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PHOTO BY RUTH HOUSTON-BEHRENS

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Sen. Darius Brown Acquitted



Things to Look Forward to In 2022



2021 Mini Max Winners





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HEADLINES

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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A list of pre-filed House bills released Thursday offers a glimpse into some of the issues the General Assembly plans to tackle when it reconvenes next week. Proposals included on the list range from a measure to make gun ownership legal for medical marijuana users to a bill to hold schools legally accountable if a student is abused by an employee.

Many of the bills are bipartisan, including one to allow the continued sale of alcoholic to-go beverages and one to exempt unemployment benefits from 2021 state taxes.

Pre-filed bills are measures submitted by legislators for introduction before the legislative session begins. All of the bills have been assigned to committees for review. Until they are voted on there, none can move to the Senate or House floor for debate and vote. No bill is guaranteed to receive a final vote in the House or Senate simply because it's filed.

The legislature will hold its first committee meetings of the new year beginning Tuesday, Jan. 11. House and Senate leaders announced Friday that all committee

PRE-FILED BILLS OFFER GLIMPSE INTO LEGISLATURE'S PLANS

meetings will be held virtually throughout the month of January in the wake of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. Legislators will convene in person on Thursdays to consider legislation.

Allowing medical marijuana users to own guns

Under federal law, Delawareans who are prescribed medical marijuana are currently prohibited from owning firearms. [House Bill 276](#), sponsored by Rep. Andria Bennett, D-Dover, would make clear that registered qualifying patients under the Delaware Medical Marijuana Act are not disqualified under Delaware law from possessing firearms.

“At least 36 states allow for the medical use of marijuana,” the synopsis reads. “However, federal firearm laws have not kept pace and currently prohibit an individual who is ‘an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance’ from possessing or purchasing a firearm. It is still unlawful under federal law to use or possess marijuana.”

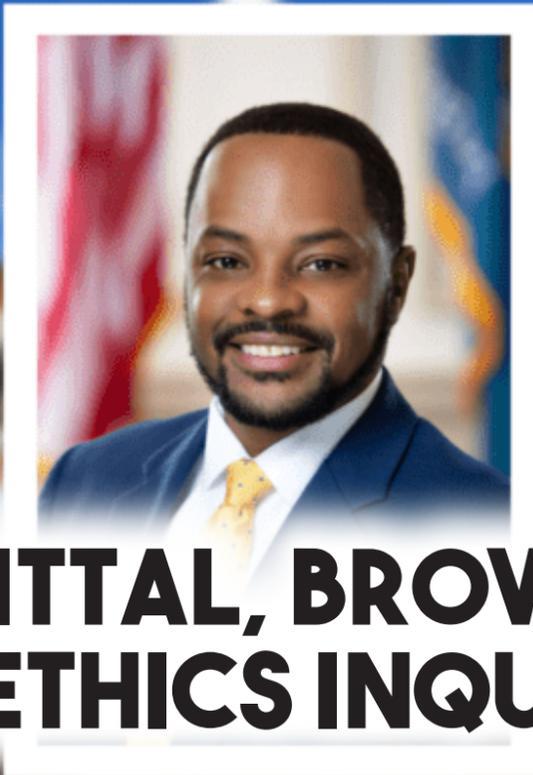
Under the law, a registered qualifying patient’s purchase of a firearm through a federal firearms licensee would still be prohibited under federal law. The bill has been assigned to the House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee for review.

Allowing continued sale of to-go alcohol

[House Bill 290](#), a bipartisan proposal sponsored by Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth, would allow food and drink establishments to continue to sell alcoholic beverages for take-out, curbside or drive-through service and to use outdoor seating for serving of food and drinks so long as the licensee satisfies certain conditions.

The practice had been prohibited until the spring 2020 COVID lockdown prohibited dining in restaurants. Rules were changed to allow restaurants to include alcohol in sales, and therefore make more money. The rule last year was extended through March of this year.

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DESPITE ACQUITTAL, BROWN WILL STILL FACE SENATE ETHICS INQUIRY

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Despite being acquitted Thursday on charges of offensive touching and disorderly conduct, State Sen. Darius Brown will still face a Senate Rules and Ethics Committee review when the General Assembly reconvenes.

In a statement following news that the jury found the Wilmington Democrat not guilty on all charges, Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola said it remains clear that “Sen. Brown has been involved in multiple confrontations in public spaces over the last year, regardless of whether that behavior rose to the level of criminal conduct.”

“As elected representatives of the people we serve, I believe we owe it to Delawareans to hold ourselves to a higher level of accountability and conduct,” Sokola said. “In the coming weeks, the Senate Rules and Ethics

Committee will fully review all of the allegations leveled against Sen. Brown, and I will have no further comment on the matter until that time.”

During the two-day trial at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington, Dr. Cherita Carroll accused Brown of hitting her then throwing a martini glass at her during an argument at Taverna Rustic Italian Restaurant in May of 2021.

Each misdemeanor charge carried a statutory maximum penalty of 30 days in prison.

The prosecution called five witnesses to the stand, including Carroll, a patron at the restaurant, a bartender, a waiter and a State Police Trooper.

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TONY ALLEN TO HONOR MOTHER'S LIFE WITH SCHOLARSHIP FOR SINGLE MOMS

BY DR. TONY ALLEN

R. Leatha Allen, mother of Dr. Tony Allen, president of Delaware State University, died early Tuesday morning from non-COVID pneumonia. Dr. Allen wrote this appreciation of his mother's life.

