in education circles, which is reflected in groups like the Wilmington Learning Collaborative and Redding Consortium, about making sure educators and parents have a seat at the decision-making table.

Patton said he would like mandatory training in selecting the right governance model that will ensure:

- Student outcomes are the major focus of all school districts.
- Policies that ensure districts are held accountable when students are not performing at an acceptable level no matter who the leaders are.
- Annual evaluations of all district employees including superintendents.

Patton pushed Christina's board in 2022 to adopt a new model to evaluate Superintendent Dan Shelton.

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# FREIRE CELEBRATES NEW ATHLETIC FACILITY, HOME-COURT ADVANTAGE

BY JAREK RUTZ

It felt like a carnival on 14th Street as Wilmington’s **Freire Charter School** unveiled its \$5.3 million athletic center to the public Wednesday night. Students lined up at the popcorn and cotton candy stands as the school’s band, cheerleaders, basketball team and dancers thundered through the gym to applause from families, education leaders and government officials. Andrea Robinson, a senior and co-president of student government, said the new space will benefit the mental and physical health of students and allow families to join together to show school spirit.

The current building was purchased by the school in July 2022, and just a few months after, Freire launched its capital campaign to raise funds for the gym. The Longwood Foundation gave a notable \$1.375 million grant, and other contributors include the Sonecha Family Foundation, Welfare Foundation, WSFS CARES Foundation, The Laffey-McHugh Foundation, Crestlea

Foundation and many others.

The Freire project is one of several in the state in recent memory: Ursuline Academy was given \$5 million for its gym upgrades, Newark Charter built a stadium as part of its capping off of a 21-year expansion, the Salesianum School received \$10 million for a sports complex and more.

Construction began on March 30, 2023, and most of the progress was made that summer. The athletic center was fully completed in January. The first event was a boys basketball game on Jan. 23, which Freire won.

The man of the hour seemed to be David Singleton, secretary of the school board. Head of School Madeline Weckel choked up when thanking Singleton for his commitment to the school’s children.

Singleton pushed for and led the project, all while staying under budget.

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# GREAT OAKS ON TRACK TO MEET ALL 16 CONDITIONS TO STAY OPEN

BY JAREK RUTZ

The State Board of Education March 21 announced promising progress on conditions placed on a charter school that has been facing a potential closure for two years. In November, **Great Oaks Charter School** was given one last chance by the state to meet the 16 conditions to keep its doors open.

“There’s quite a long history of Great Oaks, but just to kind of wrap it up in a nutshell, there’s been a long history of struggles with enrollment,” said Leroy Travers, director of the Charter School Office at the Department of Education.

Their enrollment has ticked up this year over last year and their number of applications for 24-25 has gone up this year, he told the state board.

“They’re doing a number of things for community outreach, but a part of it is just time between their former reputation and now,” he said, “but a lot of community outreach, trying to change the culture within the building, with of course support from the department.”

The charter has a student body with 36% of students receiving special education services, 15% of students have previously been incarcerated, 10% of students are current/expecting parents or have experienced late term pregnancy loss and 5% of students are in foster care and/or homeless. School leadership has said it’s important to stay open for students who are underserved and underprivileged.

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# DON PATTON STEPS AWAY FROM WLC, GROUP SEEKS ANOTHER EXTENSION

BY JAREK RUTZ



One of the champions of improving education in Delaware is resigning from the Wilmington Learning

Collaborative's governing council. Don Patton, who started both positions in 2022, says he needs to focus on his elected position as president of the Christina School District Board.

Also March 19, Laura Burgos, executive director of the collaborative, had some pointed words about the state of education in Delaware's largest city and the need for WLC's work.

"Not many people have been unwilling to go on record to say it," Burgos said. "I would like to publicly go on record as saying that we are in a state of emergency when it comes to Wilmington education." Too many children are being taught by uncertified and unprepared adults, vacancies persist and there's evidence of a lack of urgency in reversing this trend, Burgos said.

Safety issues persist and Burgos said she's heard of cases where multi-language learners are grouped with special education students, as well as students with Individualized Education Programs and 504 Plans have unmet needs and sometimes being reclassified, all due to staffing shortages.

## PATTON RESIGNATION

Patton announced his resignation this week via a letter to the other members of the collaborative's council. He said being the president of Christina's board, as well as other responsibilities, limits his time. One of his focuses is improving the quality and abilities of school board members across the state.

Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, now has a bill going through the General Assembly that would require training on financial responsibility for new school board members.

Patton's resignation comes the same night collaborative leaders reiterated that the council is seeking another extension on its WLC goals, which requires an amendment to the signed memorandum of understanding. Patton said extensions and delays were not the reason he is resigning.

