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Contents

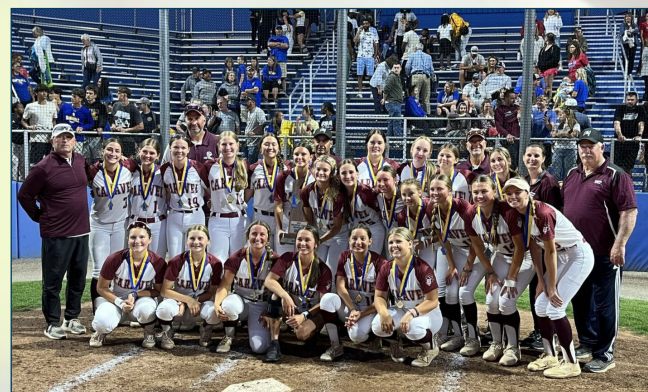
Community	3
Business	7
Food & Dining	11
Government	14
Education.....	20
Sports	26
Stay Connected	30



Italian Festival in Wilmington



Committee Rejects Voting Bill



Inside the Circle: 2024 Softball Recap

photo link: Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library
Photo by Suchat Pederson and Bob Leitch



Community

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



ITALIAN FESTIVAL IN WILMINGTON RUNS THROUGH SUNDAY

BY JAREK RUTZ

One of the largest Italian-American cultural events in the nation, with about 60,000 attendees, is back this week in Wilmington for a ceremonious 50th year. St. Anthony’s Italian Festival, sponsored by [St. Anthony of Padua Parish](#), involves decadent Italian cuisine like pasta, pizza, cannolis and more.

“Thanks to all who come out to support our St. Anthony’s Italian Festival,” said Judy White, principal of St. Anthony of Padua Grade School. “Proceeds go to our church, but get directed to our grade school.”

The event, particularly the bars and entrance gates, are staffed solely by volunteers, White pointed out.

“Those volunteers are St. Anthony of Padua Grade School staff, families and friends,” she said. “Come check out the great food and drinks. Walk the property and see our vendors. Rides, face painting, great food, drinks, food trucks and music are on every corner.”

She thanked the community for 50 years of support.

FOOD AND ACTIVITIES

The outdoor eateries include [Bella Cucina Foods](#), [Cafe Riviera](#), [La Pizzeria Metro](#), [La Casa Pasta](#), [Luigi and Giovanni’s](#), [Trattoria di Napoli](#), [Bernie’s Water Ice](#), [Fusco’s Italian Water Ice](#), [Olevano Olive Oil](#), [Serpé’s Bakery](#), [Donut NV Wilmington](#), [Funella’s Funnel](#)

[Cakes](#), [Gotta Lotta Gelata](#), [Lucky Shot Coffee Company](#) and more.

The exciting atmosphere is highlighted with live music, traditional dances and family-fun carnival games. Attendees can bring home a souvenir article of clothing made by [Stitch In Time](#).

[Filitalia](#), a Philadelphia nonprofit aiming to promote and preserve the Italian heritage, language and customs throughout the world, is making an appearance at the festival on Saturday.

On Sunday, the 2024 Home Winemakers Competition began at 3 p.m. The categories are white wine, red wine and cordials. Enter the competition by filling out an entry form [HERE](#).

Also Sunday, the [Mattinata Musicale](#) radio programs and the [Italian-American Herald](#) helped educate patrons about the region’s Italian-American media outlets, dedicated to celebrating and informing the region of the richness of the culture in the Delaware Valley and beyond.

Be sure to check out the Bellini Bar, 9th St. Cafe and The Antonian everyday for musical performances, featuring traditional and contemporary Italian tunes.

Here is the week’s schedule:

- Monday to Friday, June 10-14, 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 15, 4 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 16, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

WHAT TO KNOW

There’s free secure parking at Salesianum School and a continuous shuttle to the festival grounds (10th and DuPont Street) from 30 minutes before opening to 30 minutes after closing.

[CLICK TO READ MORE](#)



NEW TWIST: PORCH PIRATES DON AMAZON VESTS TO STEAL PACKAGES

BY BETSY PRICE

There's a new wrinkle in the **Porch Pirate** business. The **New Castle County Division of Police** says that residents are having packages delivered and shortly after the delivery is made, an individual, sometimes wearing an Amazon vest, quickly runs up to the package and steals it. It's also a trend across the country, the police said.

As always, police said, if residents see something suspicious, they could call and report it to 911 or the non-emergency number, (302) 573-2800.

ANTI-PORCH PIRATE TIPS

Residents also may want to take steps to make their purchases less available, police said:

- Opt to require a signature for all package deliveries.

Residents should review the delivery options at "check-out" and if there is an option, leave specific delivery instructions for the delivery company on where to leave packages.

- Consider sending the package to a family member or trusted neighbor who is home during the day to accept the delivery.
- Use the "pick-up at store" option for merchandise.
- Pick-up packages at a local UPS or FedEx location.
- Amazon also offers locker locations spread throughout communities where packages can be left with a code to get them. Convenient locations include grocery stores.



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JUNE TEENTH

CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH NEXT WEEK WITH THESE EVENTS IN DELAWARE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Throughout the state of Delaware, a number of organizations are holding events to celebrate and honor the Juneteenth holiday.

Made a federal holiday in 2021, Juneteenth is short for “June 19” and celebrates the day in 1865 when Union Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger and his officers arrived in Galveston, TX, to free any remaining slaves. About two months after the Civil War had ended, and more than two years after the **Emancipation Proclamation** was signed by President Abraham Lincoln, the day became a day of honor after President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making it America’s 12th federal holiday.

2024 Juneteenth events

- Wilmington Juneteenth Parade kicks off at 11 a.m. on Saturday, June 15. Attendees are asked to meet at Rodney Square at 1000 North Market Street, and the

route is down King Street, ending at the historical Tubman-Garrett Park.

- YMCA’s Juneteenth Celebrations are at all seven branches throughout Delaware. The events include food, drinks, bouncy-houses, family fun games, mindfulness and physical classes and more. Walnut Street YMCA’s is Saturday, June 15 at noon; Bear-Glasgow Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 3 p.m.; Middletown Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 11 a.m.; Brandywine YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 3 p.m.; Western Family YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 at 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. and at 6:45 p.m.; Dover YMCA’s is Wednesday, June 19 (call location for time); and Sussex Family YMCA’s is Saturday, June 15 at 10 a.m.
- Winterthur Juneteenth Celebration is Saturday, June 15 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Activities include a drum

circle, African dance demonstrations, storytelling, dance jams and more.