If you ever reached my mother's old-school voice message, you would hear R. Leatha Allen say, "Words are a creative force. Use them wisely. We are not available at this time, but if you leave your name, number, and brief message, we will return the call as soon as possible."

Leatha was a teenage mother banished from her public school in Jacksonville, Florida, forced to relocate to have her son in a school designated specifically for "girls like her" in Newark, New Jersey. She described the experience as "embarrassing" and "painful," until she reconciled herself to one clear and compelling objective: raise her little boy—her only child—to be and do all the things she never thought she could be or do.

She had a job to do, and so she did it. She was not much for fanfare or fancy things, always working a steady job, to which she would add another job when the situation required. She understood the importance of place and at 20 years old, purchased her first home for herself and her son.

She later fell in love with the man who gave them his last name but soon found that this relationship was not all she'd thought it would be. Ultimately, though, it was that relationship that moved the small family to Delaware to start life anew.

It was 1973; Leatha was then just 22 and I was three years old. My mother took me everywhere she went. I was attached to her hip, our souls aligned. As young mothers and their sons often do, we grew up together.

When my mother gave her life to Christ in 1978, something inside her changed. She grew more confident and self-assured; she expected more from herself and kept moving—constantly moving. We spent our Sundays in the church from sun up to sundown. She was a Sunday School teacher, an usher, and ultimately, a trustee.

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SOME PATIENTS BEING TRANSFERRED TO NURSING HOMES WILL BE COVID-POSITIVE

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

On average, one out of every four Delawareans who tests for COVID-19 is testing positive, Gov. John Carney said during his weekly briefing Tuesday afternoon.

That is, in part, a result of increased testing in the state—although Carney also blamed the surge on holiday gatherings and the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Approximately half of the state's cases are Omicron cases, with the other half being the Delta variant.

Carney said Monday's snowstorm that covered some parts of the state with a foot of snow or more may have helped stop the spread—albeit for a short period of time.

“The only good news there is that it kept people at home and maybe out from getting close to others that might be COVID-19 positive,” Carney said.

The weekly briefing came on the heels of a renewed State of Emergency declaration that took effect Monday.

Under the state of emergency, Carney will deploy up to 100 members of the Delaware Army and Air National

Guard to work as certified nursing assistants in skilled nursing facilities.

Those National Guard members are currently undergoing training and will be deployed to nursing homes with the ultimate goal of transferring patients who may need continued care but who do not require the level of acute care provided in hospitals.

Most patients who are transferred to nursing homes will have already been patients at those facilities prior to being sent to the hospital.

The problem the administration is hoping to address is not a lack of hospital beds, explained A.J. Schall, director of the Delaware Emergency Management Agency. The problem is a staffing shortage. Health care facilities are particularly vulnerable to such shortages as workers remain in close contact with the virus.

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WILMINGTON COUNCILWOMAN RYSHEEMA DIXON RESIGNS DURING MEETING

of the Public Safety Committee. She was formerly the chair of the Community Development & Urban Planning Committee.

First elected in 2017 and re-elected in 2021, Dixon thanked her constituents for trusting her with two terms in office, noting that during her time on City Council she was integrally involved in passing legislation relating to vacant properties, hair discrimination, allowing students to register to vote at their schools, revitalization of Eden Park and sexual consent health education.

Council President Trippi Congo called her resignation bittersweet. “When you first first broke the news to me, I was extremely upset,” Congo said to Dixon during the council meeting. “And I still am—I mean, that’s just the selfish part of me—but I’m so happy for you that you are able to do what you love doing and just keep doing it in a greater and greater role.”

It’s not clear how or when the vacancy will be filled.

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Wilmington City Councilwoman Rysheema Dixon, a Democrat, resigned from office during Thursday’s council meeting.

The at-large council member said she’d be taking time to focus on her community development consulting business, RD Innovative Planning, which she said is rapidly expanding within the United States and even internationally.

Prior to her departure, Dixon served as chair of the Health, Aging & Disabilities Committee and vice-chair

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CULTURE

PHOTO BY AIR MOBILITY COMMAND MUSEUM

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36 ARTS GROUPS, 13 ARTISTS GET CHUNK OF RESCUE PLAN CASH

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Division of the Arts has given 36 arts organizations and 13 artists grants from its \$753,000 in American Rescue Plan Art money designed to secure jobs and support artists and nonprofit arts organizations.

The grants ranged from \$900 for an individual grant to \$45,000 for organization grants.

Three groups got a \$45,000 grant each: Delaware Theatre Company, the Grand Opera House and the Joshua M. Freeman Foundation.

Artists' work is crucial to the creative life of communities and well-being of individuals, and it adds distinct value to the state's economy, said Jessica Ball, director of the Division of the Arts, in a press release.

"These relief funds are critical to arts organizations and their ongoing service to the community," she said. "Public funds represent only a small portion of the revenue

that arts organizations generate. In addition, individual practicing artists have seen their opportunities postponed or canceled due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ARP Organization grants ranges from \$5,000 to \$45,000 and were only available to groups that had been getting general operating support from the state in the past three years. The grants could cover expenses to support salaried employees, fees for artists and/or contractual personnel, facility costs such as rent and utilities and marketing expenses incurred between Dec. 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

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AS 'LONGWOOD CHRISTMAS' CLOSES, 'WINTER WONDER' OPENS

BY BETSY PRICE

“A Longwood Christmas” officially closes Sunday, but fans of the Kennett Square gardens won’t have to wait long for the next exhibit. “Winter Wonder” will run Jan. 22-March 27, with public performances back on the grounds, but mostly live-streamed classes.

