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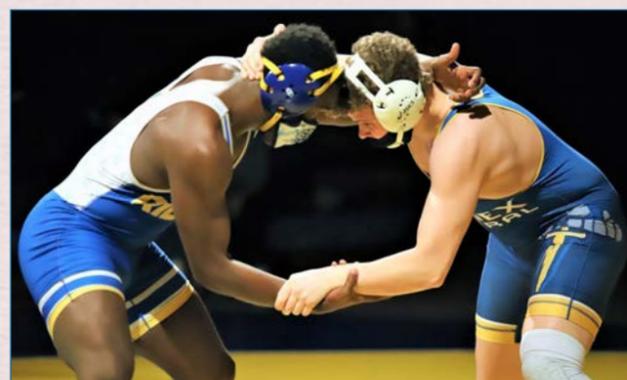
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PHOTO BY JOANN KINGSLEY



HEADLINES

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REPUBLICAN BILL WOULD INCREASE SENIOR PROPERTY TAX CREDIT TO \$750

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A Republican-backed bill to nearly double the tax break for senior citizen homeowners is pending action in the Delaware House of Representatives.

House Bill 287, sponsored by Rep. Kevin Hensley, R-Odessa, would increase the Senior School Property Tax Credit to a maximum of \$750 annually. Currently, homeowners ages 65 and older are eligible for a 50 percent tax credit against regular school property taxes up to \$400. The credit can only be used against property taxes on a homeowner's primary residence.

Until 2017, the maximum amount of the credit was \$500. After facing a large budget deficit, lawmakers cut the credit by 20 percent. That reduction has been included in each subsequent budget despite the robust rebound in state revenue.

"State revenue is way up, and this does not include the massive amount of relief funds we've received from the

federal government," Hensley said. "We've also, smartly, set aside money in rainy day and reserve accounts to take appropriate precautions for the future. Now I believe the state has an obligation to share its good fortune with its citizens."

No Democrats have signed on to co-sponsor the bill. Attempts to immediately reach the House Democratic Caucus for comment were unsuccessful.

The bill joins a growing package of tax cuts proposed by Republicans after the nonpartisan Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council, or DEFAC, announced that it anticipates the state will collect around \$820 million more than previously expected.

In response, Republicans filed legislation aimed at slashing Delaware's income tax, gross receipts tax and corporate tax; decreasing the real estate transfer tax; adjusting taxes with cost-of-living increases and giving

Delaware's lowest income earners a tax credit.

"By virtue of their life-long contributions, no group of citizens has collectively paid more taxes than our seniors," Hensley said. "At a time when the state is flush with cash, there is no excuse for not providing some modest tax relief to our older population, many of whom are now living on fixed incomes."

Secretary of Finance Rick Geisenberger said that if legislators decide to increase the credit to a maximum of \$750, they'll have to find a way to fund that expense in the state budget.

"At the end of the day, it's not a tax cut," Geisenberger said. "What it is, is it's a budget expenditure because the way it works is the school districts still get the money—it just comes out in state coffers, rather than out of the taxpayer coffers."

"Eventually, it gets paid for," he continued. "It's going to have to be paid for through income taxes, through realty property taxes or through some other form of taxation because the expenditure doesn't go away."

A separate bill sponsored by Rep. Mike Ramone, R-Pike Creek South, would restore the senior tax credit to the pre-2017 maximum of \$500. A fiscal note completed last year revealed the bill would return more than \$4.2 million annually to qualifying Delaware seniors. Geisenberger noted that the \$4.2 million estimate would have to be updated with new figures.

That bill—House Bill 108—has earned broad bipartisan support. Among the long list of sponsors and co-sponsors are ten Republicans and five Democrats.

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RED CLAY JOINS CHRISTINA, BRANDYWINE IN LEARNING COLLABORATIVE TALKS

BY BETSY PRICE

After making Gov. John Carney wait for hours at their January meeting and then raking him over the coals, the Red Clay School Board on Feb. 9 took only minutes to unanimously vote to join discussions to create a Wilmington Learning Collaborative.

Red Clay now will partner with the Christina and Brandywine districts in negotiating a memorandum of understanding that will set up a board to oversee only the Wilmington kindergarten to eighth grade students in their city schools.

A project of Carney’s office and the Delaware Department of Education, the Collaborative will be charged with helping the schools involved finding the best ways to help Wilmington students learn to the best of their abilities.

Carney has pledged \$7 million for the Collaborative to use in its programs, which are expected to rely heavily on suggestions from teachers and others already dealing with the children. It will also include programs that will reach into the community to help families and thereby help students.

“There is nothing more important than making sure our students get the education they need and deserve,” Carney said in a statement released after the meeting. “I want to thank members of the Christina, Brandywine, and Red Clay boards of education who unanimously voted to move forward with exploring the Wilmington Learning Collaborative—a partnership aimed at giving children, families and educators the support they need to be successful.

“Thank you to all who have come out to public meetings and other forums to discuss the Collaborative. We’ll only be successful if we continue to work together.”

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BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BRANDYWINE, WASHINGTON WAS IN WILMINGTON

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A Wilmington history buff has uncovered many of the roads and paths General George Washington marched Continental Army troops along en route to Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, for the 1777 Battle of Brandywine. Retired Army officer and University of Delaware graduate Bill Knightly plans to share his findings.

The George Washington Society of Delaware will hold a champagne luncheon at the Ed Oliver Golf Club on Sunday, Feb. 20, at 12:30 p.m. with Knightly as the featured guest.

“I’ve always had an interest in history and Delaware just has a fantastic history that not many people know about,” Knightly said. “I’m trying to uncover that history and make it interesting for people to learn about.”

In August 1777, 15,000 British troops came ashore near present-day Elkton, Maryland, with their eyes set on capturing Philadelphia. In order to stop that, Wash-

ington positioned 20,000 Continental Army troops between then-Head of Elk and Philadelphia, near Wilmington—but he was outflanked.

After a clash at Cooch’s Bridge south of Newark, the British troops traveled north and Washington ordered his troops to deploy against the British at Chadds Ford. The resulting conflict became known as the Battle of Brandywine.

“For historians, it’s more sexy to focus on the Battle at Brandywine and nobody focuses on how Washington got there,” he said. “There’s two reasons. Reason one is, that’s just not their major focus. They want to focus on the battle. And number two is that Washington didn’t write any orders to get there. It was done so quickly, all the orders were verbal orders and so there’s not a lot of written documentation.”

