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Harlan Elementary Promotes Reading



Special Election March 5



Appo Outlasts Smyrna

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HEADLINES

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RENTER, LANDLORD ADVOCATES DISAGREE OVER SOLUTIONS TO EVICTION CRISIS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Lawmakers and advocates say a new Delaware Supreme Court rule that allows tenants to be represented by non-lawyer advocates in eviction proceedings will create parity with landlords and mitigate some of the most harmful effects of housing insecurity.

Opponents, including the Delaware Apartment Association, the non-profit group that represents the interests of multi-family rental unit landlords, say efforts and money would be better spent in the form of direct rental assistance.

For the Supreme Court's rule change to have its full intended effect depends on the passage and signing of a bill that's been held up in the House of Representatives since before the legislature recessed in June 2021.

Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 101, sponsored by Sen. Bryan Townsend, D-Brookside, would guarantee the right to counsel in landlord/tenant actions for households that fall below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

"The bill tries to focus on those most in economic need," Townsend said in an interview with Delaware/

Town Square LIVE News. "The reason for it is because there's a vastly disproportionate percentage of instances in which the landlord has legal counsel or an experienced advocate in court to represent the interests of the landlord, but the tenant does not have legal counsel at all."

Indeed, according to the ACLU of Delaware, 86% of landlords retain legal representation in court eviction proceedings while, on average, only 2% of renters have representation.

"There's a sort of inherent unfairness to that," Townsend said. "If you happen to be one of the very few tenants who has access to counsel and you walk into court and you're sitting there waiting for your proceeding to begin, and you look over and there's another tenant without legal counsel—well, it's very likely that the two of you are going to walk out of the courthouse with quite different outcomes."

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CHRISTINA SCHOOL DISTRICT ASKS FOR MORATORIUM ON NEW, EXPANDING CHARTER SCHOOLS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Christina School District's Board of Education has called for a statewide temporary moratorium on new charter schools and the expansion of existing charter schools. The board hopes that the pause will stabilize relationships between schools and districts that serve students in Wilmington while they work together on developing Gov. John Carney's proposed Wilmington Learning Collaborative and implementing proposals from the Redding Consortium for Education Equity.

But Kendall Massett, executive director of the Delaware Charter Schools Network, said a moratorium is not what's best for Wilmington's students. "We look forward to working with the Wilmington Learning Collaborative once it is established," Massett said. "We want to work with all schools and districts to ensure every student in Wilmington has access to a high-quality public school that best meets their needs. A temporary moratorium on new charter schools in the area will not help us meet that goal."

The Wilmington Learning Collaborative is a voluntary network of schools in Wilmington across multiple school districts. It asks Christina, Red Clay and Brandywine school districts to create a new board to oversee the education of Wilmington students in kindergarten through eighth grade and create programs to help those students learn and achieve at state and national levels.

Carney has argued that city students are often faced with unique issues not common in suburban areas, and therefore have different educational needs. His proposed fiscal year 2023 budget includes \$7 million for the Collaborative.

