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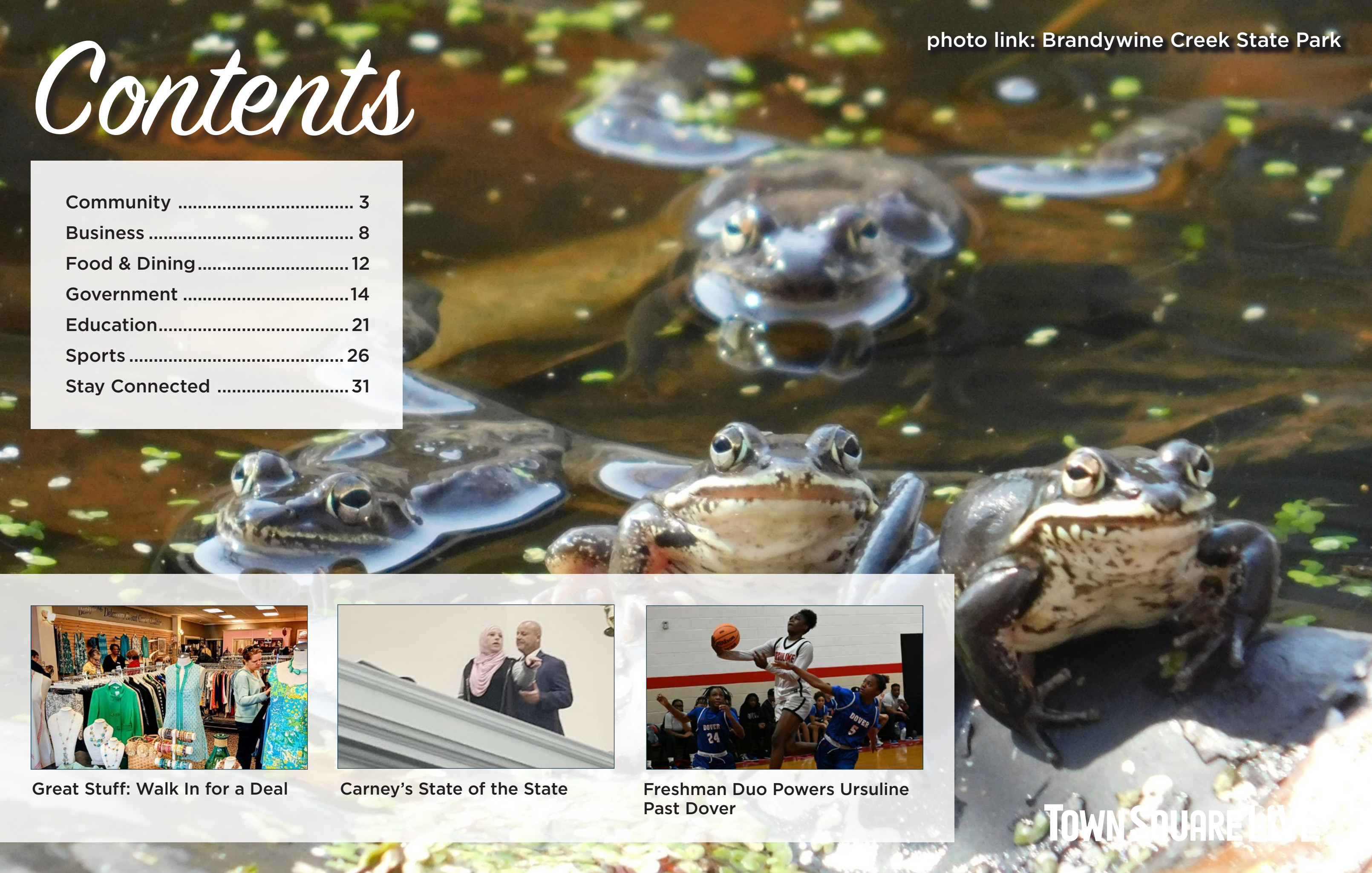
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Great Stuff: Walk In for a Deal



Carney's State of the State



Freshman Duo Powers Ursuline Past Dover

photo link: Delaware Greenways

Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





EXCLUSIVE: RECORD \$18M FOR DELAWARE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

A Centreville estate with a 10-bedroom house, five rental properties and two barns on 152 acres has just been sold for \$18 million. That’s a record for Delaware, according to Steve Crifasi, the listing agent with Christopher S. Patterson, both of Patterson-Schwartz Real Estate. “It’s drop-dead beautiful,” he told *DelawareLive*.

“What makes the property so unique is that it is very private and you can’t see it from the road,” he told [Realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com) when it listed last year. “It’s very relaxing and peaceful when you are there.”

The property, called Shadowbrook, is on Snuff Mill Road. It was sold by the six children of Edna Bennett Pierce, who died in 2022, and C. Eugene Bennett. It attracted “numerous” developers, Crifasi said, because development on it is unrestricted. It also drew interest from three families who made offers “at or near” the

listing price and “the family wanted to deal with families first,” he said.

The deal had been in the works for a little while before it was closed. The buyer: one of the siblings, whom Crifasi declined to name.

She plans to move back into the house, upgrade it and put it into a conservation easement. “She wants to maintain it the way it is and she has a lot of ideas,” he said.

The full-page ad in *Delaware Today* describes Shadowbrook as a “circa 1939 Georgian stone home with exquisite museum-quality millwork and moldings, including a replica of the Montmorenci staircase seen at the nearby Winterthur Museum.

“The approximately 12,000-square-foot of living space offers 10 bedrooms, 10 bathrooms, 11 fireplaces and breathtaking views at every turn. With fields and

valleys that bridge the Delaware-Pennsylvania line, this property includes a six+-acre stream-fed pond, five rental properties and two barns with 20+ horse stalls.”

A HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

Hal Haskell Sr., then assistant director of the DuPont Co., bought the land as a wedding gift for his daughter. Haskell’s son, Hal Jr., was a Congressman and Wilmington mayor. The Bennetts bought the house in 1978 from Gerret Copeland, a member of the du Pont family known for his philanthropy, particularly in the arts.

C. Eugene Bennett was a co-founder of F & M Scientific Corp. After his death, Edna Bennett Pierce married Augustus “Bud” Duer Pierce Jr., co-founder of Financial House in Centreville. Her [obituary](#) offered this insight on her joy in nature: “Edna loved nature and the beauty of the landscape around her — and cultivated that love within us. Throughout much of her life she enjoyed and involved us in gardening, growing a wide variety of vegetables, and creating magnificent flower beds surrounding our home. She supported us in nurturing our ever-changing menagerie of pets and wildlife. She encouraged us to enjoy the great outdoors and led by example: swimming (many summers, a mile a day) and hiking through the fields, woods and creek. She reveled in spotting great blue herons and egrets on the pond — and recently, most majestic of all, the nesting bald eagles in one of the tulip poplars.”

The previous record for a residential property in Delaware was a \$12 million waterfront home in Rehoboth Beach, according to [Realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com). The three-floor home, built in 1930 on two lots, has seven bedrooms, an elevator and a pool.