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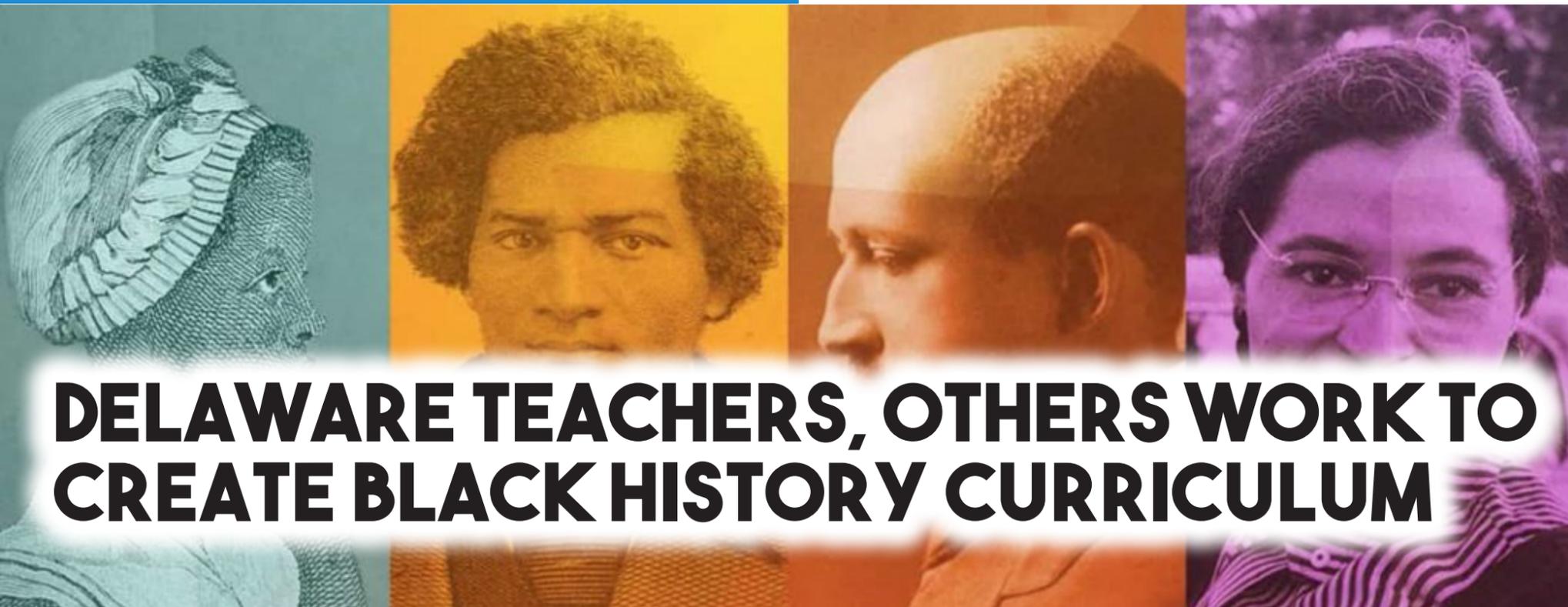
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DELAWARE TEACHERS, OTHERS WORK TO CREATE BLACK HISTORY CURRICULUM

BY JAREK RUTZ

When state schools start using a Black history curriculum in the 2022-23 academic year, it won't entail having classes focus solely on that subject for a week or weeks-long series of classes. Instead, elements of Black history will be spread out through grades and course material.

For example, two teachers told the Brandywine School District Feb. 7, kindergarten through third grade will take a multidisciplinary approach through English language arts, the visual and performing arts, and social studies. Grades four through 12 will draw upon the Delaware recommended curriculum that is currently being written, with Black history integrated into courses such as history, civics, government and economics.

What will be taught when is being discussed by panels of teachers, their state Social Studies Coalition and Department of Education experts who are helping the

schools find resources, including some through the Delaware State University and the University of Delaware.

At the elementary level, districts of Delaware are forming an Elementary Black History Education Committee. At the high school level, districts will work internally to find the best places to integrate Black history into their courses.

The focus on Black history stems from a new law signed into law in June 2021. That law, House Bill 198, requires K-12 public and charter schools to create a curriculum that includes contributions Black individuals have made to American society, culture, art, economics and politics. It is to go into effect in the fall.

Sponsor Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington, and members of the Delaware General Assembly's Black Caucus wanted children to learn about "real history,"

she said in an interview with Delaware LIVE. "Students reached out from the Delaware Black Student Union and said that they do not see themselves reflected in the classroom or any of the classrooms' lessons," she said. "That's when it really started burning inside of me that we need to do something for all students to have an understanding of Black history."

Walker says she wants the curriculum to "create dialogue, help people gain a better understanding of one another, and help those who are in positions of power understand that the system has never been in favor of Black people."

The state is following a similar path to create a curriculum including the history of the Holocaust. That is required by House Bill 318, sponsored by Rep. Deb Heffernan, D-Bellefonte. It, for example, may include part of the history in World War II classes, and part of the history in English classes, studying material such as "The Diary of Anne Frank."

Monica Gant, chief academic officer of Delaware's Department of Education, said the new Black history curriculum is intended to be "culturally responsive."

"We define cultural responsiveness as intentionally acknowledging and valuing the diversity, contributions and experiences of every educator and learner by providing opportunities for individuals to see themselves and others in their learning, which will lead to academic achievement, cultural competence and socio-political consciousness," Gant said.

The state's role in implementing the new legislation includes identifying resources that schools can use to teach Black history.

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CULTURE

PHOTO BY AIR MOBILITY COMMAND MUSEUM

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LONGWOOD'S RESTORED ORCHID HOUSE WILL SHOW EVEN MORE BLOOMS

BY BETSY PRICE

Longwood Gardens reopening its restored Orchid House Feb. 26 is the first sign of changes being wrought during its \$250 million Longwood Reimagined project.

The Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, attraction is expanding its conservatory in ways designed to modernize the displays, make the plants more accessible and employ more environmentally sound construction.

The Gardens will celebrate the grand opening of the Orchid House the weekend of Feb. 26 and 27 with activities that include opportunities to meet the Greg Griffis, curator of the Orchid House, and hear from the design team behind the renovation and the research team responsible for Longwood's orchid conservation program.

The century-old Orchid House will exhibit up to 50% more orchids from Longwood's world-class collection throughout the year, using new custom-made trellises of varying depths, heights and arrangements. The display will change routinely with at least 300 to 500 blooming orchids on display daily.

For information about tickets, go to www.longwood-gardens.org.