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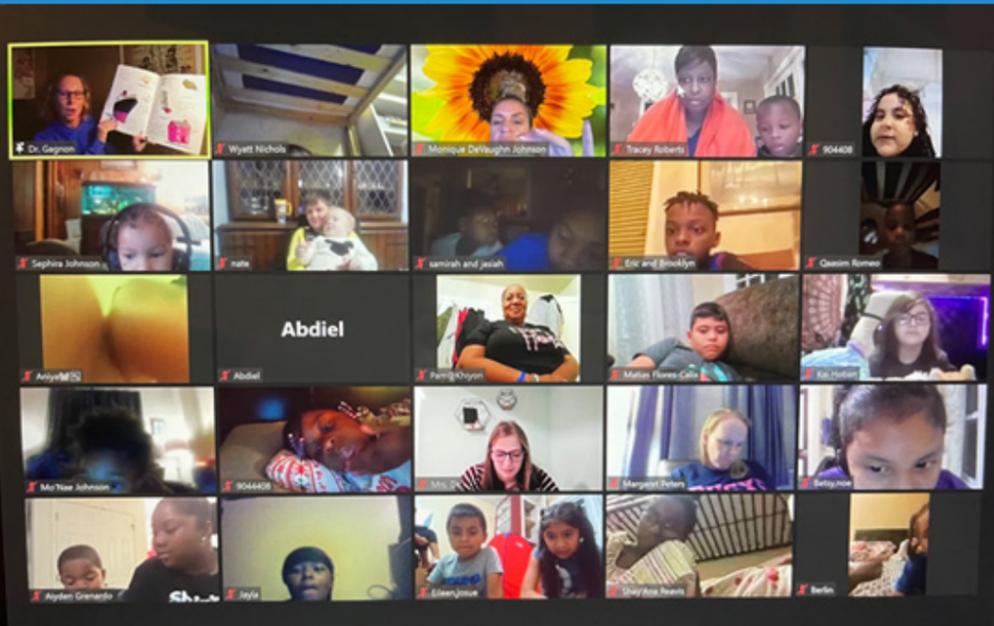
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BY BETSY PRICE

A Wilmington school’s night time story program started to keep students engaged while classes were in virtual mode has grown into a cultural touchstone for students, families and teachers.

Every Thursday night, as many as 70 Harlan Elementary School students and their families log on to its Bedtime Stories via Zoom to hear a teacher read a book. During the 30-minute program, a teacher or Principal Tracey Roberts point out aspects of the story that the students can connect to. Prizes are given, including copies of books.

“We want to foster a love for learning and a love for reading,” Roberts said. “We want to get students excited about reading different types of books, to get them to know that when you hear a book or read a book, that you can always make a connection to it in some way.”

Some of those connections might be personal—the main character might have a brother and so does the student—or it might be a connection to another book

HARLAN ELEMENTARY'S BEDTIME STORIES PROMOTE READING, COMMUNITY

or a movie that had the same theme or kind of character.

The 70 students attending Bedtime Stories represent about one-fifth of the school’s students, who are 96% African Americans, 3% Latino and 1% other. It began in January 2021, and ended with the school year, but when the kids returned to in-person classes for the 2021-2022 year, many kept asking if it was coming back. It did in October.

The number of attendees has grown steadily since the program started, Roberts said. She hopes to find ways to continue that growth.

Online, the kids are excited to see each other and to see Roberts and their teachers. A year after starting, it’s common for students walking through school halls to stop and tell teachers or friends that they saw them on the Bedtime Stories livestream.

“What we get from it is certainly the sense of community,” Roberts said. “The families feel, and they report the students feel, that we have a common language for the books we’ve read and the topics we’ve discussed, or the strategies we’ve learned from the books.”

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CULTURE

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DOVER TO CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A group of local nonprofit organizations and businesses have kicked off a month-long series of in-person and virtual events highlighting Black history, culture, art, music, and theater.

The 2022 Dover Citywide Black History Celebration is the culmination of a partnership between the Biggs Museum of American Art, *Delaware State News*, Delaware State University, DonDel Productions, Dover Public Library, First State Heritage Park, Inner City Cultural League and Sankofa Cultural Arts Center. This year's programs are sponsored in part by Chesapeake Utilities and Dover Federal Credit Union, with virtual events sponsored by Bayhealth. More information about the celebration can be found [here](#).

Separately, during February, the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs will also be sponsoring five special events in commemoration of African-American History Month. Those events are listed below the Dover Citywide events.

Events include:

- **Location:** Biggs Museum of American Art, 406 Federal Street, Dover, DE 19901
- **Date:** Friday, Feb. 4–May 21
- **Event:** Visions & Voices: A juried exhibition of Mid-Atlantic African-American Artists
- **Event Description:** “After years of successfully hosting juried art competitions for photographers, landscape artists, and figural artists of the Mid-Atlantic Region, the Biggs Museum is proud to introduce a new juried exhibition highlighting the work of regional African-American artists. This exhibition will present art from all visual art media including, but not limited to painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, craft, fiber, and video. The physical exhibition will be accompanied by an opening reception, artist talks, public programming, and gallery sales of the accepted works.”