GREAT STUFF: WALK IN FOR A DEAL, WALK OUT WITH NEW FRIENDS

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

The positive vibe inside Great Stuff Savvy Resale & Home store is palpable the moment you walk into this upscale thrift store. In addition to its attractively displayed designer clothing, accessories and house accents, there's almost always a happy buzz of volunteers, staff and shoppers.

Great Stuff's impact is much wider. Its profits — \$170,000 last year — have been a major source of funds for the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition programs since the store opened in 2010. This year 1,140 Delaware women are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60 are expected to die because of it.

"We needed a way to raise money year-round," said Katelyn Bender, the coalition's communications direc-

tor. "October is a very popular month to support DBCC but then partnerships tend to slow down."

For many of the volunteers and shoppers, the store is more than a conduit to a stylish bargain. "The 'great stuff' isn't just the clothing and accessories. It's the people," said breast cancer survivor Jeannine Herrmann of North Wilmington. Herrmann started working at Great Stuff in 2018 after the death of her mom, whom for years she'd been bringing to the store to shop.

"She would have a seat by one of the dressing rooms and the volunteers would fawn all over her and make her feel so special," Herrmann said.

While the shop has two paid managers, the rest of its staff are volunteers, many of whom either had breast or

another type of cancer, or were close to someone who did. Many become volunteers after first becoming friendly with the staff, like Herrmann.

"I already felt like I was part of the family before volunteering," said Herrmann, who was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 33. She's now in her 70s.

On Friday, at least a dozen people — volunteers, staff and shoppers — happily milled about. Galina Chadwick of Wilmington was hunting for vintage treasures, as she regularly does, particularly purses and jewelry.

"Great Stuff has really couture stuff you can't get anywhere else, unless you're in Paris, Rome or New York," Chadwick said.

She often donates items to Great Stuff while purchasing new stuff from the thrift store. Her favorite find so far has been a classic two-piece Chanel suit. Chadwick said Great Stuff Savvy fills needs other than fulfilling the thrill of thrifting.

"It's environmentally friendly — extending the life of something instead of going out and buying something new," she said.

Manager Trish Cullen and Assistant Manager Lorena Hendrickson are the only two paid staff members and both say they love coming to work every day. About 50 volunteers rotate shifts, some working in the retail storefront and others handling the intake of donated items in the back. The managers and volunteers often come to know the shoppers, many of whom stop in at least once a week or more often when they have the chance.

Herrmann began volunteering after being diagnosed with breast cancer as a single mom with two young boys.

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HERE'S HOW DELAWARE SLICES ITS SCHOOL FUNDING PIE

BY JAREK RUTZ

One might find it hard to believe that laundry, driver's ed and athletic travel and equipment are considered "instructional costs" in Delaware public schools, but they are. Instruction is one of nine categories of funding for the First State's public schools. It makes up 55.28% of the spending for the 23-24 school year, totaling \$1,584,970,346, according to the [Delaware State Report Card](#).

Some items included in instruction funding are to be expected: pay of teachers, substitutes, paraeducators; computers and technology; books and publications; multimedia equipment; and reading and math specialists.

"The pie chart on the state website shows sums, not averages, and all fund types (local, state, and federal) are included," said Alison May, public information officer at the [Department of Education](#). "It includes all

local educational agencies (19 districts and all charters) where expenses were made in the respective categories."

The definitions for each category of funding is pretty general. Instruction, for example, is defined as anything that "includes the activities dealing directly with the interaction between teachers and students."

Britney Mumford, executive director of [Delaware-CAN](#), said her biggest takeaway from the funding splits is that it's not granular enough.

Teacher salaries are assumed to be under instruction, "which is technically true, but also somewhat misleading," Mumford said. "We want to know exactly how much money is being spent on salaries and exactly how much is going directly to student resources in the classroom, and this pie chart does not provide that information."

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NONPROFITS SEEK BOOST DURING DO MORE 24, STARTING MARCH 7

BY BETSY PRICE

A busload of Dover students last year were treated to a tour of public art as experts talked about the thought processes behind choosing designs to fit those memorials and displays. A Wilmington mom helps 2,000 low-income and homeless children receive name-brand athletic shoes each year so they could better participate in school activities. And the Food Bank of Delaware staff and volunteers next week will assemble hundreds of weekend meal kits to combat children’s food insecurity in Kent and Sussex County.

All three of the nonprofits behind those feats will participate in the 24-hour fundraiser, **Do More 24 Delaware**, starting Thursday, March 7. A joint venture by **United Way of Delaware** and **Spur Impact**, the event invites the public to donate a bit more to their favorite Delaware nonprofits — or maybe to find a new cause that interests them among the **500-plus** participating in

this year’s event. It runs from 6 p.m. March 7 to 6 p.m. March 8.

Charles Vincent, executive director of Spur Impact, said his organization’s interest in working with the United Way for Do More 24 morphed out of smaller, focused events it was doing with nonprofits.

“The idea of putting it all into a single day of giving, sort of like a supercharged Delaware Giving Tuesday, is really to emphasize the depth of nonprofit work here in the state,” said Vincent. “It’s trying to raise awareness for all the work that nonprofits are doing as a whole.”

DO MORE 24’S GENESIS

After the two groups started looking for the right date to hold Do More, they settled on March, he said. It’s far enough from Giving Tuesday after Thanksgiving and from the push nonprofits make for year-end support to make it meaningful for both donors and charities, he

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said. Delaware has 1,300 active nonprofits, which sounds like a lot for a state of 1 million people. Most other states have a lot more charities per capita, Vincent said.

Nonprofits also are the second largest employment sector in Delaware, behind the state, with an economic impact of \$7 billion, he said. Many people don’t realize the breadth of nonprofits, Vincent said. They typically think of them as a 501(c)(3) with a narrow focus, but don’t realize that big organizations such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs also are nonprofits.

The public also doesn’t realize how much nonprofits do through contracts with the state to provide services such as child care and afterschool programs so people can work, or care for older people or the homebound so they can remain in their homes, he said.

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Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



BILL CAPPING CAR DEALERSHIP PROCESSING FEES HEAD TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Whether it be buying tickets to a favorite artist or sports team, paying a parking ticket, or even gifting a car to a family member, the public is hit with pesky processing fees that inflate their purchase costs. Delaware has no cap on motor vehicle dealer processing fees, which permits dealers to arbitrarily charge whatever amounts they wish, leading to great discrepancy of these fees among dealers and a lack of protection for consumers.

House Bill 295, sponsored by Rep. Paul Baumbach, D-Newark, would place a cap of \$475 on the dealer processing fee, which is similar to neighboring states Pennsylvania (\$449) and Maryland (\$500).

In Tuesday’s House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee meeting, Baumbach said the idea for the bill arose when Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, purchased a car recently and was hit with a \$600 processing fee. He said the average processing fee in Delaware is \$475, which matches the cap included in the bill. Committee Chair Rep. Franklin Cooke, D-New Castle, wanted to make sure the Division of Motor Vehicles approved the bill, which Baumbach confirmed.