HALESTORM, HANK WILLIAMS JR. JOIN 2022 STATE FAIR CONCERT LINEUP

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware State Fair has announced two additional headline acts for its 2022 Delaware Lottery Summer Concert Series at the M&T Bank Grandstand.

Hard rock band Halestorm and country music star Hank Williams Jr. will join the star-studded list of acts that already includes Sam Hunt, Nelly, Toby Mac, ZZ Top, and, of course, the annual demolition derby.

Williams Jr. had been set to perform at the fair for the past two years, but the concert series was canceled in

2021 and Williams pulled out in 2021 over uncertainty relating to COVID restrictions.

The State Fair announced the additional headline acts in a Facebook [post](#) Feb. 7. The 103rd Delaware State Fair will be held from July 21 to 30.

Delawareans will finally have their chance to witness the performances of Christian hip-hop star Toby Mac and country music songsters Sam Hunt. Both were booked to perform at the 2021 fair but had to cancel due to the pandemic.

Rapper Nelly's appearance will mark his second visit to Delaware in less than a year after his performance at Firefly Music Festival in September.

The star-studded lineup is refreshing news for devoted fairgoers. In 2020, all concerts were canceled due to the pandemic. Acts would have included country musicians Dierks Bentley, Hank Williams Jr., and comedian Jim Gaffigan.

This past summer, the concert lineup originally featured TobyMac, Hunt, Williams Jr., and Vanilla Ice, but they all pulled out because of uncertainty surrounding the fate of Delaware's COVID-19 large gathering restrictions.

Delawareans can expect to see the following acts and others yet to be announced:

- Sam Hunt w/Roman Alexander on Thursday, July 21
- Halestorm on Friday, July 22
- Nelly on Saturday, July 23
- Demolition Derby on Sunday, July 24
- TobyMac w/Cade Thompson on Tuesday, July 26
- ZZ Top on Wednesday, July 27
- Harness Racing on Thursday, July 28
- Hank Williams Jr. on Saturday, July 30

Tickets range from \$20 to \$99 and can be purchased at this [link](#).





BUSINESS

PHOTO BY JASONGOODMAN ON SPLASH.COM

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CHRISTIANACARE TO ACQUIRE CROZER HEALTH, FOUR HOSPITALS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

ChristianaCare announced Feb. 11 that it has signed a letter of intent to acquire Crozer Health from Prospect Medical Holdings. Under the agreement, ChristianaCare will purchase the assets and operations of four Prospect hospitals in the greater Philadelphia area, including:

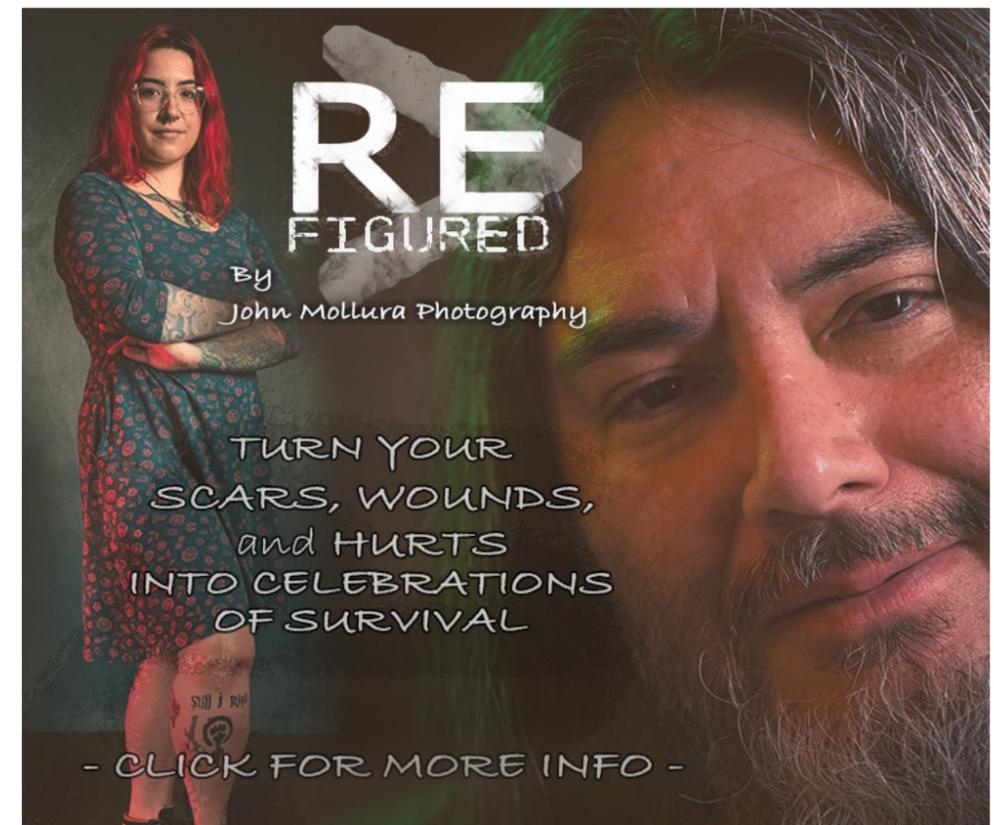
- Crozer-Chester Medical Center in Upland, Pennsylvania, with 499 certified beds
- Delaware County Memorial Hospital in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, with 215 certified beds
- Springfield Hospital in Springfield, Pennsylvania
- Taylor Hospital in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania

The agreement also includes the hospitals' related businesses, real estate assets, Crozer Health Medical Group and associated assets, ambulatory centers, medical office buildings, physician clinics and ancillary

outpatient services. A purchase price was not shared in the announcement.

“The pandemic has demonstrated the vital importance of working together to meet the clinical needs of the communities we serve,” said Kevin Spiegel, CEO of Crozer Health. “We are excited by the potential to join these two great organizations so that we can continue to provide the high-quality, accessible care that our communities—Delaware County and beyond—rely on.”

While the letter of intent lays the foundation for the purchase, ChristianaCare said it would continue to “engage in further due diligence and negotiation of a definitive agreement.” According to the health care network, definitive agreement execution is targeted for the second quarter of 2022 with the potential for closing



to occur in the second half of 2022. The agreement is subject to customary regulatory approvals.

Upon the deal's closing, ChristianaCare will return Crozer Health, with its approximately 4,000 employees, to nonprofit status as part of ChristianaCare. Crozer Health currently operates as a for-profit entity.