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WANT HYDRANGEAS THAT BEES WILL LOVE? CHOOSE A LACECAP, SAYS MT. CUBA

BY BETSY PRICE

If you want to choose a native hydrangea that will attract pollinators, all you have to do is follow the buzzing. When Mt. Cuba Garden Center was studying 29 species and cultivars of native hydrangeas, the row filled with lacecap hydrangeas—particularly *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Haas’ Halo—looked (and sounded like) like an insect version of the Starboard on Memorial Day weekend.

Buzz, buzz, buzz as the bees flitted around gorging themselves on the lacecap nectar, ignoring nearby plants that were baking in the sun on that July day. The lacecaps were planted across the row from mophead hydrangeas, known for their giant balls of flowers. Lacecaps have hundreds of tiny flowers in the center, surrounded by showy white flowers on the outer ring.

“You could walk down that row and once you got down to the lace caps, it was this auditory experience, where you’re just hearing and seeing hundreds of 1,000s of insect pollinators all at once,” said Sam Hoadley, manager of horticultural research. “It

was really quite striking and incredible to witness.” It’s one of the many details included in Mt. Cuba’s newest trial garden research report, “Wild Hydrangea for the Mid-Atlantic Region.”

The hydrangea study is the latest in a series that looks at popular plants to see which grow best in the Mid-Atlantic region and which attract the most pollinators. The topics have included echinacea, Helenium, phlox, monarda, baptisia, coreopsis, heuchera and asters. The report details which of the plants grow the best and offers advice on how gardeners can best care for the plants to get the effects they want to achieve.

As far as the hydrangeas go, Hoadley said the study showed there are lots of excellent choices, whether you want to attract pollinators or simply want a pink ornamental plant. Mt. Cuba found excellent specimens for sun and shade, and in both lacecap and mophead.

A former du Pont estate, Mt. Cuba focuses on native plants, which support local wildlife and better handle weather extremes such as droughts and unusual wet seasons than non-natives do. The studies are meant to help inform both the home gardener and the nursery industry.

“*Hydrangea arborescens* are a classic landscape shrub that is currently undergoing a garden renaissance,” said Hoadley about the lacecaps. “Their beauty, cultural adaptability and ability to support wildlife make them a welcome addition to any garden in the mid-Atlantic region and beyond.”

Among the key takeaways offered by the report:

- While the iconic favorites come in lacecap and mophead varieties, pollinators clearly—and loudly—prefer lacecap hydrangeas, particularly Haas’ Halo.
- Hydrangeas do better in shade when grown in the Mid-Atlantic region. The evaluation was conducted in full sun, and 19 plants were also grown in 60 percent shade for comparison.
- Cutting back plants often reduces the overall height and width of the shrub while increasing the diameter of the flower heads.

The hydrangeas are popular enough that plant breeders continue to introduce new versions, called cultivars, to enhance desired traits such as sturdy stems and new flower forms and colors. Those new versions made plant experts wonder about their ability to perform and to support wildlife.

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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control announced Tuesday that Delaware standard surf fishing permits sold out just hours after going on sale. The announcement came after sales reached the cap of 17,000 standard tags issued for the 2022 calendar year.

While no more standard surf fishing permits that allow fishing anytime will be sold until the 2023 season, the popular off-peak permits introduced by DNREC last year are still available and allow fishing all days except summer weekends and holidays.

In 2019, the Delaware Parks and Recreation Advisory Council established a 17,000 cap on standard surf fishing permit sales. According to the DNREC Division of Parks and Recreation, it implemented a first-come, first-served

cap on the number of permits issued “as the most equitable way to serve all beach users, and to manage a limited resource, while also protecting against overcrowding of parks beaches.”

Tags ordinarily go on sale much earlier, but this year the sales were delayed because of nationwide supply chain disruptions.