- Georgetown’s Juneteenth Event is Saturday, June 15, at the historic Richard Allen School following at 11 a.m., following the 10 a.m. Juneteenth parade which starts at 10 a.m. in downtown Georgetown. The event will include an array of Sussex County historical presentations and performances by the Nanticoke Indian Tribe.
- Friends of Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site will host a Juneteenth celebration at 3 p.m. on Sunday, June 16, featuring Kenneth B. Morris and Nadjah Nicole, two civil rights activists and speakers. The location is South Old Baltimore Pike in Newark, three minutes east of I-95.
- The city of Lewes Juneteenth Celebration is Saturday, June 22, at 1 p.m. at the George H.P. Smith Park, located at the end of Dupont Avenue in Lewes.
- Cornerstone Fellowship Baptist Church’s Juneteenth Observance is a spiritual service of remembrance with gospel music and inspirational messages. The event starts at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 19. The church is located at 20 West Lea Boulevard in Wilmington.

If your group or organization is hosting a Juneteenth event that is not on this list, please contact reporter Jarek Rutz via email at jarek@delawarelive.com to have them added.



photo credit: Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce



Business

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



PROPOSED FAMILY LEAVE CHANGES: HAVE CONTRACTOR DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

BY BETSY PRICE

Changes continue to Delaware's **Paid Family and Medical Leave Program**, which became law in 2022 and was sold as a way to give all employees, not just those at big companies, paid leave for emergencies and become a parent.

Originally called the Healthy Delaware Families Act, it created a statewide insurance program to provide up to 80% of wages for eligible Delaware workers for up to 12 weeks per year for parental leave and six weeks over two years for caregiving and medical leave. It is to be administered by the state, cost \$17.7 million and be paid for through a 0.8% payroll contribution split between the employer and the employee. For example, an employee who makes \$1,000 per week would pay \$4 per week and so would their employer.

On Tuesday, the House Labor Committee seemed set to approve **House Bill 438**, which would allow the state

Department of Labor to hire a third-party contractor to determine eligibility and take that task away from businesses themselves. It's a move supported by business groups, including the New Castle County and Delaware State chamber of commerces, and contractors, all of whom spoke in favor of the bill. They said using a third-party to make eligibility determinations saved small and mid-sized businesses the administration burden and also protected them from liability and the likelihood of lawsuits over the issue. Joe Fitzgerald of the New Castle chamber noted that Connecticut has adopted a third-party contractor for its program and that seems to be working well there.

The fiscal note on the bill was incomplete, meaning it was impossible to say how much that would add to the cost of the program. That is usually remedied between the time a bill appears in committee hearings and hits

the chamber floor for debate.

Rep. Deb Heffernan, D-Bellefonte, who sponsored the bill, said that she was bringing it up at the request of businesses and the Department of Labor. Not all the details were hammered out, she said, a point echoed by Rachel Turney, deputy secretary of the state Department of Labor.

"We're not in complete alignment with what the bill is, as it's written today," she told the committee. "We are working and developing the costs associated with changing that eligibility determination or determination from benefits from the employer to the department and so we will continue to work with you and the comptroller general's office."

The committee did not have enough members present to vote the bill though, but chairman Edward S. Osienki, D-Newark, said he would take the bill to other members to vote yes or no. Because Democrats have a majority in the House, it's sure to pass. Both GOP members of the committee voted yes.

One of the early sticking points was a passage that would require the Department of Labor to check with the Office of Child Support and be sure child support—including back child support—was taken out of checks.

LEAVE AND CHILD SUPPORT

Rep. Franklin D. Cooke, D-Wilmington, seemed shocked by the idea and heavily questioned how that would happen. He wanted to know how much would come out and how the worker would know.

If a worker is expected to get a check of \$600 and only gets half that, without knowing it, it would seriously impact that worker's ability to pay his or her own bills, he said.

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DELAWARE TO GET \$4.9M IN \$700 MILLION J&J BABY POWDER LAWSUIT

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Delaware will receive \$4.9 million in a \$700 million nationwide settlement that aims to resolve allegations related to the marketing of **Johnson & Johnson's baby powder** and body powder products that contain talc.

“All of the funds we receive will be placed in the State’s Consumer Protection Fund,” the Delaware Department of Justice said.

Under the consent judgment with attorneys general representing 43 states, Johnson & Johnson:

- Has ceased the manufacturing, marketing, promotion, sale, and distribution of all baby and body powder products and cosmetic powder products that contain talcum powder, including Johnson’s Baby Powder and Johnson & Johnson’s Shower to Shower in the United States.
- Shall permanently stop making, marketing, promoting, and distributing any covered products in the United States either directly, or indirectly through any third party.

BABY POWDER OVER THE YEARS

“Johnson & Johnson sold such products for over a hundred years,” a release from Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings said. “After the coalition of states began investigating, the company stopped distributing and selling these products in the United States and more recently ended global sales. While this lawsuit targeted the deceptive marketing of these products, numerous other lawsuits filed by private plaintiffs in class actions raised allegations that talc causes serious health issues including mesothelioma and ovarian cancer.”

The release wasn’t that blunt, but a 2018 **Reuters** investigation cited more than 11,000 plaintiffs alleging the powder was contaminated by asbestos, a known carcinogen. Reuters said the contamination was known as early as 1957.

In 2018, a jury of 22 awarded women \$550 million in compensatory damages and more than \$4 billion in punitive damages in a suit contending that the powder led to ovarian cancer, Healthline reported.

In 2022, J&J announced transitioning to cornstarch for baby powders. “Our position on the safety of our cosmetic talc remains unchanged,” the company said at the time. “We stand firmly behind the decades of independent scientific analysis by medical experts around the world that confirms talc-based Johnson’s baby powder is safe, does not contain asbestos, and does not cause cancer.”

The new settlement is pending judicial approval.





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DELAWARE TECH

*Students must meet eligibility requirements. Course fees and books are not covered by the SEED Scholarship.

photo link: SoDel Concepts

Food & Dining

TOWN SQUARE LIVE





KERN WON'T BRING HOME BEARD AWARD BUT STILL FEELS LIKE WINNER

BY PAM GEORGE

It's not often that you get to meet your idols. But during the **James Beard Awards** events in Chicago this past weekend, Delaware's Matt Kern chatted with Elizabeth Faulkner, a "Top Chef" alum and "a hero of mine for probably 20 years," said Kern, chef-owner of **One Coastal** in Fenwick Island.

He met Michel Nischan, another hero, and Kevin Tien of Moon Rabbit in Washington, D.C., a fellow finalist for the Best Chef Mid-Atlantic award. And, of course, Kern met Harley Peet of Bas Rouge in Easton, MD, who received the award in the Mid-Atlantic category.

That's fine by Kern.