"It is because my plate is heavy with CSD and all the challenges we must fix if we are going to improve student outcomes, increase parent involvement, and let principals, staff members and families make decisions for their students," he said.

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# BILL MAKING JAVELIN DIAA EVENT MOVES ON; SOME COACHES OBJECT

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would permit scholastic track and field competitions to include the javelin event passed the Senate Tuesday, although some coaches are not happy with the idea. **Senate Bill 211**, sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, forces the **Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association** (DIAA) adopt javelin as an approved event for all DIAA-sponsored track and field competitions. The bill passed along party lines, with all six “no” votes coming from Republicans.

High school track and field coaches from around the state said this week that the event can’t just be added

without considering the impacts to schools and their coaching staffs, not to mention the additional time now needed to train 19 different events.

Brittany Keller, a track coach of 15 years, the past 10 at **Ursuline Academy**, told Delaware LIVE she appreciates that javelin could provide another opportunity for athletes, but there is a lot to be done and considered before adding this as an event for high school students.

“Many of the logistics stem from financial and safety concerns,” she said, which was pointed out by the legislators against the bill, notably Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover.

Most schools in Delaware struggle to have enough space to safely throw discus, Keller said, and therefore cannot offer the event when they host meets.

“Javelin would require even more space and the installation of a runway surface, as athletes should not be throwing from a grass surface due to safety concerns,” she said. “They would need a large enough field, and again, many schools simply do not have the space.” The cost of a runway would be several thousand dollars, she said, plus the cost of javelins are several hundred dollars each and need to be replaced often as they get damaged from throws.

Brown cited a *Wall Street Journal* article in July 2022 that said at least 22 states within the country have adopted the javelin as a throwing event within their high school track and field programs.

The bill also explains that the tips could be rubber in order to ensure safety, but opposing legislators don’t think simply making the tip a different material wouldn’t prevent all potential injuries.

Matt Lindell, a coach of several sports including track and field at Cape Henlopen High School, told Delaware LIVE he has similar concerns to Keller.

“While I am not opposed to javelin as an event...the legislature is trying to bypass the traditional process that would review such concerns in making a final decision on adding an event,” he said. “In addition to those concerns, this is the first time that I can remember legislators attempting to mandate an event in our sport.”

Per the bill, schools do not have to participate in a javelin event, but obviously they would lose points in a competition if they have no athletes for javelin, which is an Olympic sport.

“This seems like a bit of legislative overreach to me,” Lindell said. “This was not done when we added pole vault as a girls’ event in the late 1990s.”

If there is a true demand for the event, as there was with girls pole vault in the late 1990s, he said, the process should start at the school/coach/athlete level. That would be followed by a review that goes through the normal process with the DIAA Track & Field committee making a recommendation followed by approval of the DIAA board.

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# INSIDE THE CIRCLE: WEEK 1 SOFTBALL TOP 10

BY GLENN FRAZER



Spring sports are among us. Softball is in the air. Lots of good early season matchups that are worth getting out to watch. Check out our top 10 rankings for week 1.

**#1 Caravel (0-0)** The defending state champs open the season Thursday against DMA. Coach Randy Johnson has a powerful offensive team with Haley Grygo, Zayda Rocke, Paige Richardson and Kendall Browne leading the way. In the circle is returning pitcher Kasey Xenidis.

**#2 Sussex Central (1-0)** The Golden Knights have four-year starter Madge Layfield pitching and one of the best position players in the state in Takyla Davis. John Wells' team blanked Smyrna 11-0 in its season opener.

**#3 St. Marks (3-0)** The Spartans are off to a great start with wins over Middletown, Conrad and Concord. Liv Datilio will probably handle most of the pitching duties, but coach Jon Thomas has at least three others he can call on to take some innings. The offense is led by Chloe Bedwell, Kate Lovett and Kimorah Neal.

**#4 Appo (2-0)** Coach Brian Timpson always fields a competitive team in west Middletown. He will rely heavily on returning pitcher Ayla McCathern, and the bats of Brianna Russo, Lauren Foltz and Mia Boyd. An early season 6-5 win in eight innings against Laurel featured the Jags trailing by five runs after the fourth and rallying for the victory.

**#5 Laurel (1-1)** Kylee Hill is one of the top pitchers in the state with a "nasty" changeup in her arsenal. Her battery-mate Bailey Ullman and sister Ashlyn lead the offense.