The conservatory—now undergoing a \$250 million redo—will turn into a lush sanctuary bursting with color featuring vibrant baskets of primroses (*Streptocarpus* ‘Concord Blue’), African violets (*Saintpaulia*), and towering chains-of-glory (*Clerodendrum schmidtii*). An array of orchids in bloom also will be on display.

Outdoors, the landscape will be designed to show how plants can be used for both aesthetic and habitat benefit,

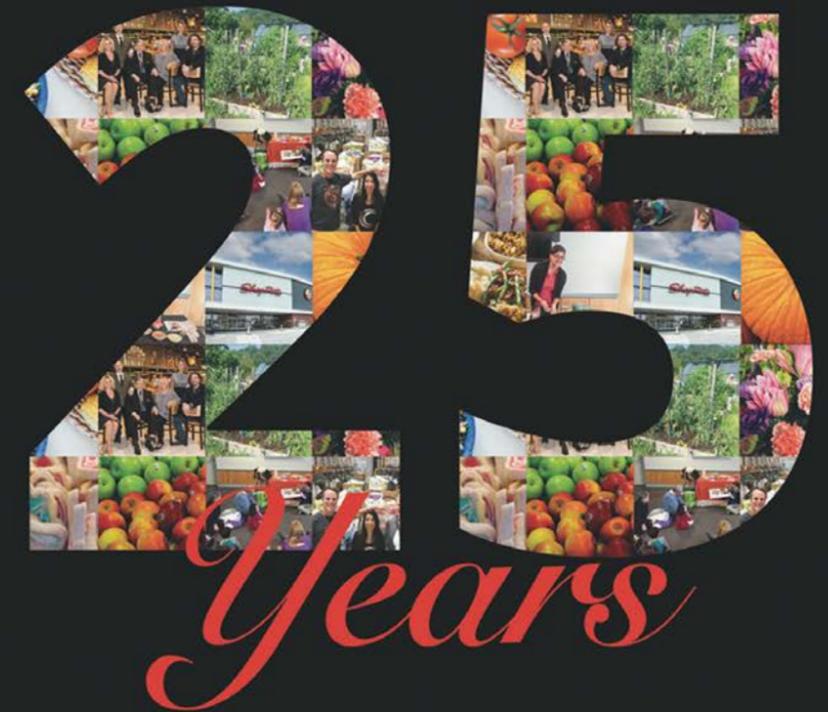
with a serene landscape on the Hillside Garden and hues of copper and umber in the 86-acre Meadow Garden.

In early March, Longwood’s famed blue poppy (*Meconopsis* ‘Lingholm’) returns to the conservatory. Native to the high elevations of the Himalayan Mountains, they have to be forced to flower in March.

The Gardens are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Tuesdays. Timed admission tickets are \$25 for adults; \$22 for seniors (age 62+); \$13 for students (ages 5–18 or with valid student ID) and be bought at www.longwoodgardens.org.

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BY BETSY PRICE

From golf pros descending on Wilmington Country Club, to new shows and amenities at area theaters and cultural institutions, to the latest restaurant moves, Delaware has a lot to look forward to in 2022.

With the end of the year fogged by a surge of COVID-19 testing and new cases, some of what happens may change depending on the spread of the coronavirus.

But as of now, here's a baker's dozen of things that are planned for the new year.

The Jackie O Exhibit

The former first lady will star in the big exhibit for 2022 at Winterthur Museum, Gardens and Estate. "Jacqueline Kennedy and Henry Francis du Pont: From

A BAKER'S DOZEN OF THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2022

Winterthur to the White House" will run May 7 to Jan. 8, 2023. It will follow the former First Lady and Winterthur's founder in renovating and restoring the White House when John Fitzgerald Kennedy became president. Among other exhibits will be the dress that Jackie wore when she gave the television tour of the White House after the work was done. For more, go [here](#).

Bardea's New Steakhouse

Bardea Food & Drink plans to open [Bardea Steak](#) next door to its Market Street restaurant in early 2022. Co-owner Scott Stein had a merry time during the holidays showing diners what the inside space looked like—without walls and furnishes—in photos on his cell phone. The steakhouse will be its third dining spot. It also owns Pizzeria Bardea in the DECO Food Hall.

Pro Golfers in Wilmington

The pro golf BMW Championship is coming to Wilmington Country Club's South course Aug. 16-21. The penultimate event of the PGA TOUR's FedExCup Playoffs, the championship is selling tickets now, ranging from \$85 for a one-day visit to \$575 for a weekly ticket to the trophy club. Ticket prices will rise July 1, its [website](#) says.

Longwood's Orchid House Reopens

As Longwood Gardens' conservatory undergoes a \$250 million [renovation](#) and reimagining expected to be

finished in 2024, its revamped century-old [Orchid House](#) will open in winter 2022. Longwood said in a blog that it's not only preserving this iconic space, but also expanding its display capabilities by returning to its original configuration. When open, up to 50 percent more orchids from the collection will be on display throughout the year under a new glass roof and in new custom trellises that allow more display points.