“ChristianaCare and Crozer Health have been serving the people of northern Delaware, southeast Pennsylvania and parts of Maryland and New Jersey as neighbors for many years,” said Dr. Janice Nevin, CEO and president of ChristianaCare. “We welcome this opportunity to explore a closer relationship with an organization that shares our commitment to value and service to the community.”





BARDEA'S NEW VENTURE: TACOS IN DE.CO FOOD COURT

BY PAM GEORGE

Before a restaurant opens for service, the staff often gather for a family meal. More often than not, the food is a departure from the regular menu. For instance, at **Bardea Food & Drink** in downtown Wilmington, an Italian concept, tacos became the employees' popular choice during the pandemic.

"We had some of the most memorable staff meals," recalled Scott Stein, who owns the restaurant with executive chef Antimo DiMeo. "The entire kitchen participated, and on some of our darkest days, it gave us a little hope—a bonding moment."

The tacos were so tasty that when Phubs' space became available in **DE.CO**, a downtown food hall, Bardea's owners decided to open a taqueria. "We thought it was an empowering time to create the concept," Stein said. "The

entire kitchen collaborated with Antimo on the menu."

The approach is appropriate, he added. "DE.CO was created as a launching pad for young chefs and entrepreneurs."

Taqueria el Chingon opened quietly on Feb. 9 with a focused menu. Chingon is a colloquial term for something masterful, cool or awesome. "We're making bad-ass tacos," he said. Consider pork al pastor with pineapple, togarashi (a Japanese condiment), lime and peppadew remoulade.

Other choices he mentioned are beef cheek with barbacoa, mole verde and mango mostarda, as well as chorizo with chipotle, corn salsa, queso fresco

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PHOTO BY MARY ELIZABETH PHILLIPS

GOVERNMENT

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DEMA GETS \$85.6 MILLION FROM FEMA FOR COVID TESTING, REPORTING

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware Emergency Management Agency announced Feb. 10 that \$85.6 million in federal funds have been made available for reimbursement of COVID-19 testing and reporting costs.

The funds, issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, will reimburse the state agency for emergency protective measure costs incurred between Oct. 12, 2020 and Sept. 12, 2021. According to DEMA, approximately \$3.08 million of the grant covers COVID-19 materials for emergency protective measures and \$82.56 million covers contract costs that were directly related to and used for COVID-19 patients.

“This grant funding supports Delaware’s response as it rapidly enhanced capabilities to ensure equitable expansion of COVID testing among some the most vulnerable populations,” said MaryAnn Tierney, regional administrator with FEMA.

According to the state agency, DEMA’s COVID-19 plan includes key considerations such as access, equity, and cost, and is structured to define specific strategies for key populations, including long-term care residents and staff and other congregate settings, vulnerable populations, such as elderly Delawareans and members of low-income and minority communities, and certain front-line essential workers.

“From May of 2020, Delaware has worked to have a layered testing approach to keep people safe,” said DEMA Director AJ Schall. “Through the FEMA Public Assistance program, we have been able to address testing demand and have regularly exceeded the testing goal set by the CDC.”

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DELAWARE DOJ CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION SECURES FELONY HATE CRIME CONVICTION



HATE CRIMES

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Attorney General Kathy Jennings on Feb.10 announced the Department of Justice's first felony hate crime trial conviction by the agency's Division of Civil Rights and Public Trust. Defendant Matthew Gregg was convicted by a New Castle County jury on charges of hate crimes, harassment, and terroristic threatening after repeatedly verbally attacking a member of Gov. John Carney's staff, an African American woman, with threats, and racist and sexist slurs.

The Division of Civil Rights and Public Trust enforces hate crimes law in Delaware. Under **Title 11, Section 1304** of the Delaware Code, if a defendant engages in terroristic threatening, disorderly conduct, or any other crime, and the defendant selected their victim on the

basis of the victim's race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin or ancestry, then the crime is a hate crime under Delaware law.

"It's a disturbing fact that hate is alive and well in 2022, and I'm grateful to the jury, the victim, and our prosecutors for fighting back," Jennings said in a press release announcing the conviction. "State employees engage with the public every day; that engagement matters and our communities are stronger because of it."

Jennings said her office will not tolerate threats of any kind, "least of all those colored by hate and ignorance.

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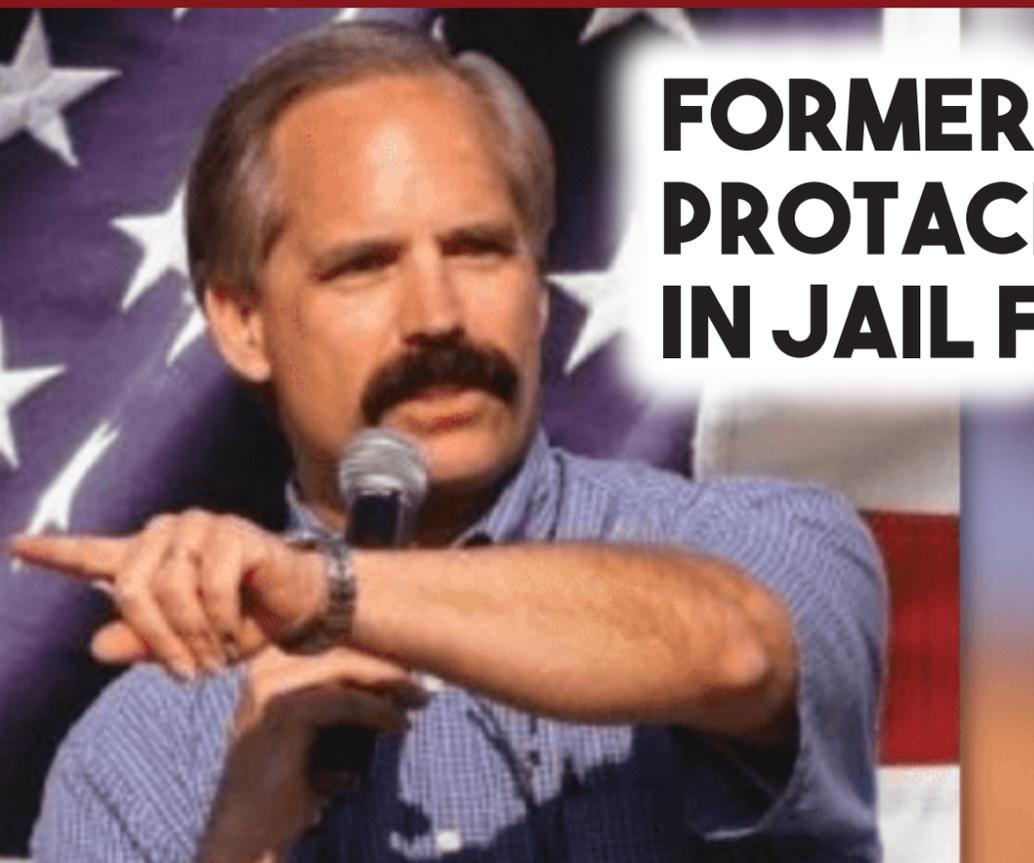
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FORMER GOP CANDIDATE PROTACK SENTENCED TO YEAR IN JAIL FOR MAILING THREATS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A former Delaware Republican candidate for governor and U.S. Senate will spend a year behind bars after pleading guilty to federal charges of mailing threats to his ex-wife's attorney.