**#6 Polytech (2-0)** The Panthers are loaded up and down the lineup plus they have a solid pitcher in Mara Everton. Rachel Carey has belted three homers in the first two games, while Gabrielle Bogdon, Mackenzie Mitchell and Brianna Benton add to coach Kyle Taylor's juggernaut.

**#7 Lake Forest (2-0)** The Spartans have a good mix of power and speed plus pitcher Carah Sumpter. Chloe Revelle, Katelyn Bell and Kaitlyn Pierce triggered the scoring while Sumpter provided an early season highlight performance against Delmar by recording 17 strikeouts and hitting a grand slam.

**#8 Cape Henlopen (1-0)** Coach Mike Tkach returns the entire starting lineup from last season. Abby Marsh is solid in the circle. Hayden Hudson, Alivia Heers and Ava Calciano (UConn commit) anchor a solid offense.

**#9 Smyrna (1-1)** New head coach Nina Marcano (former coach at Middletown) takes over for Nicki Shirey who will now serve as a volunteer coach. Linda Roscoe will split time in the circle with Alexis Dennis. Roscoe is also one of the top batters on the team.

**#10 DMA (0-0)** Veteran coach Roman Allin once again will have the Seahawks in the mix. Emily Trzonkowski handles the pitching duties. The 'hawks were scheduled to open the season against St. Elizabeth on Wednesday, March 26.





# ON THE PITCH: WEEK 1 GIRLS' SOCCER RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

The weather turned colder this week as the season kicked off, but we started the season with a bang, as we had 12 matches involving both teams being ranked in the Delaware Live top 10. Appoquinimink beat two ranked teams by the combined score of 12-0 (Padua 6-0, St. Georges Tech). Sophomore Mariana Catania had five goals and two assists, to lead the Jaguar attack and the team defense only allowed four shots total, including zero in the win over St. Georges Tech.

The top teams play some big matches this week before most of the teams will be taking seven to 10 days off for spring breaks. There are a bunch of top matches and some big conference games as the week goes on. Here are week one Delaware Live rankings after the first week of competition.

## DIVISION 1

**No. 1 Middletown** (1-0)(LW No, 1) The defending champs opened the season with a big conference win over William Penn. They host two ranked teams this week No. 6 Odessa on Wednesday and No. 3 Smyrna on Thursday.

**No. 2 Appoquinimink** (2-0)(LW No. 2) The Jags beat two ranked teams by the same 6-0 score (Padua and St. Georges Tech) They hosted No. 2 Saint Mark's on Tuesday and Mount Pleasant on Wednesday.

**No. 3 Smyrna** (0-1)(LW No. 3) The Eagles lost a tough

5-3 decision to Sussex Academy last week. They hosted No. 9 Cape Henlopen on Tuesday and travel to No. 1 Middletown on Thursday

**No. 4 Wilmington Charter** (2-1)(LW No. 6) The Force bounced back after a tough 4-1 loss to No. 4 Archmere with wins over CR and No. 8 Delcastle. They traveled to DMA on Wednesday.

**No. 5 Polytech** (1-0-1)(LW No. 5) The Panthers tied No. 6 Odessa 1-1 and beat No. 9 Delmar 2-1 last week. They hosted Dover on Tuesday and Red Lion on Wednesday.