Shuffle Libre Restaurant

When developers Buccini/Pollin Group finally opened Wilma's, its duckpin bowling and cajun eatery combo, in November, the firm announced their next venture. Shuffle Libre will be a combination shuffleboard court and Cuban dining spot. It's expected to open at BPG's Residences at Mid-town Park.

Hagley's 'Nations of Inventors'

The September opening of Hagley Museum and Library's new permanent "[Nation of Inventors](#)" exhibit was scotched by flooding when the remnants of Hurricane Ida came through. It's now planned for spring 2022, although a firm date has not yet been set. The \$2 million exhibit replaces one about the history of the DuPont Corp. that was installed in 1957 in the visitors center. This two-floor exhibit celebrates the inventors and their products that made America great in small and large ways.

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BUSINESS

PHOTO BY JASONGOODMAN ON SPLASH.COM

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DEL. MINIMUM WAGE INCREASED JAN. 1 AND NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY ABOUT IT

BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

With Delaware's minimum wage increasing from \$9.25 per hour to \$10.50 per hour beginning Jan. 1, some are still sounding the alarm bell for the impacts such a move will have on small businesses—and consumers, too. The adjustment is the first of four gradual increases slated to occur by 2025. The wage will go to \$11.75 per hour in 2023, \$13.25 per hour in 2024 and \$15.00 per hour in 2025. Gov. John Carney signed the gradual wage hike into law in July.

Senate Bill 15, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-White Clay, and Rep. Gerald Brady, D-Greenville, passed along party lines in both the House and the Senate. The bill saw support from some businesses and union leaders but was met with opposition from small-business owners and local chambers of commerce.

Before signing the bill, Carney said that increasing the minimum wage would “lift up those lower-wage workers so that they can provide the same opportunities for their children that the rest of us can.”

Not everybody was as enthusiastic about the bill's signing. Some argued that the increase was too drastic and came at the wrong time.

“I don't think anyone disagrees that a person should be paid an honest wage for an honest day's work, but when you are a business owner you have to put everything in perspective,” said Judy Diogo, president of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce.

“If you have a 30-year-old who is applying for a position or you have a 16-year-old who is applying for a position, and you need to pay that person \$12 or \$13 an hour—who do you think you're going to hire,” Diogo asked at the time of the bill's signing. “Probably the person who has more experience and a better skill set.”

But Walsh said Senate Bill 15 was the most important legislation of his career, arguing that it boils down to one core principle: that “someone who puts in a hard day's work deserves to earn enough to keep a roof over their head and food on their table.” Walsh said that his

decision to sponsor SB 15 was easy, citing the principles he says the United States was founded on: “equality, fairness, and taking care of each other.”

Regarding the criticism that minimum wage increases could hurt small businesses and cost Delawareans their jobs, Walsh said that's “simply not true—not true at all.”

“If you look at almost every instance in which we've raised the minimum wage, you see the unemployment rate in Delaware fall or remain flat—you see the labor force participation rate increase or remain flat—and you see Delaware's GDP grow or remain flat,” Walsh said. “The reason is simple. Putting more money in people's pockets means more bills getting paid, and more money going into cash registers, which results in a better economy for all of us.”

Walsh said that he drafted SB 15 in close consultation with local business leaders and trade groups. “The bill is not a question of pro-business or anti-business,” Walsh said during the signing. “It's a simple question of whether you believe in lifting people out of poverty or not.”

Diogo disagreed with the notion that small businesses wouldn't be hurt by the increase. She said at the time that increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour will negatively impact small businesses that currently pay their more experienced workers that rate.

“Minimum wage is an escalator,” Diogo said. “So if you have somebody making \$15 per hour now and you're bringing in new people and paying them \$10 or \$11 per hour—that person making \$15 who's been with you for five years is going to expect an increase.”

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PHOTO BY CHEVANON PHOTOGRAPHY FROM PEXELS



FOOD & DINING

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FOOD & FUN: MUSIC, GAMES ON MENU AT MANY DELAWARE RESTAURANTS

BY PAM GEORGE

Melissa Ferraro is an innate event planner. Credit her tenure as president of Rolling Thunder, a Delaware food truck association. The owner of Outlandish also has [Sonora](#) in Newark. But having a bricks-and-mortar location hasn't changed the need to "put on a show."

Beginning in February, her Newark restaurant will offer live music on Wednesday and Thursday nights and some weekends. And on April 23, Sonora will host a 1985-themed "prom," a ticketed event with food and music.

Sonora isn't the only restaurant bringing entertainment to the traditional dining experience. By day and evening, the new [Snuff Mill Restaurant, Butchery &](#)

[Wine Bar](#) is a sophisticated, hip restaurant with entrée prices starting at \$32. But on the first Friday of the month, DJs pump out the tunes.

"Burgers & Beats" has been a hit, said chef Robert Lhulier, who planned to spin as DJ Jazzy Chef Jan. 7 before canceling the event because of weather. "We sell our signature burger and offer the full bar."

However, pulling off dinner and a show in a restaurant takes skill—and sensitivity.

Making fun the focus

Admittedly, entertainment is the concept at some restaurants. For example, consider the new [Wilma's](#) in downtown Wilmington, a duckpin bowling alley and a New Orleans-themed eatery serving brunch, lunch and dinner. (Duckpin balls are smaller and pins are squatter than those used in regular bowling.)

Downstate, [Lefty's Alley & Eats](#) in Lewes is a traditional bowling alley with a large restaurant and bar. The venue also offers an arcade, laser tag and ax-throwing—as well as wine dinners and live music.