Off-peak surf fishing permits still available

While sales of standard surf fishing permits have ended for 2022, off-peak surf fishing permits are still available. There is no cap on the number of off-peak surf fishing permits, which were **piloted** in 2021.

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DELAWARE RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION ISSUES DIRE PLEA FOR HELP



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BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The organization that represents restaurants in Delaware said the industry is far from being out of the woods after two years of the COVID pandemic.

The Delaware Restaurant Association's *2022 State of the Restaurant Industry* report found that restaurants continue to struggle to keep their doors open amid a surge in coronavirus cases, inflation, a labor shortage, and supply chain delays.

"Alarmingly, Delaware's restaurant industry remains down 4,300 jobs from pre-pandemic employment levels," the report says. "Data from [BLS.gov](https://www.bls.gov) shows DE leisure and hospitality jobs at 49,100 in December 2021, down from a high of 53,400 in December 2019."

According to the National Restaurant Association, the United States lost more than 650,000 restaurant and hospitality industry jobs early in the pandemic and still

hasn't recovered. The group found that to be a loss of 45% more than the next closest industry.

The national association is now asking Congress to replenish the Restaurant Revitalization Fund, a now-depleted \$28.6 billion program created by the American Rescue Plan Act that provides emergency assistance for eligible restaurants, bars, and other qualifying businesses impacted by COVID-19.

"It's dangerous to see restaurants open and think that everything is ok and profits have returned," said Carrie Leishman, president and CEO of the Delaware Restaurant Association. "Industry subsidies and relief programs in 2020 helped, but the reality for restaurants is that business conditions are more difficult now than a year ago during the height of the pandemic."

The Delaware association notes in its report that new



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data collected from Delaware restauranteurs highlights the devastating impact of the Omicron variant and the rapid deterioration in business conditions for Delaware restaurants.

According to the survey, 90% of restaurants experienced a decline in customer demand for indoor on-premises dining in recent weeks, as a result of the increase in coronavirus cases due to the Omicron variant. 86% of operators report that business conditions are worse now than three months ago and 80% say their restaurant is less profitable now than it was before the pandemic.

The survey also found that Delaware restaurants took a number of actions in recent weeks as a result of the increase in coronavirus cases due to the Omicron variant.

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GOVERNMENT

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WILMINGTON COUNCIL PRESIDENT GOES PUBLIC WITH WPD 'WHITEST BLACK GUY' TROPHY

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Around Christmas of 2019, a Black male detective in the Wilmington Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division was given a trophy by his white male supervisor with an engraved message that reads, "Whitest Black Guy in the Office Award."

The trophy has been openly displayed on the detective's desk since it was presented to him, according to City Council President Trippi Congo, who brought the incident to light in an emailed newsletter Thursday afternoon.

Congo offered the trophy as an example of systemic problems within the ranks of the Wilmington Police Department that preceded the City Council's Jan. 20 vote of no confidence in police chief Robert Tracy. He was appointed by Mayor Mike Purzycki in 2017.

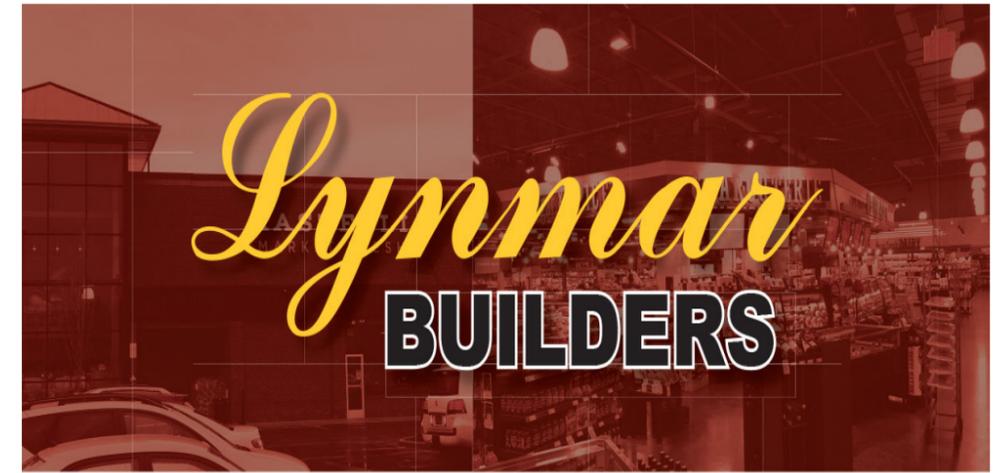
Purzycki's office could not immediately be reached for comment, but according to *The News Journal*, the