HB 295 also defines “dealer processing fee” as an amount charged by a dealer for any of the following:

- The preparation of written documentation concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.
- Obtaining the title and license plates for the vehicle.
- Obtaining a release of lien.
- Filing title documents with the Department of Transportation.
- Retaining documents concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.
- Complying with federal or state privacy laws.
- Other administrative services concerning the buying, selling or exchange of the vehicle.

There is no fiscal impact on the state if the bill becomes law. HB 295 was voted for unanimously and will now head to the House floor for consideration.

Also discussed in Tuesday’s hearing was **House Bill 19**, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, which would create a background special license plate for the United Way of Delaware Pride Council. A background special license plate supports a cause and is available for purchase by the public. The numbers, letters or both, assigned must be the same as the license plate assigned to the owner’s vehicle at the time of the application for the plate. The plates would cost a one-time fee of \$50, and \$35 of that would go to the Pride Council.

HB 19 also heads to the House floor to be voted on by the entire chamber.





AMTRAK TO INVEST MILLIONS IN CONTROVERSIAL WILMINGTON SITE

BY KARL BAKER

In 2022, a government watchdog said a Wilmington office building Amtrak bought for a lofty \$41 million was structurally unfit for its intended use and that the rail company’s goal of saving money by moving hundreds of workers to the site rested on unrealistic assumptions. In spite of the critique from the Amtrak Office of Inspector General, rail company executives persisted with plans to remake the eight-story Renaissance Centre into a central hub for at least a portion of its dispatch, police and other staff.

Today, Amtrak is on the verge of awarding a contract to retrofit the building for a previously estimated cost to taxpayers of \$37 million.

WHY SHOULD DELAWARE CARE?

Amtrak is a major employer in the Wilmington area, but its own inspector general also criticized its purchase of the Renaissance Centre, which Amtrak is now in-

vesting in further. As a federally chartered corporation, state and federal taxpayers fund the company while passengers support its operation with fares.

The renovation will involve construction of four “control centers, a data center and office space,” according to a document announcing the bid, which began last summer. When complete, Amtrak is expected to move 40 dispatchers from outside of Delaware into the Wilmington building, down from the 250 originally planned, according to the inspector general’s report. Amtrak could relocate as many as 35 information technology jobs to the renovated building, down from the initially estimated 400.

In all, it is the latest chapter of a yearslong murky story that has prompted Amtrak executives to fervently defend their real estate purchase to critics questioning their stewardship of public dollars.

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Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



SLIP INTO 1920S WITH CURED PLATE'S UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCE

BY PETER OSBORNE

Servers wearing 1920s attire. Light-up menus. Customer-designed charcuterie boards. **The Cured Plate**, which opened Feb. 13, is providing one of the most unique dining experiences in the area and it's proven popular with diners in the region.

The charcuterie-based restaurant, which sources locally, has not had an empty seat since the doors opened and customers are posting rave reviews on social media.

"For most people, this is an experience that you have never had in your life. It's NOT like a regular restaurant. It's very small, but very doable, very soft, low lighting! It's a cozy, 'chill' atmosphere," Cheryl Satterfield Nash posted after her first visit. "Everything is very unique. A terrific place for some good conversation. I expect this place to be a real hit in Milford. My guess is, they'll have

to find a bigger space, because this idea is so great for this town."

Nash was not alone in her praise.

"Love the vibe it gives off and the food was amazing," Joey Shipley commented. "Definitely can see the time and effort put in to present the food, very unique experience and will definitely be back! Fell in love with the place as soon as I walked in."

Upon entering the new restaurant, guests are greeted by staff wearing 1920s attire. The restaurant is small with several cocktail-style tables in the center that seat two, sofas on each wall with seating for between four and six, plus two U-shaped tables in the front for eight.

It's dark in the restaurant because the owners wanted to keep it in the style of a 1920s speakeasy and those

were "hidden" from the government during Prohibition. To help diners adjust to the darkness, each table or seating area has individual lights that can be adjusted for those who need more lighting. As a bonus, when the menus open, they light up, providing additional illumination.

The menu includes appetizers such as baked brie, mac and cheese skillet, stuffed dates and more. Entrees include two cheese boards which can be built for two (\$50), four or six people. The Cured Plate sources local meat and cheeses for the boards. There are also salmon or chicken skewers, Buffalo mac and cheese, chicken and waffles along with other options.

Each charcuterie board is custom made with guests choosing from cheeses, meats and jams. The boards are works of art with meats arranged in the shape of roses, grapes positioned perfectly and additional items like candied nuts sprinkled throughout.

Entrees are well proportioned as well. It can be pricey with charcuterie starting at \$45 for the board for two. However, the entrees are moderately priced, ranging from \$22 to \$28. There are even options for children and sides can be added to any entrée, including roasted broccolini or a baked potato bowl.

A small bar in the lounge seats eight. The bar is limited to specific liquors, like Uncle Nearest Whiskey, in keeping with the 1920s theme. They do offer a small selection of beer, including Dogfish and Michelob Ultra. The wine selection is also topnotch. However, when visiting, guests may want to consider some of the unique specialty cocktails designed after those popular in the 1920s.

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photo link: Town of Middletown, Delaware



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



TWO SENATORS BATTLE OVER DUELING SCHOOL SAFETY RESOLUTIONS

BY JAREK RUTZ

On the day Gov. John Carney preached the impact of working together in his State of the State address, the Senate watched a tense interaction divided by party lines that one legislator called “childish behavior.” The interaction between Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, and Sen. Bryan Townsend, D-Newark/Glasgow, and their similar education task force resolutions, were enough to cause comment from a veteran lawmaker during the session.

“We either correct our own misbehaviors and go forward and serve the public as we’ve sworn to do, or we continue this childish, ‘I can one-up-you’ behavior,” said Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel. “If we continue that,

we don’t serve our people. We only hurt them and that we all should be ashamed of.”

The fracas began after a quick, smooth unanimous Senate vote Tuesday on a bill relating to educators donating days off to one another with a resolution that would create a task force focused on school discipline.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 117, sponsored by Buckson, who was an educator and is a member of the Senate Education Committee, would establish the Classroom Behavior and School Discipline Task Force. The 25-person task force would be responsible for reporting findings and recommendations to improve student behavior in schools.