Music has been a significant draw for [Shrimpy's Bar & Grille](#) in the Midway Shopping Center in Rehoboth Beach, where guests can tuck into a filet mignon while a singer croons Frank Sinatra. The restaurant books live performers nearly every night.

Entertainment was always part of [Grain on the Rocks'](#)

business plan. The Lewes restaurant provides a sound system and live-streaming capabilities. The bayside restaurant took its cue from its sibling, [Grain H2O](#), on the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal.

Why go above and beyond?

Adding entertainment and creating events brings excitement to the setting, Ferraro says. As a new restaurant, she wants to attract customers during the pandemic when many are sticking to old standbys.

"I'm not failing by any means," she said. "But if people are going to trek to a restaurant, they won't try something new unless it's offering something awesome."

Lee Mikles, co-owner of the Grain restaurants, would concur. "We feel it gives people a reason to visit, a reason to linger, a reason to return," he said. "Our live music is meant to be a complement to the evening."

And entertainment can add to the bottom line. At Shrimpy's Bar & Grill, reservations fill when Bryan Clark performs. "We sold out 55 weekends in a row," said owner Ronald Zee last fall. While listening to Clark, customers order everything from appetizers to desserts, with cocktails in between.

Ferraro's entertainment will whet appetites for the live music she plans to offer regularly in a currently unused space in the restaurant that has a stage.

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PHOTO BY MARY ELIZABETH PHILLIPS

GOVERNMENT

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DEMATTEIS TO LEAVE ROLE OVERSEEING FEDERAL STIMULUS TO HEAD STATE HR



BY BETSY PRICE

The woman in charge of overseeing how the state spends its federal stimulus money has been nominated to be secretary of the Department of Human Resources, and two people will be taking her place.

Gov. John Carney said in nominating Claire DeMatteis, now a special assistant to the governor, to head HR that he was asking A.J. Schall, director of the Delaware Emergency Management Agency, to manage that agency as well as implementation of American Rescue Plan Act investments.

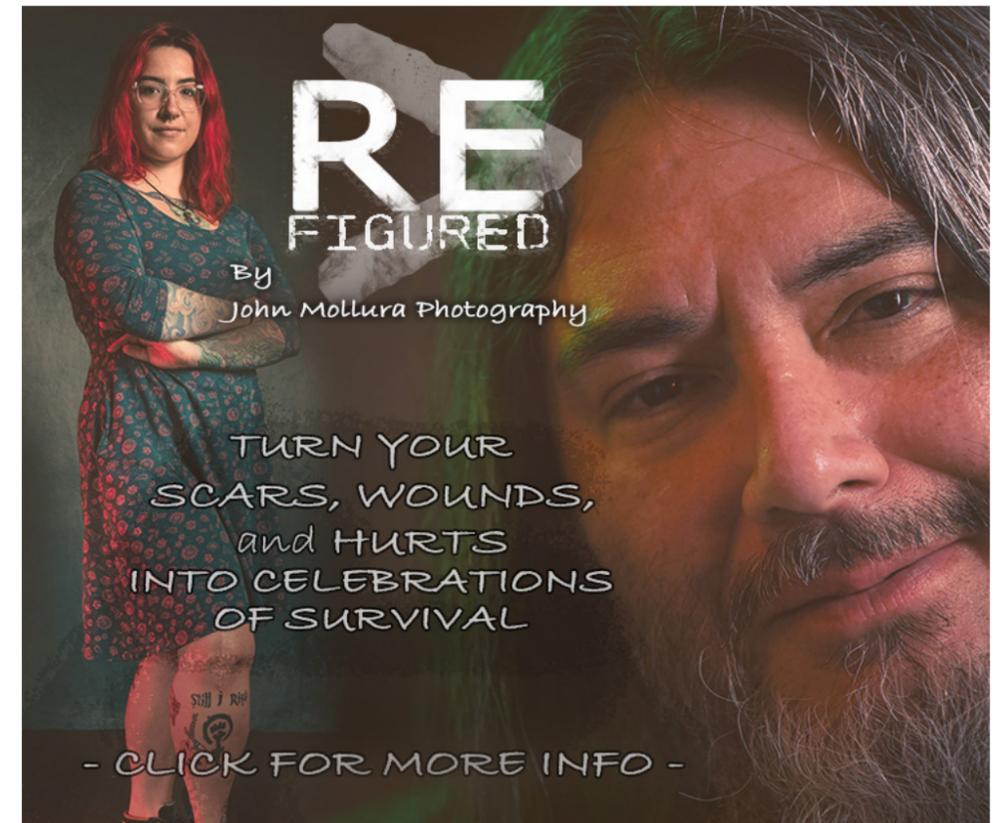
He also will move Greg Patterson, now chief of staff at the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, to his office as infrastructure implementation coordinator to manage funding received

through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Delaware is expected to receive more than \$2 billion through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including significant new funding for road and bridge repairs, broadband expansion, clean water projects, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

As secretary of the Department of Human Resources, DeMatteis will provide support for Delaware's state workforce and manage recruitment and retention programs across the executive branch of state government, the press release said.

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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The woman that state Sen. Darius Brown was accused of assaulting testified Wednesday that he hit her and threw a glass of water at her after seeing a photo of her and another man on Facebook.

Dr. Cherita Carroll testified at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington that she and Brown have known each other for about 10 years and have been “off again on again” dating throughout that time.