"I didn't go into it my first year thinking I was going to win, although there's always the chance, right?" he said the morning after the June 10 award ceremony. "This is a long game and Harley Peet was here last year and didn't win. It made sense for him to take it home this year."

Kern and his wife, Karen, were happy to network with other restaurateurs and have a couples' weekend in Chicago.

PATH TO WINDY CITY

Kern, who grew up near Bethlehem, PA, came to Delaware to work in a restaurant. After meeting Karen, a Sussex County native, he grew roots in the area—an apt metaphor considering Kern's dedication to local prod-

ucts and sustainability.

He also makes a beautiful plate of flavorful food, which he demonstrated as executive chef of **Heirloom** in Lewes. For two consecutive years, he was a semifinalist for a James Beard Award.

The 2024 nomination was particularly sweet, given that he and Karen now own One Coastal, a small restaurant that lacks the bells and whistles of other kitchens yet produces rave-worthy cuisine. More than a few chefs in Chicago told Kern they were eager to try his restaurant.

"That was awesome because I look up to this community of chefs," Kern said. "There were a bunch of people who said, 'Man, what you're doing is incredible.'"

WHIRLWIND BEARD WEEKEND

The Kerns spent most of the weekend at James Beard events, including cocktail hours and industry advocacy workshops. The awards ceremony on Monday evening was at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Along with Peet, Tien and Kern, finalists included Tony Conte of Inferno Pizzeria Napoletana in Darnestown, MD, and Jesse Ito of Royal Sushi & Izakaya in Philadelphia. Tien's pastry chef was also up for his award, and his entire restaurant crew—47 people—flew to Chicago. (Neither won.)

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MOVE TO HELP STATE ELIMINATE FOOD DESERTS HEADS TO HOUSE

BY BETSY PRICE

A proposal to launch a three-year pilot program focuses on eliminating food deserts in Delaware has broad support as it heads to the Delaware House of Representatives. The goal is to provide health food options for people who now don't have much access to fresh fruit, vegetables and meat and tend to survive on fast food and other readily available products loaded with fat, sodium and sugar.

Under [Senate Bill 254 \(S\)](#), the state would authorize a state study of where help is needed and incentives and assistance that can help independent corner stores, food

pantries, local governments and other providers expand the healthy food options available in targeted communities.

“Anything we can do to find creative solutions for access to healthy foods is an important endeavor,” said Julie Miro Wenger, executive director of the Delaware Food Industry Council. “There are no easy solutions when it comes to sustainable models for some of our food deserts in underserved communities. We certainly would like to be part of the solution and welcome the opportunity to participate in developing the strategy to increase food access.”

Food deserts can occur in poorer and more rural areas. Grocery stores often make decisions about where to put stores based on both income and total nearby population. Inner cities can get ignored and so can rural areas where people are more spread out. Yet, access to fresh food is critical, because nutrition often is the first line of offense in populations battling high rates of obesity, diabetes and other illnesses often tied to diet, while often also having limited access to medical care. That leads to other medical problems and early deaths.

SB 254, sponsored by Sen. Darius Brown, D-Wilmington, would require the state of Delaware to develop a holistic, statewide strategy for reducing food insecurity, while creating a new grant program to help strengthen the existing network of small businesses, nonprofits and other organizations already giving underserved

communities their only access to fresh, healthy food.

“While people have been talking about our worsening food deserts for over a decade, we have seen very little progress in terms of making healthy foods readily available to the Delaware families living in urban and rural neighborhoods across our state who do not have reasonable access to a grocery store or supermarket,” said Brown. “We simply can't wait any longer for the national supermarket chains to fix our problems for us.”

He is not alone in his concern.

“The Delaware Grocery Initiative is a measured step, not a cure-all, in addressing the complex challenge of slowing escalating healthcare costs,” said Joseph Fulgham, director of Policy & Communications for the House Republican Caucus. “We know better food choices lead to better health outcomes, and this initiative aims to empower residents by increasing access to healthy, affordable groceries. The three-year sunset provision will allow the legislature to assess the effectiveness of this approach before deciding whether to extend it or explore alternative solutions.”

“This bill recognizes there are areas within the state where Delawareans do not have access to readily available nutritional food options,” said Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover. “A lack of nutritional options can be directly correlated to poor health among Delawareans who live in identified food deserts.”

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photo link: Town of Newark, Delaware



Government

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



HOUSE COMMITTEE REJECTS BILL TO OPEN PRIMARY VOTING

BY BRADLEY VASOLI

A Delaware House panel on Wednesday voted down a bill to open voting in Delaware’s primary elections to unaffiliated voters. State Rep. Michael Smith, R-Newark, introduced the legislation with Reps. Bill Bush, D-Cheswold, and Sean Matthews, D-Middletown. But despite **House Bill 43**’s bipartisan sponsorship, the House Administration committee rejected it three-to-two along party lines with committee Democrats opposed.

Currently, a Delaware voter can vote in a major-party **primary** if he or she has registered as a member of the Democratic or Republican Party. About 72 percent of the state’s voters thus can vote in the public nominating election of their chosen party.

As of June 1, 170,160 voters met the state Department of Elections’ description of “no party” voters. Under HB 43, they would have become able to choose to participate yearly in either the Democratic or GOP primary.

Smith said he wanted to open Republican and Democratic primaries to unaffiliated Delawareans partly be-

cause many voters affiliate with a party despite not feeling steadfast loyalty to that party.

CARNEY VS. MARKELL PRIMARY

He recalled that when current Gov. John Carney and former Gov. Jack Markell ran against each other for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 2008, many First Staters changed their party registration to Democratic merely to have a say in that race. (The general election was uncompetitive, with Republican William Swain Lee garnering only 32% of the vote that year.)

Smith said he hears from many people who simply want to remain free of party identity while still getting to play a role in the major-party nominating process.

“While you see some ebbs and flows of unaffiliated voters or Republicans or Democrats going to Democrat or Republican in a lot of cases, the one thing you are seeing is the large growth of people wanting to become unaffiliated, independent voters,” he told panel members. “And that’s mainly because of the temperature in

Washington, D.C., and sometimes the temperatures we see in the state. I wouldn’t say any of the people in this room are at fault about, that but there are a lot that are.”

He suggested states that have open primaries more often see candidates treat campaigning as a “job interview” with voters rather than a forum for “mudslinging.”

Many voters who might sound like they were covered by the bill would actually have stayed unaffected. State-wide, 10,722 voters are registered as “Independent.” But the Independent Party of Delaware is a recognized and ballot-eligible party, as is Non-Partisan Delaware, with which 1,163 Delawareans affiliate. The centrist party No Labels also has secured ballot access and boasts 1,756 residents as members.