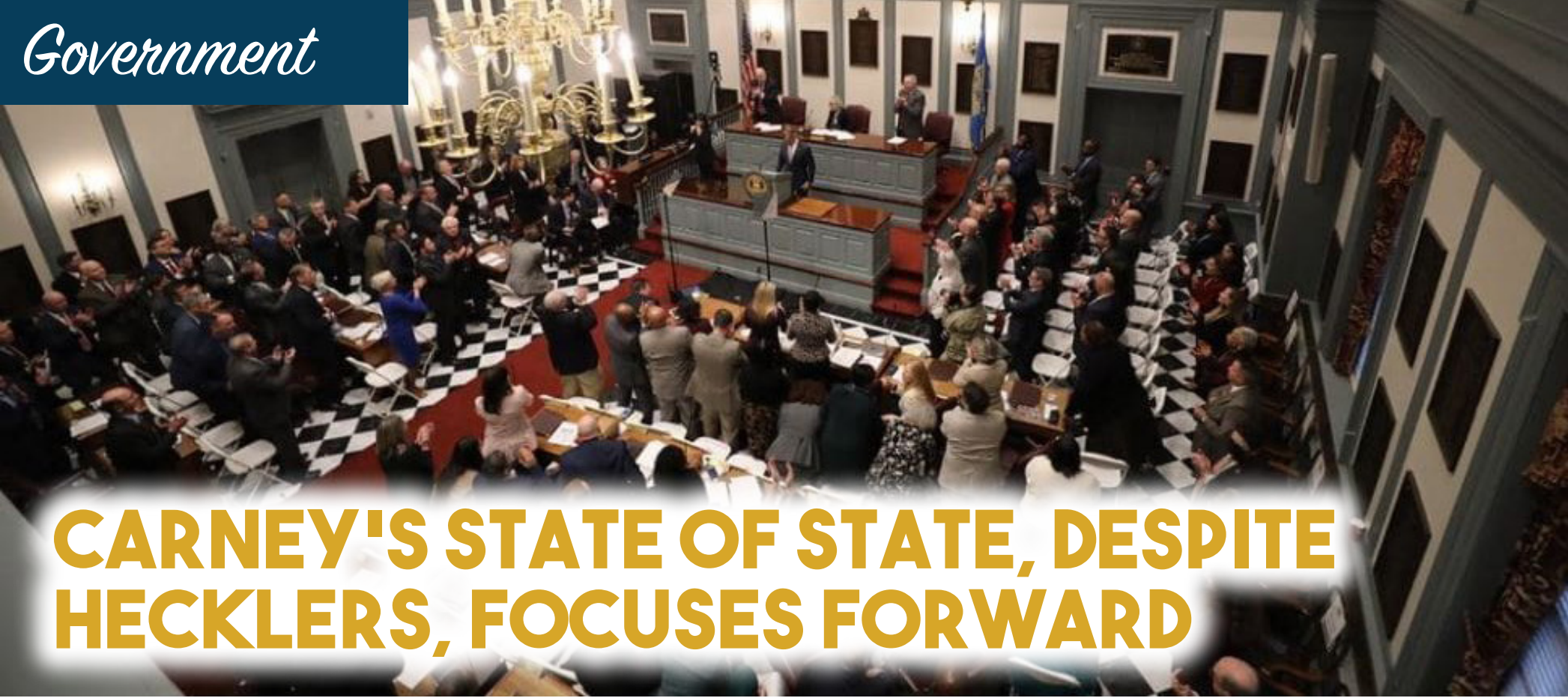
Fights, student bullying and disrespect to teachers are common tales in the legislature and at school board meetings. That has fueled concern about school safety, which has led to schools and districts hiring more constable and school resource officers while implementing safety features into buildings, including metal detectors. So, it seemed like the resolution would be a hit.

Enter Senate Majority Leader Townsend, who proceeded to introduce **Senate Concurrent Resolution 119**. It would establish pretty much the same group Buckson’s bill would, but would be called the Student Behavior and School Climate Task Force. Its goal would be to look at the causes and impact of student behavior issues on the student body.

Another difference is Townsend’s bill would study teacher dissatisfaction. It cited a 2022 American Psychological Association study showing about 50% of teachers are thinking about quitting their job because of a negative school climate.

The introduction of Townsend’s legislation triggered the argument. Buckson said that while drafting his legislation, he was provided bipartisan support as well as help from both chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees, both Democrats. But, there were some changes he was not willing to make.

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CARNEY'S STATE OF STATE, DESPITE HECKLERS, FOCUSES FORWARD

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney's last State of the State speech, meant to be a review of his administration's achievements and a push for the state to tackle thorny issues, was interrupted four times by hecklers who seemed to be referencing the Israeli invasion of Gaza.

The first heckler started shortly into the speech and was removed and a few minutes later another one started up before being removed. Toward the end of the speech, two others began. As Speaker of the House Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, repeatedly hammered her gavel against the desk and point out that the governor was in the house and the sound on the live stream was reduced so it was hard to hear what the hecklers said.

When he was able to speak unimpeded, Carney pleaded with the General Assembly to think ahead and pass

a bill that would block uncontrolled government spending.

"It's really pretty simple," he said. "Delaware can't compete in the future if we don't have our budget in order." A future governor or legislature could head down a path of uncontrolled spending, which would lead to higher taxes and painful cuts, he said.

He started office with a \$400 million deficit and is expected to leave office with \$400 million in reserves. "Let's not go backwards," Carney said. "Instead, let's build on the progress we've made. This year, I'm asking you to send me legislation that would make our spending benchmark permanent."

That benchmark is a formula that looks at proposed revenues and sets a limit to spending, with some money

left in surplus.

"This year, I'm asking you to send me legislation that would make our spending benchmark permanent," he said. "I won't be here next year. I know some of you are happy about that. But most of you will. Don't set yourselves up for failure."

Carney also warned that the state cannot afford to ignore the escalating cost of health care.

"This year, between Medicaid and our insurance plan for state employees and retirees, we're spending nearly \$2 billion on health care alone," he said. "Let me say that again: \$2 BILLION—with a B. That's roughly \$200 million more than our costs last year. The state's share of Medicaid alone costs \$1 billion."

Carney's speech originally was scheduled for January, but postponed after he fell ill. As usual, he was welcomed into Legislative Hall with a rousing round of applause.

STARTING STATE WITH FEMALE POWER

Carney started his speech by noting that for the first time, a female Speaker of the House is presiding over the State of the State address. [Rep. Valerie Longhurst](#), D-Bear, was elected speaker last June after Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, stepped down to spend more time with family. Also for the first time, the House leadership is all women: Majority Leader Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, Majority Whip Kerri Evelyn Harris, D-Dover/Magnolia, and Joint Finance Chief Kim Williams, D-D-Marshallton.

He also thanked his wife, Tracey, saying she "has transformed the role of the First Lady, we like to call her the First Spouse — and made sure every Delaware child has a First Chance to succeed."

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GOP SENATORS: HECKLERS, SMIRKING LEGISLATORS 'EMBARRASSMENT'

BY BETSY PRICE

Republican senators said Tuesday they were disappointed at the hecklers interrupting Gov. John Carney's last State of the State speech — and even more disappointed in the members of the legislature smirking during the heckling.

A video shows the first heckler, a woman in the gallery wearing a pink hijab, start shouting and asking for a moment of silence. As security approached her to remove her from the gallery, she continued shouting over her shoulder. "Because when we send our children away, it should be an honor defending our country, not to be complicit in genocide," she said. "Senators, speak up. That's all I came for. Senators, speak up." Her voice became hard to understand as she was moved along.