Michael Protack, 64, was sentenced Feb. 8 to 12 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Richard G. Andrews on the charge of mailing threatening communications.

According to court documents, Protack used the U.S. mail to send a series of threatening communication to his ex-wife's attorney. One threat, received on Jan. 7, 2021, stated that the victim should "count on being dead by June 2021." "You won't know when, where or how but your end has been written," the communication said. "Take the time and put your affairs in order because they will not find your body for weeks."

Another threat, received a couple of months later, contained nothing more than a graphic image of a dead, mutilated body. One of the last threats received by the victim stated, "I drive past your office every day."

Protack was arrested on June 11, 2021. In handing down his sentence, Judge Andrews described Mr. Protack's conduct as a "campaign of terror" and noted the lengths to which Mr. Protack went to conceal his identity as the perpetrator.

Andrews further noted that Protack's actions represented a "very serious offense" and there was a need for just punishment that would promote respect for the law.

United States Attorney for the District of Delaware David Weiss said "Protack's repeated threats to murder another human being is, indeed, a very serious offense, and the court's sentence reflects that fact."

"My office is dedicated to obtaining justice for victims of violent crime and holding the perpetrators of these crimes accountable," Weiss said. "I want to thank the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the FBI for their diligence in investigating this case and helping bring Mr. Protack to justice."

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DEM. BILL WOULD GUARANTEE HEALTH INSURANCE FOR UNDOCUMENTED CHILDREN

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Democratic lawmakers plan to file a bill in the General Assembly Feb. 11 that would guarantee health insurance for all Delaware children who are not otherwise covered, including undocumented immigrant children.

House Bill 317, sponsored by Rep. Krista Griffith, D-Fairfax, and Sen. Sarah McBride, D-Wilmington North, would direct the Department of Health and Social Services to develop and operate a medical coverage program for children in Delaware whose family income is low enough that they would qualify for Medicaid or CHIP coverage but for other reasons do not. The bill has been dubbed the “Cover All Delaware Children Act.”

“Many of us take health insurance and its lifesaving benefits for granted, but for thousands of Delaware children, there is no viable option for them to get covered,”

Griffith said during a press conference Feb. 8. “A simple trip to the doctor for an illness or to get vaccinated is not a financially viable option.”

Asked how much the program would cost, Griffith said Nemours Children’s Health has estimated the cost at around \$3 million to \$5 million annually. She noted that those funds weren’t included in the governor’s budget and would have to go through the Joint Finance Committee in order for the program to take effect by Jan. 1, 2023.

State House Minority Leader Danny Short, R-Seafood, thinks the program would cost much more than that.

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

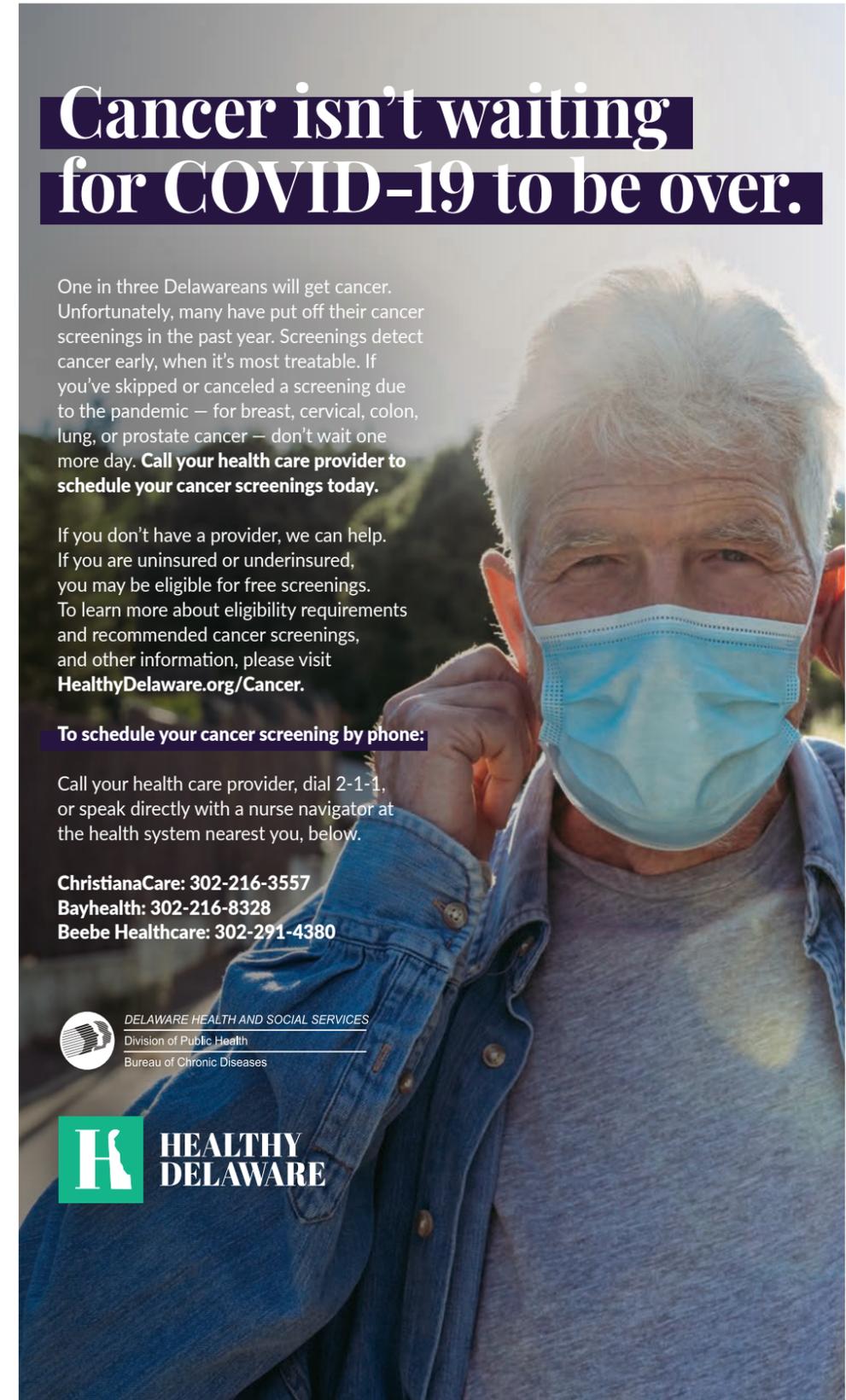
One in three Delawareans will get cancer. Unfortunately, many have put off their cancer screenings in the past year. Screenings detect cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you've skipped or canceled a screening due to the pandemic — for breast, cervical, colon, lung, or prostate cancer — don't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