Delaware’s ballot-eligible parties, including the aforementioned as well as the Conservatives and the Libertarians, pick their general-election candidates at nominating conventions. But anyone identifying with a minor political party—ballot-eligible or not—would not have gained access to primary voting under the Smith legislation.

House Minority Whip Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, said he wasn’t sure how he would have voted on the reform had it reached the House floor, but he supported it in committee to facilitate more debate on the topic. House Minority Leader Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek, a bill cosponsor, joined his Republican colleague in favor of the measure.

Ramone, now a gubernatorial candidate, recalled being an unaffiliated voter earlier in life but registering as a Republican to vote for a family acquaintance in a primary.

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GOP MOVE TO CUT REALTY TRANSFER TAX TOSSED ONTO TRASH HEAP

BY BETSY PRICE

Another Republican attempt to lower the costs of buying a house by reducing taxes associated with it was shot down along party lines Wednesday. Rep. Lyndon Yearick's **House Bill 343** would have dropped the real estate transfer tax from 4% now to 3% in January 2018. That was the rate it was in 2016 before being raised in 2017 to bring in more money amid budget woes in Gov. John Carney's early years. The hike made it the highest transfer tax in the country.

Recently, the state has seen four years of huge surpluses, many near \$1 billion, and Yearick argued—as other Republicans have before him—that the state should use some of that to pay back the people of Delaware.

His bill would have limited the tax cuts to residential properties costing \$500,000 or less and commercial properties costing \$1 million or less. Many sales would

not qualify, he said.

Yearick, the House minority whip whose district is in Camden, said he hoped the move would help ease the affordable housing crisis and help more people buy their first home. Reducing the transfer tax isn't a silver bullet, but would be a tool at the state's disposal, he said.

Rep. Jeff Spiegelman, R-Claymont, who works in real estate, noted that the transfer tax on a \$300,000 home would cost the buyer \$12,000 out of their pocket at 4%. At 3%, it was only \$9,000. That \$3,000 can make a difference in whether someone can buy a house or buy the house they really want, he said.

TRANSFER TAX V. INCOME TAX

Democrats, however, argued in Wednesday's House Revenue and Finance Committee that available houses appear to be selling fine and the real problem is that

there's not enough of them. Rep. Madinah Wilson-Anton, D-Newark, said she would rather see the state raise income tax and bring in more revenue that way before changing the transfer tax. So far, she noted, the legislature has resisted any income tax hikes.

Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, wanted to know why taxes couldn't be rolled into mortgages and what could be done by the legislature to fix that.

Spiegelman and other real estate experts explained that banks and mortgage holders would not allow taxes and fees to be included. Banks lend money tied to real property they can take that property and sell it if the loan goes bad, he said. There's no way for a bank to recoup taxes or fees. Schwartzkopf persisted, asking several times what the state could do about that. No one ever answered.

Yearick's proposal would cause the state to lose between \$30 million and \$47.7 million in revenue, according to the fiscal note and a representative of the state Finance Department. Rebecca Goldsmith said the department thought the transfer tax should not be lowered unless it was a part of a larger budgetary initiative.

Rep. Kendra Johnson, D-Bear, said she thought there were too many other areas that needed money and the state couldn't look at the transfer tax in isolation.

Rep. Danny Short, R-Seaford, who sits on the Delaware Economic Financial and Advisory Council, said the state could handle the reduced realty tax. In just the last few months, the state's revenues were upgraded by \$240 million for next year, he said. That comes as the state budget is expected to be \$6.3 billion, a 9.9% increase in a year that was expected to be tough, he noted.

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HOMEOWNERS COULD BE SOON BE FINED FOR THEIR BARKING DOGS

session or control of a dog from allowing the dog to bark for an extended period, defined as continuously for 15 minutes or more, or intermittently for 30 minutes or more. It exempts barking dogs if:

- A person is trespassing on private property
- An animal is intruding on private property
- The dog is being teased or provoked.

It also exempts dogs located in animal shelters, pet stores, dog grooming facilities, veterinarian offices and animal clinics. More exemptions are if the dog's engaged in dog training, dog exhibition, lawful performance competitions, hunting and herding.

Penalties include a first warning, \$50 for a second violation, \$100 for third violations and \$150 for all violations after. There is a state cost of about \$240,000 each year for personnel operations, specifically with the Office of Animal Welfare.

There was no discussion about how this would work in real time, how long it would take officers to react to calls and what that would mean to the average resident.

HB 124 now moves on to the full House floor.



BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would shift the burden away from police while also establishing monetary fines for homeowners with excessively barking dogs was unanimously supported in the House Appropriations Committee Wednesday. **House Bill 124**, sponsored by Rep. Eric Morrison, D-Glasgow, eliminates animal noise and noise disturbances from the Noise Control and Abatement Chapter in Delaware Code.

It clarifies that the **Office of Animal Welfare** and **Department of Agriculture** has the authority to enforce all state laws relating to the protection and control of animals with, as occasion requires, the assistance of police officers. HB 124 prohibits the owner or person in pos-

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MEDICS IN DE GIVING IVF SERVICES COULD GAIN LEGAL PROTECTION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A new bill would dispel the fears of potential repercussions for medics providing in vitro fertilization, commonly known as IVF, which takes mature eggs from ovaries and fertilizes them with sperm in a lab. About 90,000 babies are conceived through this process each year in the U.S.

House Bill 374, sponsored by Rep. Kendra Johnson, D-Bear, would legally protect medical professionals who provide fertility treatment, even if their services are deemed illegal in another state, as long as they are legal in Delaware. It also prohibits health care providers from disclosing communications and records concerning fertility treatment without the patient’s authorization in any civil action or proceeding.

HB 374 would protect health care providers from out-of-state civil actions relating to fertility treatment that is legal in Delaware. Insurance companies would be pro-

hibited from taking any adverse action against health care professionals who provide fertility treatment and services.

Sen. Nicole Poore, D-Delaware City, was the legislator who spoke most when the bill was presented to the Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday. She said the bill was personal to her. In an emotional testimony, she shared the struggles of infertility she and her husband faced when trying to conceive their first child.

“Twenty-seven years ago, as my husband and I were in our very early 20s, things that came easy to most people, pregnancy should have been one of those things,” she said. “It was not for my husband and I and Billy, being a good partner and a committed partner, walked hand-in-hand with me through the fertility procedures, many ups and downs, many disappointments, many months of infertility.”

She said she traveled to state after state in order to find somebody that could help them through insurance practices, and in January 1999, she was able to deliver their first baby.

“Delaware must ensure that families are not punished simply for seeking to fulfill their dreams of having children, and that practitioners are not punished for assisting them,” she said.

Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend, D-Newark, pointed to how emotional and powerful of a day he and other legislators experienced when a law passed a couple years ago ensuring IVF coverage for state employees.