After arguing about the photo, she said, Brown told her he was leaving the restaurant they were in. She said she was staying. Carroll testified Brown walked over to her, said something like “You think this is a game?” and then hit the side of her head and threw a drink at her. He left.

Brown is facing charges of offensive touching and disorderly conduct. Chief Judge Carl C. Danberg is

VICTIM IN DARIUS BROWN CASE TESTIFIES ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED

presiding over the trial in the Court of Common Pleas. The charges stem from a May 2021 altercation with Carroll at Taverna Rustic Italian Restaurant in Wilmington.

In the prosecution’s opening statement, Deputy Attorney General Joe Grubb said the jury would hear evidence establishing that Brown punched Carroll in the head, picked up a drink and “launched it at her.”

Grubb said Brown became jealous when he saw the photo on Carroll’s phone.

The prosecutor told the jury that they would hear the testimony of a bartender, a waiter and a patron of the restaurant. None of them actually saw the punch being thrown, he said. All of them saw the result, he said: An emotional Carroll sitting in the booth, drenched in water, shards of glass in her hair, as Brown left the restaurant.

Grubb also said the state also would show video surveillance from the restaurant. Again, he told the jury, the video would not show the actual punch or the water being thrown. Instead, the video will show Brown getting out of his seat, doing something near Carroll, then leaving the restaurant.

“Something happened,” Grubb said, that made all three witnesses turn around and look.

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DMV WAIVES LATE FEES, ASKS CUSTOMERS TO USE ONLINE SERVICES

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles is encouraging customers to utilize the agency's [myDMV online portal](#) rather than visiting its brick-and-mortar locations. The online portal offers more than 20 services, including driver license renewal, vehicle registration renewal, address changes and more.

By completing those transactions online, the DMV hopes to alleviate some of the pressure on the staff at the physical locations. The agency said in a press release that it anticipates staffing shortages due to the surge in COVID-19 cases.

For customers who are not able to complete their transactions online, the division is encouraging the exclusive use of drive-through services at DMV locations.

In an effort to reduce capacity inside the DMV lobbies, a text messaging notification feature will be

implemented starting Tuesday, Jan. 4. With this feature, DMV customers will be able to wait in their vehicles until a text message invites them into the lobby when it is their turn to be served.

In addition, all late fees for vehicle registration and driver license renewals will once again be waived until further notice. Individuals are encouraged to wait until February if they require in-person renewals.

Customers who still need to visit a DMV facility should expect longer than usual wait times.

All DMV locations will continue to increase cleaning and disinfecting efforts and implement additional precautionary measures. All customers visiting a DMV location are still required to wear a mask inside the facility.



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WILMINGTON LEARNING COLLABORATIVE WAITS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS OK

BY BETSY PRICE

A state program that wants to centralize learning for Wilmington students now split between three districts is waiting to see whether those districts vote to join the effort.

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative, a joint project of the Delaware Department of Education and Gov. John Carney's office, wants the districts to agree to form a board to oversee just the city students among the districts.

Collaborative organizers have had more than 100 meetings with various groups, including the district boards and town halls inviting residents to talk. A virtual town hall is set for Thursday, Jan. 13, at 6:30 p.m. at <https://governor.delaware.gov/wlc/>.

Red Clay and Christina boards are expected to vote on whether to join the project this month, and the Brandywine school district in February.

James Simmons III, chief equity officer of the Delaware Department of Education, said he feels optimistic about the plan's chances, partly because no one has actively opposed it. Many people, though, have questions about how the board will be chosen, who will be on it and what powers it will have. The planners can't answer that.

"What we're saying is that we're not coming to you with a prescribed plan," Simmons said. "We're coming to you to say let's work on this plan together so that we're building this completely as a collaborative, and you can't call it a collaborative if you're coming in with prescribed answers, right?"

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BY BETSY PRICE

The University of Delaware said students could return to campus Jan. 2, but winter classes will start virtually as the school tries to stem the tide of Omicron variant COVID-19 cases.

At the same time, Wilmington University said it will react to a new Delaware State of Emergency by closing its campus starting Monday, Jan. 3. Faculty, staff and service departments will be available electronically to students, it said. More information about Spring classes will be released soon, the announcement said.

Gov. John Carney said Dec. 30 he would declare a new State of Emergency because of the record-setting rise of new COVID-19 cases fueled by the Delta and Omicron variants. He said he was doing it partly to allow him to ask the National Guard to work as nurses to help handle the rise in cases.

On Dec. 30, Delaware broke a week-old record by having 1,991 new COVID-19 cases. That number is expected to rise after people gather for the holidays. In the meantime, schools, businesses and other state

UD WILL START WINTER CLASSES VIRTUALLY; WILM U CLOSES CAMPUS

offices are struggling to stay manned because of infected, isolated and quarantined workers.

Delaware testing sites have been swamped, with many closing early, and most of the people waiting in line have been exposed to the virus or are showing symptoms consistent with a coronavirus infection.

UD said in its message to students, parents, staff and the public that Winter Session classes started Jan. 3, as planned. “However, to ensure that all students, faculty and staff who will be on campus during Winter Session have been tested at a UD testing site the first week of January, the majority of Winter Session classes will shift to an online format for the first week,” according to the UD statement. “Although classes will be virtual during this period, residence halls will reopen for Winter Session on schedule from noon-6 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 2.”