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





REPUBLICANS TAP ATTORNEY TED KITTILA TO RUN FOR GERALD BRADY'S SEAT

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Republican Party of Delaware has selected Wilmington attorney Ted Kittila to serve as their nominee in the upcoming special election to fill the

vacancy left by Rep. Gerald Brady.

In 2014, Kittila received the nomination of the Delaware GOP to be the Republican candidate for attorney general, ultimately finishing second in the five-way race to Democrat Matt Denn.

The special election is scheduled for Saturday, March 5. Kittila will face off against former Wilmington City Councilman and transportation department spokesman Bud Freel, who the Democrats nominated Feb. 7.

The 4th District includes the Highlands and Trolley Square areas of Wilmington. Freel served on the Wilmington City Council for nearly 24 years and much of his district overlapped with Brady's.

Voter registration data shows that Democrats maintain a two to one lead over Republicans in the district, which, combined with Freel's name recognition, makes him heavily favored to win the special election.

Kittila is the managing partner of Wilmington law firm Halloran Farkas + Kittila LLP. According to the

firm's website, "Kittila has served as lead counsel on a number of complex corporate and commercial disputes, including expedited litigation in the Delaware Court of Chancery, where Mr. Kittila clerked from 2000 to 2001, litigation involving Delaware limited liability companies and contract interpretation in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware, and litigation in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court both in Delaware and nationally involving Delaware-related entities."

Kittila received his bachelor of arts in international relations from the University of Delaware and his juris doctorate from the University of Minnesota Law School.

A spokesman for the Republican Party said an official announcement will likely be made Friday, Feb. 11 and that Kittila would withhold comment until that time.

If Kittila wins the special election, he won't hold the seat for long. During the redistricting process finalized in Nov. 2021, the 4th Representative District was relocated to the Long Neck and Oak Orchard area of Sussex County. New district lines will take effect immediately following the next election, which will be held on Nov. 8, 2022.

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DEMOCRATS TO RUN FORMER COUNCILMAN BUD FREEL IN SPECIAL ELECTION

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Democratic Party has selected former Wilmington City Councilman and transportation department spokesman Bud Freel to serve as the

Democratic nominee in the upcoming special election to fill the vacancy left by Rep. Gerald Brady. The Delaware Republican Party has announced Wilmington attorney Ted Kittila as its nominee on Feb. 8. The election is scheduled for Saturday, March 5.

The 4th District includes the Highlands and Trolley Square areas of Wilmington. Voter registration data shows that Democrats maintain a two to one lead over Republicans in the district, which, combined with his name recognition, gives Freel a high probability of victory.

“Bud Freel already has a 24-year history of serving residents of the 4th Representative District, as his former councilmanic district overlaps with much of the district he is running to represent,” the Democratic Party said in a press release. “Known for his level head and voice of reason, Bud Freel was often a unifying force on the Wilmington City Council.”

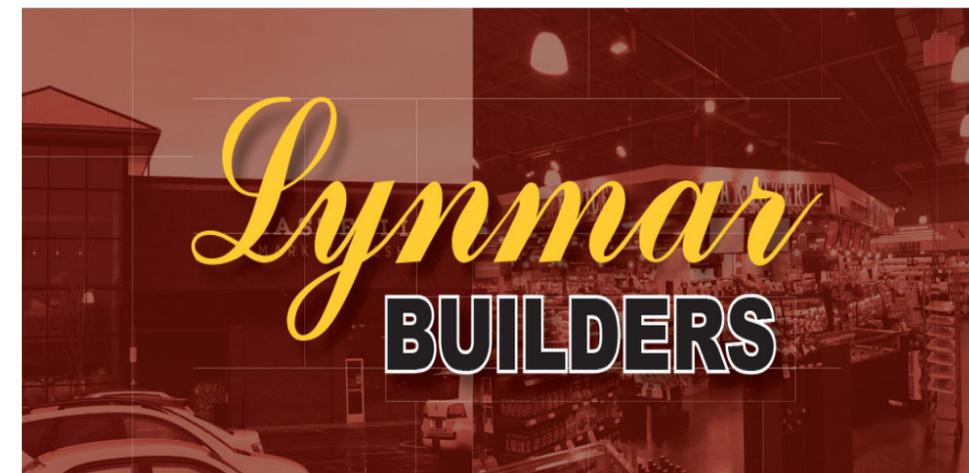
Freel was selected during a meeting of the 4th District Democratic Committee Monday evening. In selecting Freel, the committee passed on Dr. Adriana Bohm, a Red Clay School Board member and sociology professor at Delaware County Community College. Bohm could not be reached for comment.

If Freel wins the special election, he won't hold the seat for long. During the redistricting process finalized in Nov. 2021, the 4th Representative District was relocated to the Long Neck and Oak Orchard area of Sussex County. New district lines will take effect immediately following the next election, which will be held on Nov. 8, 2022.

In order for Freel to maintain a seat in the House of Representatives after the current term, he would have to challenge an incumbent—likely Rep. Krista Griffith, a Democrat from Fairfax whose district will engulf much of the current 4th District as a result of redistricting.

Some have mentioned former state Sen. Anthony Delcollo, a Republican from Elsmere who lost his seat to Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos in the 2020 election.

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SCHOOLS UNLIKELY TO LIFT MASK MANDATE EARLY, DESPITE PARENT PLEAS

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney announced Feb. 7 that he would lift his indoor mask mandate Feb. 11—except for schools, where masks are required until March 31.

On Feb. 8, parent Benjamin Kennedy asked the Appoquinimink School District Board to not wait and to get rid of masks in schools on Feb. 11. The next night, parent Brandon Bushon asked the Red Clay Consolidated School District Board to get rid of masks on Feb. 11 when Carney's indoor mask demand expires.