“There’s occasional times where people still send us emails with photos of their new loved ones that are part of their world now because of it, and it only happens because people advocated, and the most important advocacy is sharing the personal story like you just did,” he told Poore.

Representatives from the Delaware Department of Insurance, Planned Parenthood of Delaware, League of Women Voters Delaware, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Delaware and Medical Society of Delaware all gave public comments in support of HB 374.

Senate committees do not take a public vote on bills, but instead sign the bill with their vote, which is usually posted on the General Assembly website a few hours after the meeting ends. If released by committee, the bill will reach its final step on the full Senate floor, and then will be ready for Gov. John Carney’s signature if it passes the Senate.





CHARTER LEADERS HAPPY WITH FLEXIBILITY NEW LEGISLATION COULD GIVE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Several leaders from charter schools spoke at the state’s legislative hall in support of a bill that allows them flexibility in hiring. **Senate Bill 311**, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, provides the ability for charter schools to hire the administrators that they deem beneficial to the success of the school’s education program and the needs of students and staff.

The bill, which was introduced to the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, clarifies that all instructional administrators at charter schools must be licensed and certified as administrators while non-instructional administrators do not.

James DeChene, chair of the board of directors of **Newark Charter School**, said the bill is very timely for his charter.

“I have a CFO [chief financial officer] who’s going to be retiring in the next few years...and we want the best possible person to fill that position, which is a CFO,” he said, “not necessarily somebody that has an education licensure or background in order to fill that position.”

Scott Kidner, president of **First State Military Academy**’s board, agreed that there are some leadership positions that are needed for the success of the school, but are not necessarily aligned to standard education backgrounds or certifications.

“We have a rather unique position as a Military Academy, and we may indeed want to seek a school leader that has a military background but does not have an educational background,” he said, “and that might be just the right person for us. This type of legislation, of course, preserves our ability to do that.”

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DELAWARECAN

DELAWARE EDUCATION IS IN CRISIS

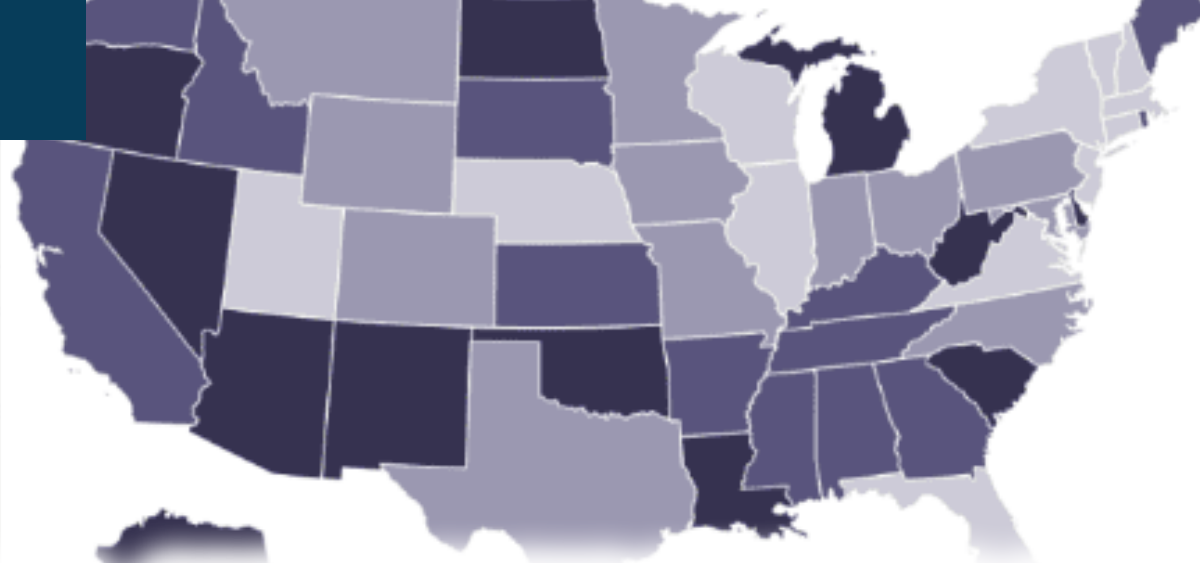
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Education

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



NATIONAL CHILD WELLBEING REPORT PUTS DELAWARE 45TH IN EDUCATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A report from a national nonprofit focused on the wellbeing of America’s children confirms what most Delawareans have learned over the past couple of years: education in the First State is far from first.

The **Annie E. Casey Foundation’s** 54-page **report** lists Delaware 45th in education, or sixth worst in the entire country. But it highlights a lot of that has to do with the lived experiences of First State children.

For example, 43% of Delaware children experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences in 2021-2022, the year a lot of the report’s data showcases. Furthermore, 27% of students are chronically absent, which means they miss more than 10% of the days in an academic year.

On a positive note, Delaware ranks eighth best for economic wellbeing for children. It’s middle of the pack—25th—in health.

Parental involvement and engagement has been a talking point for education experts, and the Casey Foundation’s report ranks Delaware as 32nd for “family and community.” This takes into account the safety of children and financial wellbeing of parents and their involvement in their child’s education.

What the report calls the “overall childhood wellbeing,” Delaware ranks 31st, which is the combination of the education (45th), economic wellbeing (eighth), health (25th) and family and community (32nd).

The low proficiency and bad test scores has been another red flag, and the report points out that 75% of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading and 82% of eighth-graders are not proficient in math.

About 13%, or 26,000 of children, live below the poverty line in the state, and 50,000, or 24%, have parents who lack secure employment.

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FIRST YEAR OF UNIQUE DSU HELICOPTER STUDIES PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware State University is the first and only Historically Black College and University to offer a helicopter training program, and it's fair to say year one of it was a success. Two upcoming sophomores at DSU, Zach Wainio and Gavin Parker, both said the program is the reason they chose to attend the school.

"I took lessons in high school and I really loved it, and looking at what I should do next I came here and the timing was pretty coincidental because this program is very new," Parker said, "so we took a lot of risk in being the first ones, we had to be the ones to make mistakes so the people after us can learn, but it's, it's a great opportunity, it really is."

The degree itself is a bachelors of science degree in aviation: professional pilot helicopter, and it was created last August with five total students in its inaugural year.

Ten more students are expected to join in the 2024-2025 school year, according to Thomas Baechle, a flight

instructor for **Ascent Aeronautical Academy**, a flight school in Medford, NJ, that was contracted by DSU. More instructors will join the program too.

A bunch of flight schools applied for the contract bid, and Ascent was picked and given a four-year contract with a two-year optional extension for a little under \$7 million, per Doug Herlihy, co-owner of Ascent.