It also said all students, staff and instructors who will be on campus any time during the Winter Session must be tested during the week of Jan. 3.

After the first week of classes, UD will re-evaluate the situation and the administration hopes to revert to in-person learning “as soon as its is safe do do so,” the statement said.

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HOSPITALIZATIONS SKYROCKET TO 692 AS COVID-19 SURGE CONTINUES



BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware continues to set COVID-19 records, this week in hospitalizations, with 692 people admitted. The state has been routinely beating the daily hospitalizations record since late December when numbers started rising above the Jan. 12, 2021, record of 474. On Dec. 31, the state hit a record number of 3,554 positive cases per day.

The surge of cases is expected to peak in mid- to late-January as Omicron essentially spreads through the state.

With daily cases hitting the mid-2000s to 3000s, the state has been asking people to stay home if they feel sick, wear a well-fitting mask around other outside of your household and only go to emergency rooms if you have a true emergency, not simply to be tested for COVID-19.

Because testing sites are overwhelmed, the state is urging people to only be tested if they have symptoms, it's been five days after they were exposed, or you are

unvaccinated. The state is still recommending that anyone who is unvaccinated be tested once per week.

Gov. John Carney will have a virtual press conference about COVID-19 Tuesday at 1:45 p.m. that will be streamed on his [Facebook](#) page, [YouTube](#), and <https://governor.delaware.gov/live/>.

In its weekly COVID-19 roundup, the Delaware Division of Public Health said:

- Delaware has seen 198,507 COVID-19 cases since March 2020.
- The 7-day average of new positive cases is 2,505.4, up from 1,622 last week.
- The 7-day average for the percentage of total positive tests: 27.7%, up from 19.1% last week
- Of the hospitalizations, which are up 207 from last week, 63 are critically ill, up 8 from last week
- 44 COVID-19 cases were reported in the last week.

- The total of COVID-19 deaths in Delaware now stands at 2,330
- Breakthrough cases are rising, with 9,858 or 1.7% of fully vaccinated individuals.
- Of those, 166 have been hospitalized and 138 have died.

The Division also released a look at the vaccinated/not vaccinated status of hospitalizations and deaths. COVID-9 vaccinations continue to creep up, according to the Centers for Disease Control:

- The percentage of Delawareans five+ who have received at least one dose is 82%
- The percentage of Delawareans 12+ who have received at least one dose is 87.4%
- The percentage of Delawareans 18+ who received at least one dose is 89.5%
- The percent of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated is 64.6%

The state also told vaccine providers this week that the could begin giving Pfizer booster shots to individuals ages 12 to 15 as soon a five months after they finish their original two Pfizer shots. The FDA and CDC also said that people who got Pfizer or Moderna vaccines could shorten the time for their booster shot from six months to five.

The booster interval recommendation for people who received the J&J vaccine remains at two months.

Individuals younger than 18 are only able to receive the Pfizer vaccine and are not able to mix and match vaccine brands like those older can.

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STATE OKS VACCINE BOOSTERS FOR AGES 12 TO 15

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Division of Public Health on Thursday said that those aged 12 to 15 may be given booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, as long as their original shots were with Pfizer and were at least five months ago.

The state's move follows the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control's approval this week to expand the emergency use authorization of Pfizer boosters for the age group.

The CDC also shortened the booster interval from six months to five months for people who received Pfizer vaccine. The booster interval recommendation for those who received the J&J vaccine (two months) or the Moderna vaccine (six months), has not changed.

Individuals younger than 18 are only able to receive the Pfizer vaccine, and are not able to mix and match vaccine brands for their booster as older people can.

The FDA and CDC relied on Israeli data that showed there were no safety concerns for 12- to 18-year-olds.

The move comes as the state is grappling with record-setting daily numbers of new cases and record-setting numbers of hospitalizations.

"This is welcome news," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of Public Health. "Vaccines and booster doses offer the best protection against infection, hospitalization and death. I urge all Delawareans who are eligible to receive a booster dose to get one now. If you or your children have not received an initial round of the COVID-19 vaccine series, now is the time to protect yourself, your children and those you love. The more Delawareans who are vaccinated and protected against this virus, the better protected we all will be."

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are seven and 11 times higher, respectively, in unvaccinated adolescents, compared to vaccinated adolescents, the state press release said.

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DEL. HEALTH DEPARTMENT MARKS 100,000 SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT REFERRALS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services has surpassed a milestone of 100,000 Delawareans to substance use and mental health services.

Referrals are made through the Delaware Treatment and Referral Network, conducted by the agency's Division of Substance Use and Mental Health. Delaware is the first state to make more than 100,000 referrals using the system.

The system identifies and tracks health resources throughout the state, giving providers immediate visibility into resource availability across a shared network. This makes it easier to get people the help they need when they need it, according to a press release from the agency.

“One death from an opioid overdose or from a mental health crisis is one too many,” said Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long in a press release. “For families coping with a loved one, who suffers from substance use disorder or mental illness, finding help is an immediate need that must be met.”

Hall-Long said reaching the milestone is proof that Delaware is mending its fractured behavioral health system by ensuring that those in need can access treatment and get on the path to recovery.

She noted that in Nov. 2021, *Newsweek* recognized Delaware as one of only four states that the CDC reported as having a decrease in the annual percentage rate of opioid deaths.

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Cancer isn't waiting for COVID-19 to be over.