"Whether you agree or disagree with what the governor is saying, there's a certain respect that you should

have for the institution that's here for this building," said Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown. "And to have certain members of the General Assembly that were smirking in glee that those things were happening is extremely disappointing and it shows you just how far we've come as a state, as a society, when the chief executive of our state is interrupted five different times with things that aren't even state issues."

He and Senate Minority Leader Gerald Hocker, R-Ocean View, didn't say who the legislators were. Pettyjohn said the hecklers, all of whom were sitting upstairs, focused on "what is happening over in the Middle East with Israel and how they were attacked."

Hocker said the six members of the Senate Republican Caucus had written Carney a note apologizing for the behavior during his speech. "No one wants to see that," he said. "That wasn't the place."

During a session designed to let the Republicans react to Carney's speech, Pettyjohn cited the treatment of the governor and a debate in the Senate between Sen. Brian Townsend, D-Newark, and Sen. Erik Buckson, R-Dover, over Buckson's bill about classroom discipline as an example of a decline in civility.

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COMMITTEE RELEASES BILLS TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING, AMMO THEFT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Prostitution and gun ammo were the odd couple of topics to be handled in Wednesday’s House Judiciary Committee hearing.

House Bill 264, sponsored by Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, makes the crime of “patronizing a prostitute” a class E felony rather than a misdemeanor when the person from whom prostitution is sought is a minor. Williams’ second bill, **House Bill 270**, creates a civil penalty for any sale or display of ammunition that allows the ammunition to be accessible to a purchaser or transferee without the assistance of the vendor or an employee of the vendor.

PROSTITUTION BILL

One reason for changing the prostitution classification is that class E felonies have a punishment of up to

five years in prison. She said the bill’s intent is to help crack down on human trafficking of minors. A person is guilty of patronizing a prostitute when:

- Pursuant to a prior agreement or understanding, the person pays a fee to another person as compensation for that person’s having engaged in sexual conduct with the person.
- The person pays or agrees to pay a fee to another person pursuant to an agreement or understanding that in return therefore that person or a third person will engage in sexual conduct with the person.
- The person solicits or requests another person to engage in sexual conduct with the person in return for a fee.

Any person found guilty of patronizing a prostitute

and such crime has occurred on or within 1,000 feet of the property of any school, residence, church, synagogue or other place of worship shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor. The minimum mandatory fine for that is \$1,000. Everyone on the committee supported the nature of the bill, with Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, taking it one step further and saying “if you’re messing with a child, you should be chemically castrated.”

There were some concerns sprinkled in through the support to protect Delaware’s youth.

“I know that a lot of research shows that criminalization doesn’t work,” said Rep. Sophie Philips D-Bear. “It drives sex workers underground and it puts them at even more risk, and it ends up hurting both consensual sex workers and trafficking victims and makes them less safe.” She wanted to see research that shows this would actually combat the trafficking happening in Delaware.

While there wasn’t any research offered, Caroline Brittingham, deputy attorney general of the Human Trafficking Unit at the Department of Justice from the Department of Justice, pointed out that 43 out of 50 states criminalize the behavior in a way similar to HB 264.

“I’m appalled that you don’t have any statistics,” said Rep. Franklin Cooke, D-New Castle. “I keep having these hearings, we’re going to [Joint Finance Committee], the Bond Committee is coming soon. We get all these secretaries of all different things and they don’t have data. Please have some data.”

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BILL GIVING TEACHERS 1-FOR-1 SICK DAY DONATION HEADS TO HOUSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A buy-one-get-two deal is a bargain at a grocery store, but not so ideal for teachers looking to exchange days off. A new law could even the scales.

Senate Bill 20, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, removes the requirement that a public school district employee who donates leave to another employee must donate two days of leave for the other employee to receive one day of leave. After a brief discussion on the Senate floor Tuesday, the bill passed unanimously.

The act is named in honor of Christopher Chujoy, a special education instructional aide in the **Red Clay Consolidated School District** who was diagnosed in August 2022 with stage IV cancer. “He was just an absolutely inspirational person, that kind of educator that you hope is educating your children,” Townsend said. “There’s just an energy of enthusiasm, of spirit about him both in staring down his triple diagnosis but also

in talking about his role as an educator.”

Chujoy used up all of his available sick time before dying and his situation raised the issue that is the primary purpose of SB 20.

ONE-TO-ONE TEACHER DONATION FAIR

Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, said the one-to-one leave is only fair.

Tammy Croce, executive director of the **Delaware Association of School Administrators**, testified in January that her organization is in full support of the law, pointing out that when the two-for-one ratio was set, there weren’t programs set up like short-term disability pay, FMLA and paid parental leave.

“It’s a good bill, and I’m excited about supporting it,” said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover and a member of the Senate Education Committee.

“As a 30-year educator, what you may not know is I’ve gotten into a fight with cancer myself and I’ve seen the



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emails where they go across the airwaves saying, ‘Hey, can you give some of your sick time to some of your colleagues’,” Buckson said, “and it was always a challenge, because you had to give two of yours to give add one to theirs.”

The bill also:

- Clarifies how much leave employees of a public school district who do not accrue annual leave must use before being eligible for donated leave.
- Clarifies the interaction between donated leave and leave available under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

There is no fiscal impact on the state if the bill becomes law. SB 20 heads to the House, where it will first be heard by a committee and then the entire House floor. If successful at both stops, the bill will head to the governor’s desk for signature to become law.





TASK FORCE REDEFINING 'FIREARM' MOVES CLOSER TO DECISION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A task force charged with updating the state’s definition of “firearm” plans to take one more look next week at the new proposed language. If approved, a bill would be introduced this year proposing the change.

One reason for a new definition is because Delaware has a uniquely general and large definition of a “firearm,” in which any device that launches any object by any means is considered a firearm under current law. That would include nail guns, slingshots, crossbows, staplers, archery equipment, Air Soft guns and more if the police or a prosecutor wished to consider them as such.

The task force, headed by Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Claymont and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, held its eighth Monday. Rep. Cyndie Romer, D-Newark, asked who specifically is negatively impacted by the current definition. Spiegelman said it creates burdens for making laws around guns.

“Especially in the last 12 years, the General Assembly has become increasingly involved in crafting firearms, gun control bills,” he said, “and we have found that as we do that, we occasionally run into something and we do something or we almost do something that we didn’t intend to do — that the intent is to control the thing that goes ‘bang,’ not necessarily bow and arrows.”

He said it might be impossible to store bow and arrows in the way that Delaware law mandates people store standard guns.

Spiegelman said the current definition doesn’t always follow common sense. He pointed to the example of how someone prohibited from using firearms might be using one, per the current definition, every single day on a construction job if they were using a nail gun.

“The police in the course of doing the job that we must have them do are seizing objects that they’re legally not

supposed to be seizing, but everybody on this call agrees they should probably seize,” he said, “so there’s a whole host of problems when you have a definition of firearm that is overly broad and runs contrary to the common sense.”

He started the meeting by saying that a drafted new definition should also include “spear guns” used for fishing, so that will likely be added next Tuesday when the task force takes its final look.