"I grew up in Brooklyn, NY, and where I lived the Coast Guard and police had their helicopters close by, so they would fly over my house like 20 times a day," Herlihy said. "One day I was just like, 'I want to do that' and I quit my job, I moved to New Jersey and I went to school to learn how to fly."

Now, his school is the vessel for Delaware's youth to learn the same skills.

DSU's Helicopter Flight Training Program is an Army scholarship that trains select Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) cadets to fly helicopters during college

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while laying the foundation to be future Army aviators. Along with flight certifications, cadets receive leadership training. By the end of the four years, enrollees will have completed 200 total hours of learning and flying and will receive a Private Pilot Certification, Instrument Certification, Commercial Certification and Certified Flight Instructor Certification.

Essentially, by the end of the four years, the helicopter students will have certification to fly themselves, fly others and teach people how to fly.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

A group advocating for radical change to improve education in the state wants parents to be involved in their child’s education and is giving them the tools to do so.

First State Educate hosted a webinar Monday night in what will be a series of meetings helping inform the public about the current state of education in Delaware. Monday’s was called “First Steps to Understanding Education: Navigating and Engaging with Delaware School Boards” in which leaders from the organization explained how to contact school board members, how to get information on school boards, the key issues school boards are paying attention to today, the composition of different district school boards and why parental engagement is key.

“Don’t underestimate your voice, because it’s important and in order to change the status quo, to change

FSE SAYS PARENTS NEED TO ENGAGE IN THEIR KIDS' EDUCATION

student outcomes, people need to speak up,” said Yvonne Johnson, school board consultant for First State Educate.

Establishing common goals in the community is key, she said, adding that studies have shown a child’s outcome is more positive when their parent or caregiver is a participant in their educational journey. Many aren’t aware of the authority of school board members, so First State Educate explained the main responsibilities they have, including:

- Hiring, firing and evaluating superintendents based on student outcomes
- Exercise financial oversight of district budgets, which are millions of dollars
- Represent the interests of their community with transparency and responsiveness
- Be accountable to taxpayers, students and families from the district
- Create and adopt policies that govern the school district.

“It’s important for families and educators to be involved in those discussions, and most school districts have a policy committee which the citizens of that district can serve on,” Johnson said.

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EIGHT STUDENTS HONORED IN DIGITAL INTERACTIVE MAPPING NATIONAL CONTEST



BY JAREK RUTZ

Eight First State students have been recognized for their excellence in a national interactive mapping contest. The [Esri's 2024 ArcGIS webapp competition](#) challenges students to create and share interactive mapping projects using ESRI ArcGIS software. First Staters created digital storymaps that explore some aspect of life in Delaware. Click on the project names below to view the maps.

Here's who placed this year:

High School

- 1st Place: Chanel Beck of Brandywine High School: [The Delaware Indians: The First People of the First State](#)
- 2nd place: Natalie Lewis of Caesar Rodney High School: [Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad](#)
- 3rd place: Levi Levine of Brandywine High School: [Horseshoe Crabs: Delaware's Most Helpful Living Fossil](#)
- 4th place: Hudson Dooley of Charter School of Wilmington: [Understanding State Immigration and Refugees](#)
- 5th place: Caleb Comley and Alexander Bovell of Charter School of Wilmington: [Educational Attainment in Wilmington](#)

Middle School

- 1st place: Eric Lewis, a home school student: [The duPont Family in Delaware](#)
- 2nd place: Katia Smith of Christiana Honors Academy: [Seaside Wonders](#)
- 3rd place: Natalia Smith of Christiana Honors Academy: [The Inside Scoop: The Ice Cream Shops of Delaware](#)

Honorable mentions were given to Parker Cuff of Odyssey Charter School for [Where There is a Need, There is a Lion](#) and Elliot Warburton and Rita Nyamikah of AI duPont HS for Evolution of AI duPont Feeder Pattern (link not available).





BY JAREK RUTZ

A state program that seeks to help foster children in Delaware afford college is back for a third year.

ASPIRE529 rewards 20 qualified applicants \$529 to youth in or aging out of the foster care system seeking higher education.

“The high school graduation rate for youth in foster care in Delaware is just over 50%, with less than 5% of that same group graduating from a four-year college,” said State Treasurer Colleen Davis in a statement. “While we know there are many issues tied to those statistics, the financial ability to seek higher education is routinely cited as a major cause.” For reference, the overall state graduation rate is about 88%.

Interested candidates have a month to act, with the application period closing Saturday, July 8. If awarded, the money can be used towards accompanying costs associated with obtaining a degree in higher education such as paying for books and supplies, materials required for skills training, transportation costs and child care.

ASPIRE529 aims to support young Delawareans who

ASPIRE529 RETURNS TO GIVE FINANCIAL AID TO FOSTER CHILDREN

have experienced foster care as they transition to adulthood to overcome financial obstacles as they pursue their educational aspirations, stated Tamara Myles, transitional and independent living program manager with the **Department of Services for Children, Youth, & Their Families (DSCYF) Division of Family Services.**

All applicants must be under the age of 26. Other eligibility requirements are:

- At least 14 years old and currently in DSCYF custody (foster care); or exited DSCYF custody to adoption or guardianship at the age of 16 years or older; or aged out of foster care in Delaware at age 18.
- Complete a current-year Delaware Aspire529 application prior to the July 8 deadline.
- Be a Delaware resident.
- Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident or approved refugee.
- Be an undergraduate student.
- Show proof of enrollment or attendance at an institution of higher learning or trade school, and if already attending, must be making satisfactory academic or vocational progress toward completion of that program. Proof of enrollment or attendance can be requested through your school’s registrar or administrative offices.