mayor only became aware of the trophy's existence after a photo surfaced on social media, at which point he forwarded it to Tracy for investigation.

"We were first made aware of this today, and immediately took action to launch an internal investigation," Tracy said in a written statement. "This is a matter we take very seriously; this message is entirely inappropriate and not in keeping with the high expectations we have for members of our department."

Congo's newsletter accused the city's police chief of demonstrating "resistance and a pattern of failure to provide information when requested, including any ideas to increase communication, transparency, diversity and police reform."

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LABOR DEPT. SAYS FRAUD BEHIND MANY UNEMPLOYMENT DELAYS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

After Milford resident Candice Hamilton was let go from her health care job in November 2021 she immediately filed for unemployment. After receiving her benefits for three weeks, the payments stopped.

In late December, Hamilton was told by a Department of Labor caseworker that her claim is in a queue awaiting assignment to a claims deputy and that there was a backlog of “around 135 days.”

Despite those delays, during a recent Joint Finance Committee hearing, the Department of Labor did not request any additional funds to hire more adjudicators or increase training for existing claims deputies.

That’s because the Department of Labor’s Unemployment Insurance Section does not receive its funding through the state’s General Fund, but rather from federal and state taxes on employers, and federal grants that would have to be approved by the State Clearinghouse Committee.

The agency saw more unemployment claims than ever

before, including during the recessions in 2001 and 2009. Amidst those claims, officials said, were unprecedented levels of fraudulent applications that had to be identified and adjudicated.

Among the agency’s requests to the Joint Finance Committee are \$42,000 to hire a full-time marketing specialist.

“This outreach and marketing work is key as we know that many Delawareans miss training opportunities, job search assistance, expungement services, case management services, and much more,” said Karryl Hubbard, secretary of the Delaware Department of Labor.

“We are also focused on promoting awareness, access, diversity, inclusion and apprenticeship by offering targeted supports to encourage participants from underrepresented groups such as women, persons with disabilities and others from ethnic minority backgrounds,” Hubbard said.

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SUNSET COMMITTEE BACKS REORGANIZING DELAWARE MOTION PICTURE COMMISSION

BY BETSY PRICE

A powerful state committee voted Tuesday to ask for the Delaware Motion Picture & Television Development Commission to be reconstituted, saying it could be an economic and public relations boost.

The Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee also asked its staff to find out how the state Department of Education is spending \$278,000 allotted annually to the Interagency Council on Adult Literacy, which hasn't met since June 2015. Efforts were unsuccessful Wednesday to get immediate comment about the council from the Department of Education.

The Sunset Committee reviews state agencies, commissions and boards to determine if there is a true public need for them. If so, it looks for ways to strengthen and support the board, according to its website.

Both the Motion Picture Commission and literacy council were subjects of what the board calls focused

reviews. Those involve the staff researching the entity, but do not require the entity to provide a self-report, make a presentation at the meeting or have a performance evaluation.

The Motion Picture Commission was created in 2015 and was housed in the Department of Finance. It was moved in 2017 to the Division of Small Business and has not met since 2017. Minutes of only three of its 16 meetings between 2016 and 2017 can be found, the Sunset Committee staff told members, and there is conflicting information about budgets. The commission doesn't have a website.

In comparison, staff said, other states including nearby ones, have robust websites that offer information on tax and rebate incentives. Some states don't offer those, but offer information and resources.

Tax incentives and rebates don't always work, said

Amanda McAtee, an analyst for the Sunset Committee. Iowa and Michigan have stopped offering them, she said.