A **Department of Justice** representative said the agency’s position remains that the state should maintain a non-specific definition of projectile weapon because it is very hard to think of every object that could be explicitly included in a bill.

“We do believe that this new definition that we’re working does take into account the DOJ’s legitimate concern about ‘person-prohibit,’ that it does take into account the DOJ’s legitimate concern about commission of a felony with one of these items, protection from violence orders, lethal violence protection orders,” Spiegelman said, “so I appreciate the DOJ is working with us throughout this process to get this as close to right as possible.”

Sturgeon agreed that there’s a challenge in trying to capture every single possible object into a uniform definition to use in Code.

“I’m sitting here racking my brain to try and come up with, to try and figure out other than spear gun, what other technologies would need to be added to this that currently exist out in the world,” Spiegelman said, “and I think we can leave this open-ended a little bit to add simply ‘spear’ to something that is thrown at an object with lethal force.”

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo credit: Cab Calloway School of the Arts



Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



MIDDLETOWN HS TO STAGE HARRY POTTER 'CURSED CHILD' THIS FALL

BY JAREK RUTZ

The magic of Hogwarts is headed to 27 high schools in America — including one in the First State. **Middletown High School** in **Appoquinimink School District** will be full of wizards and wands Nov. 8-10 as its theater crew of more than 60 students in four performances of J.K. Rowling’s “**Harry Potter and the Cursed Child**”.

“We’re expecting more to participate with this just because it’s Harry Potter,” said Brianna Barkus, a biology teacher in Appo who helps with theater productions. She described herself as the “right hand man” of Middletown’s Theater Director Jeff Dietzler.

Dietzler said the school applied in November 2023 for the licensing rights to the play, which included a video showcasing why the school is a magical place. They also had to describe certain characteristics of the school like how it’s inclusive and an environment that everyone can be a part of.

The two weren’t positive they wanted to apply, but Barkus was given an opportunity to see the show on Broadway for just \$40.

“It was funny because we decided to use that for our application video,” Dietzler said. “Part of our video, at the start, we kind of set it up like we were doing wizardry ...I was like ‘We have to go see this’ and we hid her under a platform and then made it seem like she disappeared and then in the video she popped up at the Broadway theater in a telephone booth and magically appeared.”

The fandom of the Harry Potter series spans ages, and Dietzler and Barkus said they’ve been congratulated and bombarded with excitement from both teachers and students. Barkus said a wave of elation spread through the theater students once Dietzler started playing Harry Potter music and told them they were selected to perform.

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WILMU, CODE DIFFERENTLY TEAM UP FOR 18 CREDIT OPPORTUNITY IN TECH

“This collaboration with Code Differently speaks to our mission of providing opportunity and flexibility to students and it also addresses our comprehensive focus on technology,” said LaVerne Harmon, WilmU president.

Harmon said the school understands the high demand for skilled information technology professionals, and she suspects that need will continue to grow. “This partnership reflects an opportunity for innovation to meet accessibility in higher education,” she said.

Stephanie Eldridge, CEO and co-founder of Code Differently, said the organization wants to eliminate barriers to learning and success, and is committed to the advancement of all of its participants.

Lindsay Rice, the WilmU’s senior director of Academic Partnerships, said the partnership leverages what its participants have learned and provides an easy transfer to bachelor’s programs directly connecting to Code Differently programs.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new partnership between **Wilmington University** and a national coding group will provide Delaware residents the opportunity to earn a big chunk of college credits in concentrations like computer science, cybersecurity and data analysis. The university has partnered with **Code Differently**, which provides hands-on training and education through coding classes that gives participants the technical and cognitive skills they need to succeed in technology-driven workplaces.

The partnership, announced Tuesday, provides Code Differently participants up to 18 college credits at WilmU. Since its establishment in 2018, 800 First State adults have received software development training from Code Differently, with an 89% completion rate and an 85% work-placement rate. According to the organization, the most recent group of participants included 15 students who started the 20-week coding course in February.

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HODGSON'S MAISS HUSSEIN REPEATS AS DELAWARE POETRY OUT LOUD CHAMP

I've heard it in the chilliest land –
And on the strangest Sea –
Yet – never – in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of me.

Hussein beat out the 11 other state finalists, a couple who were also finalists last year. Her round one poem was “Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear” by Mosab Abu Toha, and her round two poem was “If They Should Come for Us” by Fatimah Asghar.

The finalists were named after round two. They included Hussein, as well as Joelle Caternor from Smyrna High School, Olivia Stevens from Mount Sophia Academy, Grace Sullivan from MOT Charter High School and Jono McGarvey from Delaware Valley Classical School.

With her win, Hussein is headed to the national finals in Washington, DC, April 30 to May 3, to represent Delaware and compete for \$50,000 in awards and school stipends.

Contestants were judged on their physical presence, eye contact and body language, pace, rhythm, punctuation, dramatic appropriateness, articulation and evidence of understanding. The contestants had advanced through school competitions, choosing works from an anthology of more than 1,200 poems.

The night began with 12 poets:

- Jono McGarvey, Delaware Valley Classical School
- Grace Sullivan, MOT Charter High School
- Olivia Stevens, Mount Sophia Academy

- Maiss Hussein, Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School
- Hunter Brown, Red Lion Christian Academy
- Abigail Ehemann, Saint Mark's High School
- Perrin Brown, Sanford School
- Joelle Caternor, Smyrna High School
- Harrison Dabbs, Sussex Academy of Arts & Sciences
- Nife Anawo, Sussex Central High School
- Caliana Velasquez, Sussex Technical High School
- Jamie Feldman, Wilmington Friends School