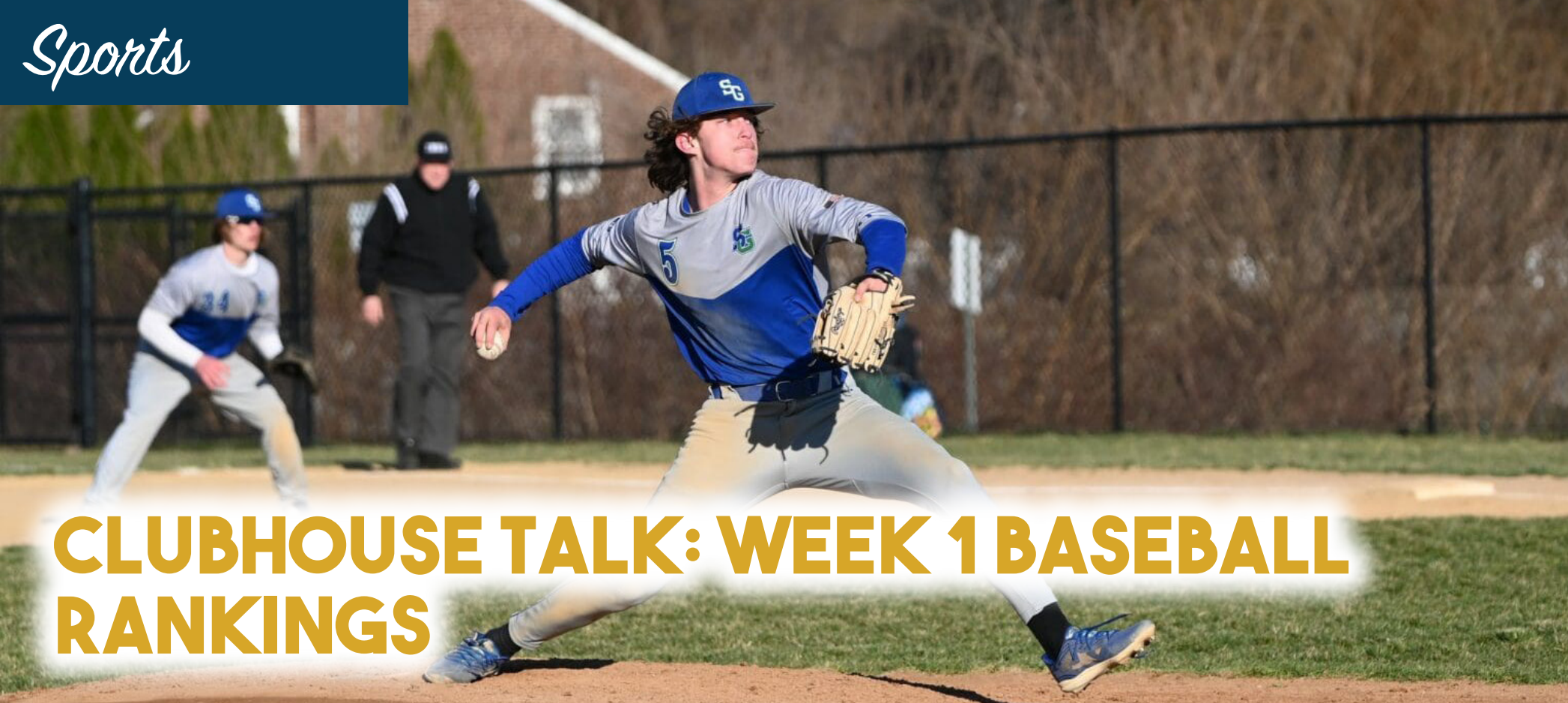
**No. 6 Odessa** (1-0-1)(LW No. 7) The Ducks tied No. 5 Polytech 1-1 and beat Newark in their first Blue Hen Flight A match. They traveled to Odyssey Charter on Monday and No. 1 Middletown on Wednesday.

**No. 7 Padua** (0-2)(LW No. 4) The Pandas lost twice to No. 2 teams (Appoquinimink 6-0 and Saint Mark's 2-1 OT) They traveled to Sanford on Wednesday.

**No. 8 Cape Henlopen** (1-1)(LW No. 8) The Vikings lost a tough one to No. 6 Sussex Academy and beat Woodbridge. They traveled to Sussex Tech on Monday and to No. 3 Smyrna on Tuesday night.

**No. 9 Delcastle** (1-1)(LW No. 9) The Cougars won over Mount Pleasant before losing to No. 6 Wilmington Charter. They traveled to McKean on Monday.

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# CLUBHOUSE TALK: WEEK 1 BASEBALL RANKINGS

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Even though spring sports started last week the spring weather hasn't. It was cold and windy with rain over the weekend that washed out all the games. We saw some top teams face off in No. 2 Conrad who fell to St. Georges, who was unranked in the preseason. However, they have a good team and I may have missed them when I did the rankings. They have a player of the year candidate in Nate Arterbridge (Missouri State) who went 2-for-3 with three RBIs and a home run in their win over Conrad.

No. 3 Cape Henlopen went 3-0 over the week with wins over Middletown, Milford and Kent Island (MD). Cape scored 40 runs in three games while only allowing nine. They are in midseason form already. No. 7 Sanford also went 3-0 in the first week of play. They defeated

Odessa, Red Lion and Mt. Pleasant. They too had the bats working scoring 34 runs over three games and only allowed 12.

Let's take a look at Week 1's top ten rankings after some real good season opening games.

**No. 1 Delaware Military Academy (DMA)** The defending state champs were idle last week. They will start the season on Wednesday, March 27, against St. Elizabeth. They turn right around the next day and play Conrad, a rematch from last year's state championship. Then they travel to play Caesar Rodney on Saturday at noon. We will see how DMA handles these three games to remain at No. 1.