"Recent news indicates the potential need for a functioning state commission on this topic," McAtee said. She pointed to a soundstage opening in Wilmington and a small but thriving film community finding success at national film festivals. Some movies have been filmed here, she pointed out.

"Delaware has potential in this policy arena and operating some commission promoting Delaware and providing information on its website could be a step in the right direction," McAtee said. "It appears the commission in its last form experienced some issues just getting off the ground and deserves a restart."

She said the staff recommended the Sunset Commission ask the Division of Small Business to work with the governor's office and others who would appoint someone to the commission and restart Motion Picture Commission. That restart should include examining the membership, setting a minimum number of required meetings, requiring it to make annual reports and making sure it's new form is in line with other commissions across the country.

Sunset Commission Chair Sherry Dorsey Walker, D-Wilmington South, said the state has great potential to bring the film industry here, especially with President Joe Biden being from Delaware. It's also got great locations, from urban areas to the beaches to its farmlands, she said. The film commission and the film community should be married, she said.

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CARNEY STILL DOESN'T SUPPORT LEGAL WEED

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Gov. John Carney said during Tuesday's weekly COVID-19 briefing that his position on recreational marijuana legalization has not changed: he doesn't support it.

The statement comes as a bill to legalize the cultivation, sale and possession of marijuana in Delaware makes its way through the General Assembly.

House Bill 305, also known as the Delaware Marijuana Control Act, was released last week from the House Health and Human Development Committee Wednesday by a margin of 10 to four. It even earned the support of one Republican—Rep. Mike Smith of Pike Creek.

The bill only requires a 3/5 vote or 60 percent of each chamber, which equates to 25 votes in the House of Representatives and 13 votes in the Senate.

There are currently 26 Democrats in the House of Representatives compared to just 15 Republicans. In the Senate, Democrats hold 14 seats while Republicans hold

seven seats. That means Democrats could pass marijuana legalization without a single Republican vote.

Some speculate that past opposition to cannabis legalization in the General Assembly has come, at least in part, from a desire to avoid forcing Carney into the awkward position of vetoing a bill with such broad public support.

Carney previously has refused to say whether he would veto a recreational legalization bill, citing his attempts as lieutenant governor to “get Delawareans to stop smoking.” If he does nix the measure, Democrats alone have the votes to override it. In Delaware, a 3/5 majority is required to override a governor's veto.



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SPECIAL ELECTION TO FILL BRADY'S HOUSE SEAT SET FOR MARCH 5

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A special election to fill the vacancy left by embattled former Rep. Gerald Brady has been scheduled for Saturday, March 5. The Wilmington Democrat from the 4th District tendered his resignation Wednesday triggering a state law that requires a special election to be set by the Speaker of the House.

Whoever wins the special election won't hold the seat for long. During the decennial redistricting process finalized in November 2021, Brady's 4th 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.

Brady announced his intention to resign from office on Jan. 21, citing a recent post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis stemming from his service in the Delaware Army National Guard.

Days later, the Newark Police Department announced that Brady had been arrested and charged with two counts of shoplifting after allegedly stealing merchandise from a Newark Acme on two separate occasions.

While Brady didn't mention the arrest as a reason for his resignation, he did say the PTSD diagnosis "can be punctuated by episodes or conduct that may make little sense to people who do not understand the nature of [the disorder]."

Before announcing his intention to resign, Brady had already resolved that he would not seek re-election.

In June 2021, the Wilmington Democrat sent a message from his state email in response to a plea from an out-of-state advocate asking him to consider decriminalizing prostitution.

In the message to Brady, the advocate referenced a Princeton University study that demonstrated a decrease

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in sex-related crime in one New York City police precinct when strip clubs exist in the area. Intending to forward the email to a friend, Brady accidentally replied to the advocate, saying, "Is the dude basically saying, if we provide free [sex acts] for Uncle Pervie there will be few rapes and few [racial slur for Asians] broads will be shipped in CONEX containers to the Port of Wilmington??"