BY JAREK RUTZ

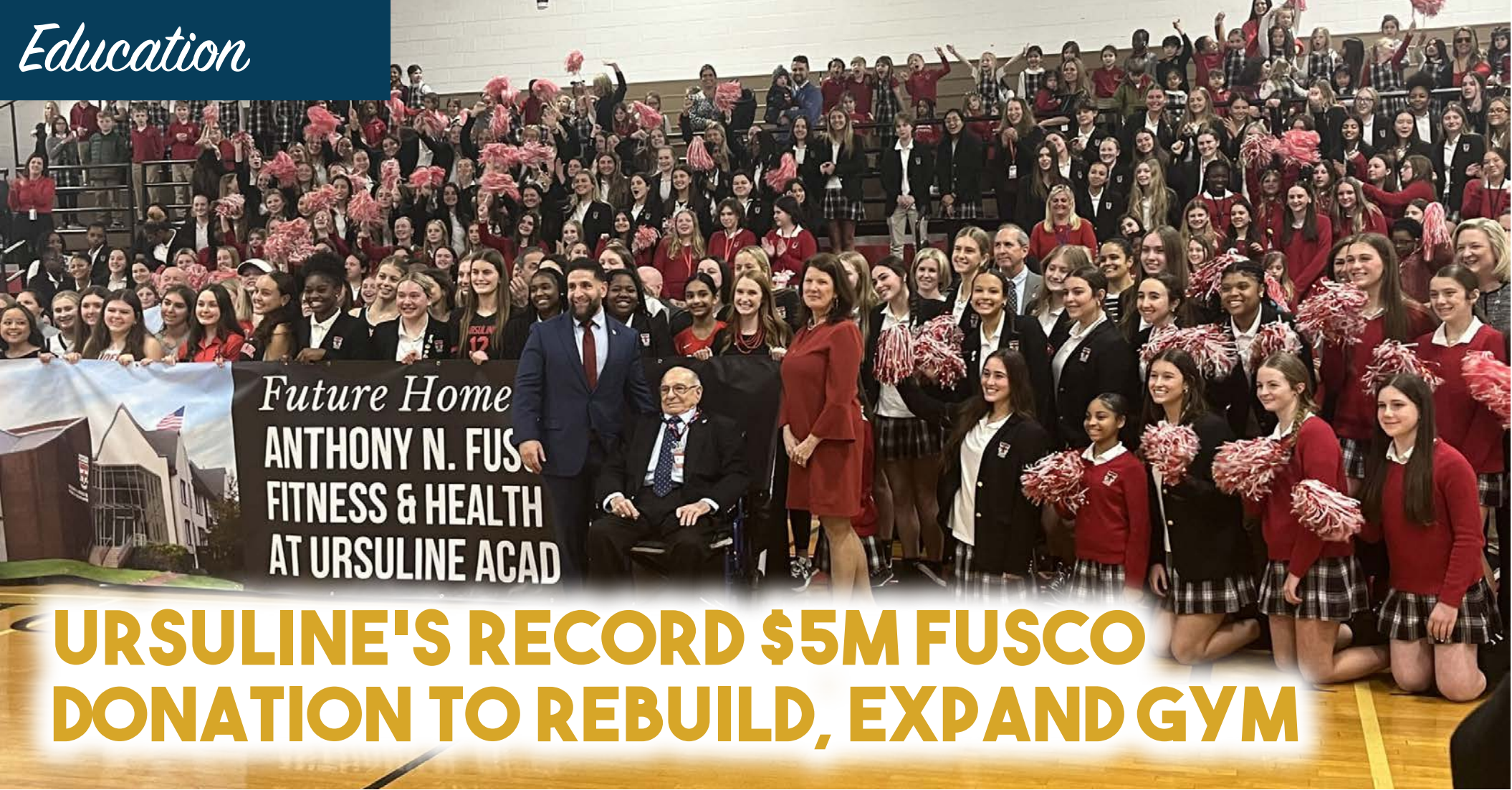
Maiss Hussein, a senior at Paul M. Hodgson Vocational Technical High School, is once again Delaware's Poetry Out Loud winner. She went back-to-back, winning this year's competition at the Smyrna Opera House Thursday night with her rendition of “Hope' is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson. The poem reads:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –
And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –
And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm –

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URSULINE'S RECORD \$5M FUSCO DONATION TO REBUILD, EXPAND GYM

BY JAREK RUTZ

A downtown Wilmington Catholic girls school has received the largest donation in its 130-year history and students rocked its gymnasium in delight Thursday.

Anthony N. Fusco Sr., a Delaware philanthropist and real estate developer, has made a \$5 million commitment to [Ursuline Academy](#). The donation will pay for the total renovation of Laffey McHugh Gymnasium, originally constructed in 1980; create an expanded fitness center for students and faculty; improve accessibility for those with disabilities; install new locker rooms and athletic offices; and add tech that will support student academic and athletic experiences.

To honor the gift, Ursuline will name its new facility the Anthony N. Fusco Sr. Fitness & Health Center.

“These funds will support the long legacy of Ursuline’s superior athletic programs by transforming spaces focused on health and wellness so that our students can continue to grow, learn and thrive,” said Trisha Medeiros, Ursuline’s president.

Anthony Pullella, Ursuline’s director of operations, said Fusco’s generosity has not only propelled Ursuline Academy’s facilities and programs forward by decades but has also left an indelible mark on the athletic landscape.



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“This transformative gift will elevate our athletic facilities to unprecedented heights, matching the caliber of our exceptional student-athletes,” he said. “The Anthony N. Fusco Sr. Fitness & Health Center is a testament to his rare gem of philanthropy, enriching the Ursuline community and the greater Wilmington area.”

Fusco also had donated millions for athletic facilities at Salesianum School and Delaware Military Academy.

His connection with Ursuline spans back to when his granddaughter, Picara Vassalo, Class of 1997, attended and he has donated to Ursuline before.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)

photo credit: Nick Halliday



Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



FRESHMAN DUO POWERS URSULINE PAST DOVER

BY NICK HALLIDAY

No. 2 seed Ursuline hosted the No. 10 seed Dover Senators in the quarterfinals of the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) girls' basketball state championship Monday night at Laffey-McHugh Gymnasium.

The freshman guard duo of Jezelle "GG" Banks and Taylor Brown combined for 54 points, as the Raiders eliminated the Senators by a score of 60-38.

Banks finished with 32 points while Brown finished with 22, to account for 54 of their team's 60 points in the game. Ursuline's defense was stifling all night, as the pressure produced numerous turn overs that led to easy points for Banks and Brown as they applied the pressure up top. Jazlynn Wesley was a presence in the lane as she blocked three shots in the first half. She unofficially ended up with seven total blocks.

Zionna Benson led the Senators with 11 points, while Ashtyn Torbert scored 10. Dover finished the season 18-5.

Ursuline will take on No. 6 Sanford in one semi final on Wednesday night at the Bob Carpenter Center. The Warriors defeated St. Elizabeth to advance to the semi finals.



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SALESIANUM SURVIVES LATE PUSH BY SANFORD TO ADVANCE

BY JOE SINGLES

The third game of the DIAA boys' basketball quarter finals round kicked off to a fast start Saturday afternoon, as both teams seemed unfazed by the capacity crowd. The home team, Salesianum, turned tough half court defense into easy baskets at the offensive end as Sanford struggled to stop the ball in transition. Despite the strong effort by the Warrior starters, they continued to look out of sorts offensively, with most offensive possessions resulting in a turnover or a off balance, low percentage shot. Coach Khalid Hart would change to a 2-3 zone late in the first quarter to try to instill some confidence in his players. Sallies led 14-8 going into the second quarter.

Sanford settled down in the next frame. Dropping into a 2-2-1 full court press halfway through the quarter slowed down Sallies in transition and seemed to give the away team some much need confidence. Sallies on the other hand, continued to find the open shooters and knock down a barrage of three point shots to maintain a four-point lead with 3:57 to go before half. A number of physical but clean fouls at both ends, brought the level of emotion in the gym to the high point of the half. Sallies seemed to benefit the most from the intensity, taking a 30-21 lead into halftime. Thomas led all scorers with 14 points while senior Jordan Spencer led Sanford with eight.

Neither team appeared to make many adjustments coming out of halftime. Sallies continued to be patient offensively, hitting the open cutter and drawing fouls. Coach Taylor Trevisan's use of his bench proved beneficial through three quarters, as the home team saw no drop off in play going to their bench while the Warriors' energy level seemed to wane. The score was 40-32 after three quarters.