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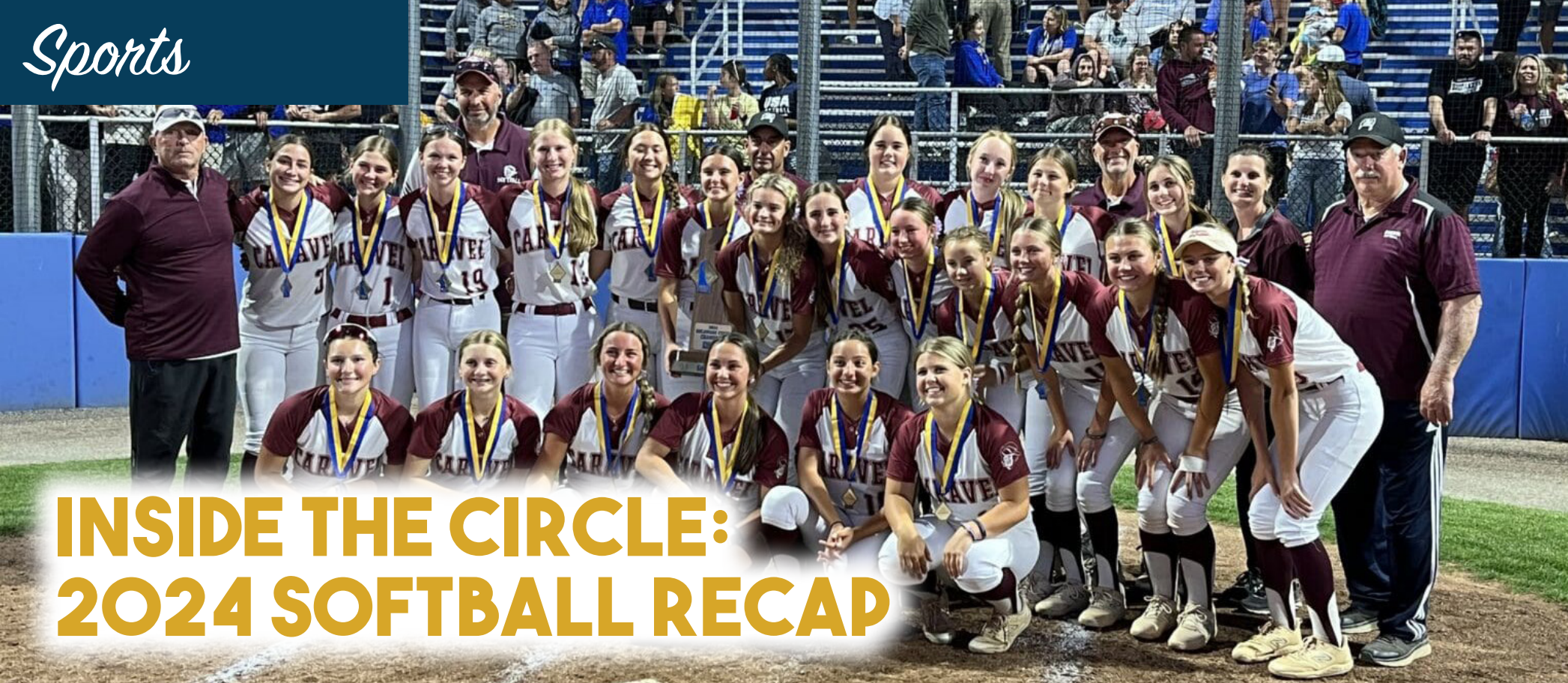
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Sports

TOWN SQUARE LIVE



INSIDE THE CIRCLE: 2024 SOFTBALL RECAP

BY GLENN FRAZER

With the 2024 softball season in the “rear view mirror”, we present our reflections of the year that culminates with the Blue-Gold All Star game played Wednesday at Red Lion Christian Academy and was broadcast on DelawareLIVE Sports.

Twenty-five different schools were represented on the three All State teams. Several of those players will participate in the All Star game. The first team included two players from nine programs, including pitcher and Player-of-the-Year Madge Layfield from Sussex Central.

Here is our final Top 10 of 2024:

No. 1 Caravel (18-1) The Buccaneers won the school’s record 14th state championship and fourth in a row in a 2-0 victory against Sussex Central. Kasey Xenidis held the Golden Knights scoreless plus “plated” the game’s only runs with a two-out bases loaded hit in the sixth.

Both Xenidis and 3B Haley Grygo were selected to the All State first team. Catcher Zayda Rocke made the second team.

No. 2 Sussex Central (19-3) For the third time in the last four years, the Golden Knights lost to Caravel in a very close state title game. In 2021 it was a pitchers’ duel for 11 innings in a 1-0 loss to the Buccaneers, a year later an 8-7 setback, and 2-0 this season. As mentioned previously, Layfield was named the Player of the Year. She was joined on the all-state first team by Takyla “T-K” Davis while freshman Lauren Myers received honorable mention.

No. 3 Laurel (15-6) Laurel had another successful campaign with all-state pitcher Kylee Hill in the circle. The Bulldogs advanced to the semifinal round and had a 2-1 lead at Caravel through five innings before falling

to the champs 5-2. Hill was joined on the first team by Bailey Ullman while sister Ashlyn Ullman was named to the second team.

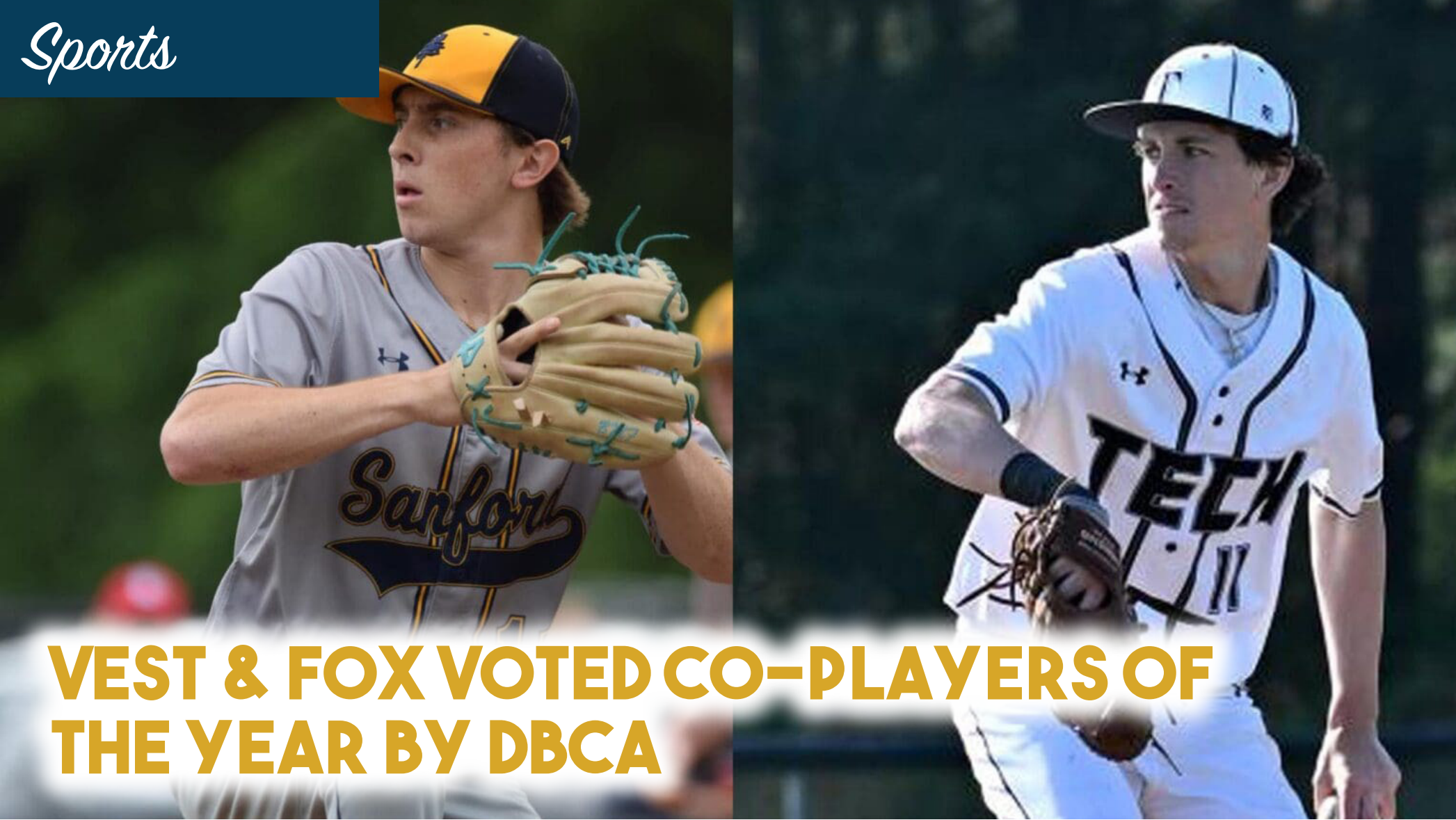
No. 4 Cape Henlopen (16-5) The Vikings improved steadily throughout the season, advancing to the semis with tournament wins versus Polytech and St. Mark’s (both top 10 teams). Their season ended with a semifinal loss to Sussex Central. Catcher Jay’Lyn Slater and SS Ava Calciano both were first team selections, while junior Alivia Heers made the second team.