One in three Delawareans will get cancer. Unfortunately, many have put off their cancer screenings in the past year. Screenings detect cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you've skipped or canceled a screening due to the pandemic — for breast, cervical, colon, lung, or prostate cancer — don't wait one more day. **Call your health care provider to schedule your cancer screenings today.**

If you don't have a provider, we can help. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may be eligible for free screenings. To learn more about eligibility requirements and recommended cancer screenings, and other information, please visit HealthyDelaware.org/Cancer.

To schedule your cancer screening by phone:

Call your health care provider, dial 2-1-1, or speak directly with a nurse navigator at the health system nearest you, below.

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Bayhealth: 302-216-8328
Beebe Healthcare: 302-291-4380





SPORTS

PHOTO BY NICK HALLIDAY

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2021 DELAWARE MINI MAX HIGH SCHOOL AWARD WINNERS

BY NICK HALLIDAY

Maxwell Football Club President, Mark Dianno, announced the 2021 Mini Max High School Award winners for the state of Delaware. The forty-four players selected are from schools located throughout the state of Delaware. Players were nominated by their coaches throughout the 2021 season and were evaluated based on criteria that includes: football performance, academics, and community service.

The Maxwell Football Club will select one player from the group of Mini Max winners as the winner of the Delaware Player of the Year. The Delaware High School Player of the Year will be announced through a press release on Jan. 26.

The Maxwell Football Club also released the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Mini Max Award winners today. Pennsylvania Players from Districts 1, 3, 11 and 12 in the eastern part of the state and New Jersey players from throughout the state were eligible for selection as part of the program.

The winner of the New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware Player of the Year awards will be the candidates for the Club's 36th Jim Henry Award as the Outstanding Player in the region. The winner of the Jim Henry Award will be announced on Feb. 2.

Recent winners of the Jim Henry Award include Kyle McCord (St. Joseph's Prep–Ohio State), Will Howard (Downingtown West H.S.–Kansas State), Keith Maguire (Malvern Prep–Clemson), Shayne Simon (St. Peters



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Prep–Notre Dame), Jonathan Taylor (Salem H.S.–Wisconsin), Brandon McIlwain (Council Rock North H.S. –South Carolina/Cal), Kyle Shurmur (LaSalle College H.S.–Vanderbilt), Mark Pyles (Lebanon H.S.–Bucknell Univ.) Fran Walsh (Archbishop Wood H.S.–Villanova Univ.), Brendan Nosovitch (Allentown Central Catholic–University of South Carolina), Bill Kim (Upper Dublin H.S.–Johns Hopkins), Brad Herzlich (Conestoga H.S.–Brown University), Daniel Persa (Bethlehem Liberty H.S.–Northwestern.), Brent Caprio (Mainland Regional H.S.–William & Mary), Steven Rizzo (Audubon H.S.–Colgate), Pat Devlin (Downingtown East H.S.–Delaware), Ryan Greiser (Pennridge H.S.–Liberty Univ.), Dan Connor (Strath Haven H.S.–Penn State) and Austin Scott (Parkland H.S.–Penn State).

On this year's honorees, Maxwell Football Club President, Mark Dianno, said "This year's group of

Mini-Max winners were challenged by more than just their on-field opponents. They had to contend with circumstances of the pandemic impacting their families, communities, schools, teachers, academics, practices, coaches, and games; yet they consistently rose to meet those challenges and performed extraordinary feats on the fields, in their classrooms and in their respective communities. On behalf of the entire Board of Directors and all the members of the Maxwell Football Club, we congratulate and salute this exceptional group of student-athletes on being 2021 Mini-Max Award winners and wish them much success in their future endeavors."

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ST. E'S BOYS BASKETBALL WINS FIRST EVER VIKING INVITATIONAL

BY JASON WINCHELL

St. Elizabeth's basketball team kept its perfect record intact on Thursday, winning the Dick Rago Cup as the boys' champion at the first Viking Invitational, but it certainly wasn't easy. The Vikings needed a 9-0 run in the final minute to take care of the Panthers by a 54-49 score.

The Vikings stormed out to a 17-8 lead after one, sparked by Aiden Tobiason's three three-point shots. Polytech, led by Kyle Gamber and Dorrell Little, chipped away at that lead over the next two quarters until finally taking a 44-43 lead with 3:50 remaining when Xavier Brewington scored on a second-chance bucket.

After Leamond Pearce's steal and coast-to-coast basket restored the one-point advantage for the Vikings, the Panthers struck again. Gamber saved a ball inbounds to Brewington and headed to the right corner. Brewington fed him a pass, and the triple gave Polytech a 47-45 lead. Little scored a minute later to extend the lead to four.

But in the next 1:15, the Vikings got the plays they needed. Kye Rawls intercepted a Panthers pass and turned that into an old-fashioned three. Pearce then rebounded a missed Panthers free throw and went from one end to the other for a layup and a 50-49 Vikings lead.

An offensive foul on the Panthers put the ball back in the Vikings' hands, and Rawls made a pair of free throws with 21 seconds to go. He came up with another steal as the Panthers looked to tie, and two more free throws with 1.9 seconds on the clock sealed the win.

Rawls had 15 points to lead the Vikings. Tobiason had 14 and Jayden Lawrence added 12. The Vikings improved to 6-0 and hosted Wilmington Charter on Tuesday at 7:15 p.m. Little led all scorers with 18. Gamber (13) and Brewington (12) joined him in double figures. The Panthers (4-3) welcomed Milford on Tuesday.



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