With 5:04 to go in the game, Sanford found themselves down only two points. The Warriors would claim the momentum for the first time all game, competing with a sense of urgency and conviction that didn't exist up until this point.

With the clock continuing to run and Sallies top scorer, Thomas, on the bench with four fouls, Sanford would come out of a timeout down 46-42 with 50.8 seconds to go. But four straight free throws by Sallies leading scorer Kareem Thomas would push the lead to seven and close out the game, sending Sallies to the quarterfinals on Thursday evening at University of Delaware. Despite sitting out most of the third quarter in foul trouble, Thomas led all scorers with 18 points while Sanford's Spencer led the Warriors with 17.





TOP SEED ST. ELIZABETH KNOCKS OFF HOWARD IN QUARTERFINALS

BY JOE SINGLES

With the top seed in the 2024 boys' basketball state tournament, the St. Elizabeth Vikings knew they would get Howard High School's best effort Saturday night. Despite a rough start shooting, the Vikings withstood the early defensive intensity from the Wildcats and used their athleticism to take a 13-12 lead on the last possession of the quarter on a 25-foot three-point shot by Robert Hunter Jr.

After what was arguably the Wildcats' best defensive quarter of the season, they came out again strong in the second quarter, constantly pressuring the Viking shooters, contesting every shot and pressuring the ball handlers. Back and forth they went in what one could argue was Howard High School's best start to a game of the season, but the talented St. Elizabeth squad would methodically build a five-point lead with 3:39 to go in the half. Coach Mike Cassidy's Viking squad would drop back into a 2-3 zone late in the half, but the hot shooting of the Wildcats would pull the away team to within one point at the 1:05 mark as a bit of frustration sat in on the number one seed. Tie ball game, 31-31 going into halftime.

The momentum that gave Howard their best half of the season continued early in the third quarter. The Wildcats gave the Viking guards fits while Aiden Tobiason

and company failed to secure any type of interior presence around the basket despite their size and athleticism. Halfway through the third quarter, Coach Cassidy decided to put some full-court pressure on the Wildcats, which included dropping into a trapping zone in the half court. The change in looks slowed the Wildcat offense down just a bit, giving the Vikings a 47-44 lead at the end of the third quarter.

St. Elizabeth stuck with their trapping defense early in the fourth and it paid dividends. Despite only having a four point lead with four minutes to go, the Howard offense went cold as they struggled to find good looks at the basket. Vikings led 57-51 with 1:25 to go in the game. Free throws down the stretch pushed the Viking lead to 10 points with 18 seconds to go in the game which would be how it ended. Tobiason led the way for the top seed with 17 points while Julius Wright added 15 and Kenneth Hunter Jr. chipped in with 13. St. Elizabeth took Howard's best shot and came out on top with a final score of 67-57. The Vikings will now try to duplicate their win earlier in the season over Salesianum when they face off in the semifinal Thursday evening.





MIDDLETOWN ADVANCES TO THE FINAL FOUR WITH WIN OVER SAINT MARK'S

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Middletown Cavaliers used a late first quarter run to grab an 18-11 lead and never look back in a convincing quarterfinal win in front of a sold-out crowd Saturday.

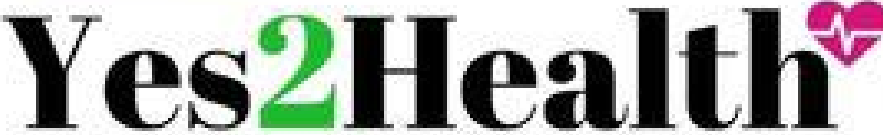
Clyde Frasier, Jack Murdaugh and Zion Mifflin each made three point shots in the opening eight minutes of play to lead the Cavs effort. Frasier aggressively drove the paint — scoring 10 points in the second quarter helping the home team take a halftime lead of 40-21.

Middletown head coach Azeez Ali reminded his team in the locker room that they trailed big (45-22) to St. Elizabeth a few weeks ago and the Cavs rallied to make the game close. “We talked about playing 32 minutes, we just played a solid 16, now we have 16 more. “We knew we would get their (Saint Marks) best shot and we waived a bit with the press, but we were able to weather the storm.”

The Cavaliers certainly weathered the storm as the Spartans could not cut the deficit to single digits. Instead, Middletown built the lead to 63-40 early in the fourth quarter on consecutive long-range shots by Zion Mifflin.


The Cavaliers were extremely efficient offensively, going 16-of-18 from the foul line and making eight shots beyond the arc. Both Aviyon Matthews and Murdaugh brought the crowd to its feet with slam dunks. Matthews also scored nine of his 17 points in the third quarter to help deny a Spartan rally.

Saint Marks finished the season with a record of 17-5 under head coach Lonnie Wright. Alasaan N’Diaye led the Spartans with 15 points, Jordan Jones added 11, and Chase Wright left the game with an apparent ankle injury, scoring nine points.



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Middletown will face the No. 2 seed Dover Senators at the Bob Thursday night in the semifinals. Dover (21-2) eliminated St. Georges Tech 67-49. The two last faced each other in the 2022 tournament as Dover defeated the Cavs 70-44 in the second round. When asked about returning to the Bob, coach Ali told us, “we want to stay in the moment, we approach each day in practice as winning the day. “When we come in Monday, win the day, same with the rest of the week, building to the game Thursday.”

Dover’s last appearance in the semis was 2019 when they lost to Sanford in the title game 48-45. Middletown advanced to the semifinals last season, falling to eventual state champ Salesianum 51-49.



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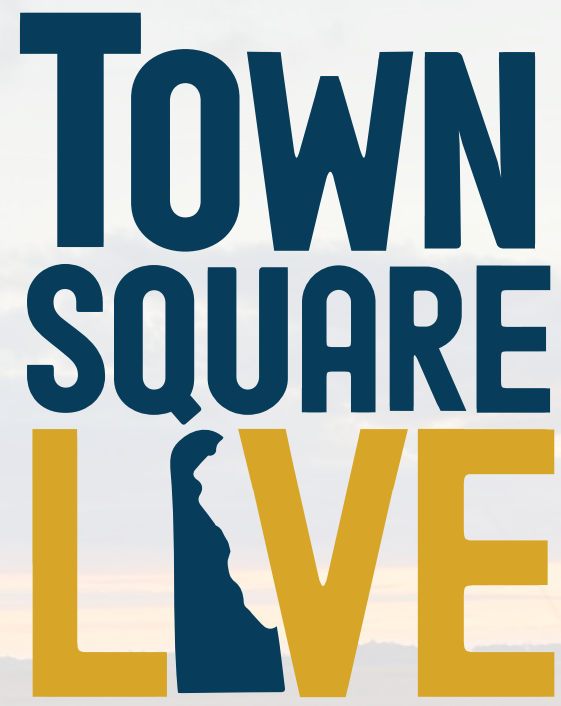
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