After facing calls for his resignation, the House held an Ethics Committee inquiry into Brady's email. It eventually dismissed the complaint after Brady announced he would not seek re-election.





FEMALE LAWMAKERS LAUNCH LEGISLATIVE WOMEN'S CAUCUS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A group of female legislators announced on Wednesday the formation of a new caucus to focus on issues affecting women. The [Delaware Legislative Women's Caucus](#) will include lawmakers from both parties and both chambers of the General Assembly and “will focus primarily on advancing the shared interests of women by advocating for policies that will make Delaware a better place for women to live, work, and raise a family,” according to a press release from the House Democratic Caucus.

The caucus will be co-chaired by House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst, D-Delaware City, and Sen. Marie Pinkney, D-New Castle. Rep. Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle South, and Sen. Kyle Evans Gay, D-Brandywine Hundred, will serve as co-vice chairs.

In a statement announcing the new caucus, Longhurst lauded the work of female legislators and activists that have worked to pass laws like the Delaware Equal Rights

Amendment, paid parental leave for state employees and teachers and protections for women in the workplace.

“But our work is just getting started,” Longhurst said. “This caucus is an opportunity for us to bring more Delaware women to the table so that together, we can work toward policy solutions that address the disparities and inequalities still present in our state.”

Women currently comprise nearly one-third of the 62-member Delaware General Assembly, with 19 female legislators serving in the House and Senate. That's second only to the 143rd General Assembly between 2004 and 2006 when there were 21 female state legislators.

According to the statement, the caucus plans to tackle public policy issues including “gender disparities in education, healthcare affordability, and public safety” during the current legislative session. The caucus also plans to hold regular open meetings to allow legislators

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and the public the opportunity to hear from other lawmakers, outside speakers and experts.

“I’m honored to serve as the Co-Chair of the Women’s Caucus in the 151st General Assembly,” Pinkney said. “Even as our state continues to elect more women to public office, our work and our progress is far from complete. I stand ready to work with my colleagues to not only empower women, but make sure women know there is a place for them in power.”

Republicans have only one female lawmaker in either chamber: Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Millsboro.

Briggs King was not included in the Democrats’ press release. She was in Wednesday’s Joint Finance Committee meeting at the time of publication and was unable to provide comment.



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DEFUNCT LITERACY COUNCIL MONEY GOES TO KENT, SUSSEX PROGRAMS

BY BETSY PRICE

Money allotted to a defunct literacy council has been going to family literacy programs at three Delaware high schools, via the Delaware Department of Education.

The issue of where \$278,000 listed in state budgets was going came up in Tuesday’s meeting of the Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee. The committee’s staff said that the cash continued to be allotted to the Interagency Council on Adult Literacy, which hasn’t met since June 2015.

The committee asked the staff to pursue what was happening to the money designated for the council, also known as ICAL. The Sunset Committee reviews state board, councils and commissions to make sure they are needed. If they are, the committee considers how to improve or support them.

“The purpose of the ICAL monies was to fund the two family literacy programs in the state—Polytech Family

Literacy and Sussex Tech Family Literacy,” said Alison May, spokeswoman for the Delaware Department of Education. “Each year these programs have used this money to support these family literacy services.”

The Polytech and Sussex Tech programs are valuable resources for English Language Learner families in Kent and Sussex counties she said. The results are documented in the Adult Education Annual Reports, which she provided.