Delaware Superintendent of Education Mark Holodick said it's not likely to happen. "While that may sound good, our 19 superintendents and charter leaders as a whole would not agree with that," Holodick said Feb. 10. "They need time."

Kennedy pointed out to the Appo board that other countries have removed school mask mandates and studies that said masks didn't have much effect on slowing the spread of the virus. But masks do have a negative

impact on grammar, active learning, facial recognition and social cue development, he said.

"I definitely don't want to be controversial," he said. "I would just like to plead with the board to make a determination based on findings from some leading health organizations in the world. Please end the school mask mandate and if not please let me know...the scientific rationale for why it would remain in place."

Bushon issued a more fiery challenge to the Red Clay board. "These illogical and irrational mass policies have done nothing but harm our children," he said. "Yet, I still hear people wonder why our kids' composite scores have dropped significantly over the past few years."

His own two children have experienced headaches, nosebleeds and overall focus issues, he said. "Our children deserve to have an optimal learning environment," he said. "They've been through enough the past 23 months."

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TOWER HILL REPLACES LIBRARY WITH HUB THAT ENHANCES TECH, GATHERINGS

BY JAREK RUTZ

You won't find librarians shushing students to maintain silence in the Tower Hill School's Education Hub. "THE Hub is a place where it is constantly buzzing," said Andrea Glowatz, dean of Teaching and Learning at Tower Hill School. The Tower High Education Hub, usually referred to by the students and staff as THE Hub, is an innovation center that replaced the old library.

THE Hub features a design lab, an innovation commons area with a large digital display wall, several "huddle rooms" for students to collaborate, floor-to-ceiling windows to let natural light into the space, and a teaching and learning center. It also features a large living green wall, equipped with an irrigation system, that gives texture to the space. Faculty and students say THE Hub looks and feels like part of a college campus.

Students often have to walk through the center to get to class, so THE Hub acts as a metaphorical nucleus of Tower Hill.

The school declined to talk about its cost, paid for as part of the Tower Hill 100 campaign, honoring the school's 100th anniversary in 2019. That campaign, which has a goal of raising \$19.19 million, is set to end this spring and already has exceeded its fundraising goals, said Amy Shrei, director of communications and marketing.

The students love THE Hub. "I use the Teaching and Learning Center everyday. Almost any time I have a free period, I'm here," said Megan Angeny, a sophomore. "It is a quiet study space but also a space of collaboration to get opinions on my ideas."

Emani Larkin, a junior, said her favorite part of the new center is the booths that line the outer area of THE Hub. "I get to sit and either talk with my friends or work on projects, and there's also really good white boards to use and collaborate on," she said.

THE Hub was designed to be able to keep technology up to date and also create a more welcoming and inclusive environment in which students can work. The construction also created more classrooms.

"The old library looked very old," said Glowatzl. "We had the dark wood tables and the wood paneling and the wood cubicles and everything was hard and cold—it didn't look like a place where students would want to congregate." With the renovations, Glowatz said the students of Tower Hill have a welcoming space that is conducive to getting work done.

The books are still there, but pushed to the outside rather than being a focal point. The arrangement allows the books to be organized better and to be more accessible to the students, Glowatz said.

Matthew Jackson, the director of THE Hub, said the space allows a group to carry on a full conversation in one area while in another, a student can sit with headphones on, laptop in front of him or her, book to the left, water bottle to the right. "And they're just jamming away getting their work done," he said.

The smaller enclosed rooms cater to students who prefer to work in a quiet private space. Jackson said the school listened to student feedback when it designed the space and will continue to.

"It's nice to know that our feedback matters," said Angeny. "They're able to take our input on what we like and dislike about the area and try to fix it to make everyone feel comfortable in the environment."





BY BETSY PRICE

The Appoquinimink School Board on Feb. 8 voted unanimously to change school starting times to help deal with a bus shortage that's meant students having to get to school hours before classes start and stay hours after classes end.

After months of studying the issue, weeks of public comment and 951 emailed comments from parents and other adults, the board took a little more than 10 minutes to choose what they call a three-bell or three-tier system.

When the 2022-23 school year starts in September, middle schools will start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 2:10; high schools will start at 8:20 and end at 3 p.m; elementary schools will start at 9:10 and end at 3:30 and PreK will start at 9:10 and end at 3:10.

Board member Richard Forsten made the motion to

APPO VOTES TO GO TO 3-BELL SYSTEM TO DEAL WITH BUS SHORTAGE

change the current two-bell situation. "But before I do, I wanted to explain some of the background and thought that goes into it," said Forsten, a former board president. "I'll begin by observing that we received more emails on this topic than certainly anything else I think the board has received input on, but that's a good thing. I think that's great. And I think it's been helpful for all of us." Ultimately, he said, "There is no perfect solution."

The changes are needed to allow those driving the buses to turn around and pick up another load, district transportation officials have said.

Forsten said he thought it was important to let high school start as late as possible because of the medical research that said kids that age need more sleep. All medical studies say that, Forster said.

Better sleep results in better mental health, performance and grades, he said. The result is not just in the classroom, Forsten said, but includes things like fewer car accidents.

Under the new plan, the system would only have one bus route uncovered, and transportation officials expect a substitute will be able to cover that easily. Right now under the two-bell system, there are 19 uncovered routes and 3,900 students who do not have access to a bus.

Other benefits from a 3-tier schedule include shorter travel time for students, said Thomas Poehlmann, director of safety, security and operations. In addition,

635 students assigned to early and late routes would have a normal bus schedule.

Under the new system, drivers could earn additional money by running more routes, he said.

Appoquinimink is one of the state's fastest-growing school systems. Superintendent Matt Burrows said the system gained 550 new students between the start of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. Then another 165 have arrived after the Sept. 30 state funding cutoff, meaning the system is not getting state funding for them. The system is given state school money based on a formula that uses that Sept. 30 enrollment as the basis for its calculations. "715 students," Burrows said. "That is a full elementary school of students."

The system has been dealing with what is a national bus driver shortage, as have other Delaware districts.

Drivers who were retired from another profession have stopped driving because of the fear of the COVID-19 virus. Appo doesn't own any buses, like other districts do, so it must contract with transportation companies.

Many bus drivers in other districts live in those districts, and the districts are not as spread out as Appo.

The state tells districts how many routes it will pay for. In Appo's case, those routes are offered to bus transportation companies who control what the drivers are paid. The school system does not.