**No. 2 Cape Henlopen** Cape Henlopen went 3-0 over the week with wins over Middletown, Milford and Kent

Island (MD). Cape scored 40 runs in three games while only allowing nine. They have two games this week when they hosted Caesar Rodney on Tuesday then go on the road to Delmar on Thursday. Both teams won their games last week, but they will be getting Cape coming off three big wins. Let's see how the week shakes up for them.

**No. 3 Caravel** The Buccaneers defeated Odessa by a 9-0 score last week. Their only scheduled game next week is a night game as they host No. 8 Salesianum. This game will be the season opener for the Sals. It's tough territory for the Sals going to Caravel to play at night. The game will be live on our YouTube channel.

**No. 4 Sussex Central** The Golden Knights defeated Smyrna last week 9-3. They have three games lined up this week starting on Tuesday as they traveled to Polytech. They then host St. Vincent Pallotti (MD) on Thursday and travel to Laurel on Friday with a noon start time. They aren't going to get much rest from their starters this week so we will see how they handle this tough schedule.

**No. 5 Sussex Tech** The Ravens defeated Polytech 12-2 last week. In that game the Ravens tallied nine hits. They traveled to Dover on Tuesday then host Lake Forest on Thursday both teams are 0-1 to start the season.

**No. 6 Sanford** The Warriors went 3-0 in the first week of play. They defeated Odessa, Red Lion and Mt. Pleasant. They too had the bats working scoring 34 runs over three games and only allowed 12. The Warriors are off this week and will resume play April 2, as they host St. Elizabeth.

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# ST. GEORGES OPENS SEASON WITH VICTORY OVER CONRAD

BY NICK HALLIDAY

On a cold blustery Wednesday afternoon, the St. Georges Hawks baseball team visited the Conrad Red Wolves to open the spring baseball season for both teams. The Hawks were able to defeat the Red Wolves to start the season off with a victory.

Both teams' bats started a little slow which is normal for the beginning of the season, but the pitching wasn't. Both teams went scoreless for three innings before the Red Wolves started the scoring. Kaden Netta helped himself. Netta, the Conrad starting pitcher, hit a double to score Andrew Stute as the Red Wolves took a 1-0 lead.

St. Georges answered right back in the top of the fifth inning when Nate Arterbridge took a fast ball deep to

left field for a solo home run to tie the game up at one.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, the Red Wolves regained the lead when Justin O'Connor ripped a double to left field that scored Matt O'Connor, who hit a double of his own, from second base. The Red Wolves went up 2-1.

In the top of the sixth inning, the Hawks broke the game open. After a single and two walks, Arterbridge walked to the plate with the bases loaded. He fouled off a couple of pitches but connected on a ground ball to right field that scored two more runs for a 4-2 lead.

After holding the Red Wolves scoreless in the bottom half of the inning, the Hawks tacked on two more runs

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for a 6-2 lead. Conrad did tack on a run in the bottom of the seventh, but were unable to climb back from the four-run deficit.

Joey Russo pitched four solid innings for the Hawks in the start. Logan Burns however, picked up the win. Burns also added three hits and an RBI, while Arterbridge went 2-for-3 with three RBI and a home run. Brayden Fields contributed two hits and a run scored for the Hawks.

Matt O'Connor had a hit and two runs scored for Conrad. Netta took the loss but pitched five strong innings.

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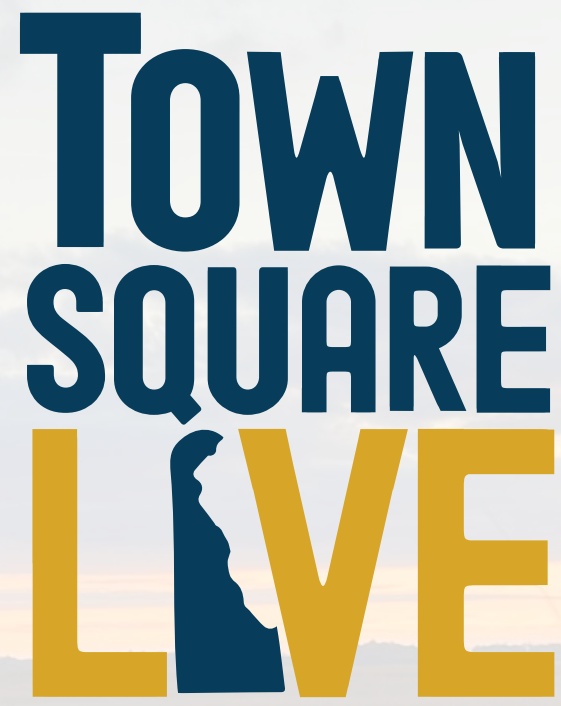
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