No. 5 Lake Forest (17-3) The Spartans’ season ended with a 2-1 loss to Caesar Rodney in the second round. This team is young and should be a force again next year. First team all state pitcher Carah Sumpter is a junior and fellow first teamer Bailey Glanden is just a sophomore. Gabrielle Cubbage was named Coach-of-the-Year as Lake will attempt to repeat as Henlopen champs in 2025.

No. 6 St. Mark’s (15-4) The “other” Spartans from St. Mark’s recorded a 1-1 tournament record losing in the quarterfinals to Cape. Outfielder Chloe Bedwell made the first team along with catcher Morgan Hall. Senior Pia Perrone received honorable mention.

No. 7 Appoquinimink (15-5) The Jags also went 1-1 in the tournament, losing a tight 1-0 game in the quarterfinals to Sussex Central. Infielders Brianna Russo and Lauren Foltz were first team selections while outstanding pitcher Ayla McCathern was named to the second team in her junior year. Also on the second team was another junior, shortstop Mia Boyd. The Jags were one of only two schools to have four players on an all-state team this year.

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VEST & FOX VOTED CO-PLAYERS OF THE YEAR BY DBCA

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Sussex Tech's Jeremy Vest and Sanford's Brady Fox were voted as co-players of the year by the Delaware Baseball Coaches Association (DBCA). The DBCA all-state team is voted upon by the head coaches from around the state.

Tech's Vest went undefeated on the season with a perfect 7-0 record. In 51.2 innings pitched, he allowed 33 hits, five earned runs, walked 14 and struck out 57 batters. He ended the season with a 0.68 ERA.

Sanford's Fox finished with a 7-1 record on the season. In 48.3 innings pitched, he allowed 18 hits, three

earned runs, walked 17 and struck out 98 batters. He ended the season with a 0.43 ERA.

Sussex Tech's GL Jefferson was voted as the Coach of the year. Jefferson led the Ravens to an 18-4 record on the season. His team also reached the semifinals in the DIAA baseball state championship.

Below is a list of the remaining all state players by position and which team they were voted on.

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SODE WRAPS UP 2024 SUMMER GAMES

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Special Olympics of Delaware (SODE) wrapped up its 2024 Summer Games this weekend at the University of Delaware. Nearly 700 athletes competed, 160 coaches and 100 unified partners were part of the 2024 Summer Games.

Before the games kicked off, there was the Delaware Law Enforcement for Special Olympics annual Torch Run, where hundreds of members of law enforcement carry the Flame of Hope across the state, lighting the way for acceptance and inclusion.

Kicking off the Summer Games, an opening day parade was held just like they do for the Olympics, a parade of athletes so that fans can cheer them on before

they start the games. Then they are invited to a family barbecue with the athletes' families to enjoy food and fun activities as well as a dance.

The athletes competed in six sports throughout two days at the Nelson Athletic Complex on the campus of the University of Delaware sports complex. The sports include Bocce, Powerlifting, Swimming, Softball, Tennis, and Track and Field events.

Jon Buzby, a board member and Senior Director of Unified Champion Schools, told us "The 2024 games were bigger and better than ever before thanks to the hard work of more than 1,500 volunteers at the games and of course the coaches who worked tirelessly leading

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up to the games at practices over the past few months.” He also told us “We can’t thank the co-presenting sponsors Bank of America and DuPont enough and the dozens of businesses and other entities that made a difference to ensure a fantastic experience for everyone who attended.”

The Special Olympics of Delaware is always looking for volunteers and partners. To be part of SODE please visit their website www.sode.org. As their motto says “Get off the sideline and into the game”.



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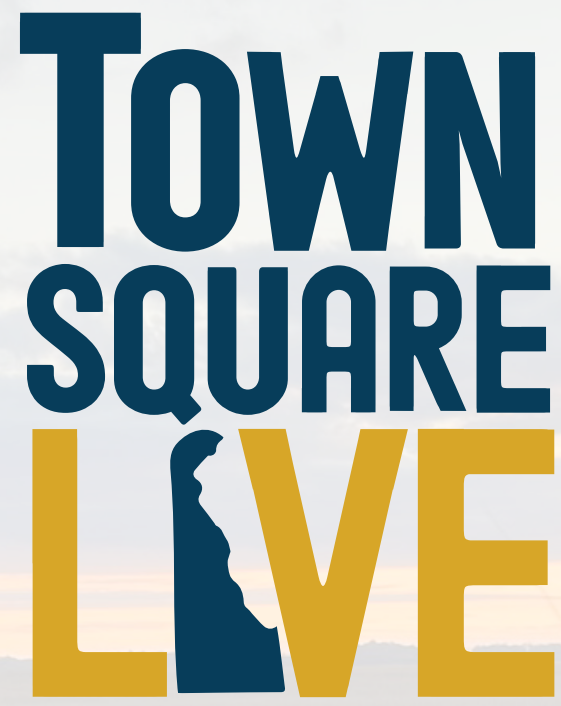
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