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CAESAR RODNEY RECORDS THREE PINS TO ADVANCE

BY BENNY MITCHELL

Caesar Rodney and Sussex Central squared off two months ago with the Riders narrowly winning by one point. The two rivals met again on the mat in the DIAA. Dual Meet State Tournament quarterfinals on Wednesday night, both teams knowing every team point was valuable.

Caesar Rodney won eight of the 14 bouts and recorded three pins enroute to a 34-31 victory and advances to the Division I semifinal round where it will wrestle Salesianum.

“We knew our last match with them was a barnburner, they are well coached and we had a few things go our way tonight. The flip at 170 was huge for us,” Caesar Rodney head coach Dan Rigby said.

Sussex Central jumped out to a quick 9-0 lead with Chase Murray winning by technical fall over Cole Moffett at 113 pounds, followed by Evan Cordrey’s 15-7 major decision over Antonio Darby at 120 pounds. Caesar Rodney answered by winning the next four bouts.

Dylan Bennett (126) pinned Tony William in 3:10, M’Ja Smith (132) won a 7-2 decision over Evan Broomall.

Cameron Cataldi won a 10-5 decision over Gunnar Abbott at 138 pounds followed by Cody Waski winning a 20-7 major decision over Justin Negron at 145 giving the Riders a 16-9 lead.

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MIDDLETOWN'S DEPTH KEY TO VICTORY OVER WOODBRIDGE



BY GLENN FRAZER

The DIAA State Indoor Track Meet is scheduled for Saturday (Feb. 19), but Friday night in Middletown, the ninth-ranked Cavaliers and Woodbridge provided their own brand of “a track sprinting event” in boys basketball. The two teams raced up and down the court playing the first half in barely 30 minutes of real time and went into the locker room separated by a single point at 28-27 in favor of the Cavs.

Ultimately, the depth of Middletown was too much for the Blue Raiders starting five, as the Cavaliers outscored Woodbridge 44-29 in the second half for a 72-56 win.

The first two quarters were very entertaining as neither team led by more than six points. Freshman

Isaiah Giles banked a three-pointer from the left corner at the buzzer to cut the Cavs advantage to 28-27 at the break. It would be his only basket of the game as most of the Blue Raiders offense this season funnels through the other four starters. Emmanuel McRea-Mosely, Kenny Newtown, Bruce Mosely and Ci-Atrick Stones are those four starters, and along with Giles, predominantly play the entire game for head coach Julius Cannon. They are “fearless,” constantly attacking the rim while using their quickness to force turnovers.

Middletown head coach Azeez Ali, countered with the depth of his team—staying fresh and matching the intensity of the visiting Blue Raiders.

Woodbridge started fast to open the third quarter, scoring four straight points on baskets by Newton and Bruce Mosely to grab its first lead of the night at 31-28. Undaunted, the Cavs regained the lead as Christian Simms drained a long-range jumper and Ty Hynson made a bucket for a 33-31 turnaround. The two battled neck-and-neck for the next two minutes until Middletown went on an 8-0 run to push the lead to 44-35.

That spurt, plus foul trouble, proved to be the difference, as the visiting team would get no closer than seven points in the fourth quarter. Two starters fouled out (Stones and McRea-Mosely) as the Cavaliers built a double-digit lead early in the final quarter and “coasted” from there.

Middletown’s balanced attack was led by Hynson with 21 points and six rebounds. Jaden Rogers added 12 points—six boards, five assists—while Simms made three treys and ended with 11 points. The Cavaliers improved to 11-5 and will host Mount Pleasant Tuesday.

McRea Mosely scored a game-high 28 points (five three-pointers) for Woodbridge. Newton added 11, while Bruce Mosely contributed with nine points. The Blue Raiders fall to 9-4.





CAESAR RODNEY SHOCKS NO. 2 SALESIANUM IN STATE WRESTLING SEMIS

BY BENNY MITCHELL

The Caesar Rodney Riders ended the regular season with a loss at Salesianum. Eight days later, the two met in the semifinals of the DIAA Dual Meet State Championships at Smyrna High School on Saturday afternoon. The Riders came out firing on Saturday recording five pins beating Salesianum 37-34.

Antonio Darby got Caesar Rodney off to a fast start at 120 pounds with a pin in 5:48 over Brady Bartkowski after initially falling behind 5-0 to start the bout. “Coach told me it was my time to shine, so I looked at my team and just went hard,” Darby said.

The Sals’ Colin Honaker answered with a 9-8 decision over Dylan Bennett cutting the Riders lead to 6-3.

Caesar Rodney responded with a pair of bonus points wins as M’Ja Smith won a 9-0 major decision over Sam Munch at 132 pounds and Cameron Cataldi pinned Frank Borzio in 4:50 at 138 pounds to put the Riders in front 16-3.

Carson Kist answered for Salesianum with a pin over Christian Rosbury in 51 seconds at 145 pounds. Caesar Rodney made the first of a series of lineup moves at 152 bumping Cody Waski up where he recorded a pin over Connor Sullivan in 2:59 putting the Riders up 22-9.

“Cody Waski’s pin was huge, we were just looking to flip the match there from the last time and he goes out and gets bonus,” Caesar Rodney head coach Dan Rigby said.

Salesianum cut into the Caesar Rodney lead with a pair of victories. Anthony Dellicompagni won an 11-3 major decision over Mason Bush at 160 pounds followed by Quinn Bartkowski winning a 4-1 decision over D.J. Baker at 170 pounds giving Caesar Rodney a 22-16 lead.

Brock Conner got the Riders back in the win column, pinning Beau Minner in 39 seconds at 182 pounds. Max Agresti answered with a 29-second pin over Sam Soghomonian at 195 pounds. The momentum swung back to Caesar Rodney when Shamar Nelson bumped up to 220. Nelson was down 5-0 when he took James Miller down to his back and secured the pin in 2:44. Josh Dyer sealed the match, bumping up to 285 and winning a 7-2 decision over Domenic Sama as Caesar Rodney built an insurmountable 36-22 lead.

Mason Cantania (106) and Cameron Davis (113) received forfeits to close out the match.

“We talked all week about how tough Sallies was going to be with some guys coming back from injuries and we told the guys we needed to flip some matches and get some pins. Antonio Darby just got us off to a great start and those pins later in the match were just huge,” Rigby said.

Caesar Rodney meets Cape Henlopen in the state final. Cape Henlopen advanced with a 33-31 victory over Smyrna. “I am just excited for these kids to get this win and now they have a chance to compete for a state championship,” Rigby said.



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