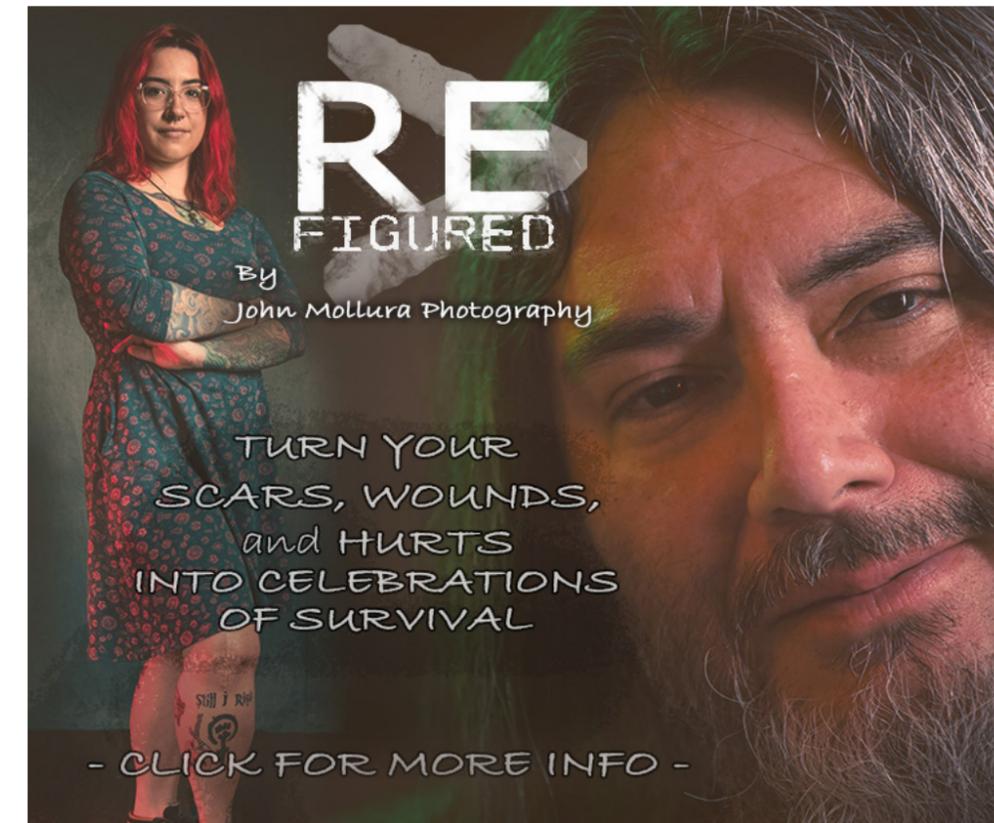
The reports say ICAL and some federal funding is being used for programs that are designed to improve literacy levels of young children by providing instruction to parents. The programs combine adult basic education, parenting education, early childhood development activities for children and interactive literacy programs.

Classes are taught in schools, libraries and public housing authorities.

In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the reports say, Polytech High School and Sussex Tech High School used the literacy money.

In 2020, Polytech, Sussex Tech and Christina High School are listed under the literacy funding, with Polytech and Sussex Tech receiving the ICAL money and Christina receiving federal Dual Generation funding.

In 2021, three family literacy programs are listed. Again, Polytech and Sussex Tech received ICAL money and Christina got federal funding.





ALLEN SAYS DSU "SHALL NOT BE MOVED" FROM KEEPING ITS DOORS OPEN

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware State University President Tony Allen called a Monday bomb threat—one of more than a dozen at Historically Black Colleges and Universities across the country—“a clear effort to confuse, intimidate and bully our students, staff and faculty.”

“We are safe, for which I am incredibly thankful, but the attempt to disrupt targeted our community because of who we serve and the mission we fulfill,” Allen said in a statement. “The impetus for such a threat cannot be ascribed to anything other than the most primitive form of racism, a form which is neither new nor unique in this country.”

The school got the call about 5:15 a.m. By 12:49 p.m., University Police and local, state and federal law enforcement officials with K-9 units had swept the campus and given an all clear.

Also receiving bomb threats Monday were Coppin State University, Morgan State University, Howard University, Bowie State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Alcorn State University, Tougaloo College, Kentucky State University, Fort Valley State University, Xavier University, Spellman College, Edwin Waters University and the University of the District of Columbia.

It was the second round of bomb threats in January, Allen pointed out. On Jan. 4, eight HBCUs had bomb threats. Howard had three in January.

Monday’s round of calls came the day before Black History Month was to begin.

“Today’s bully does not understand that their perspective is antiquated and warped, that it serves less to achieve its aim than to lower their own fortunes,

sinking them into the pathetic mire where human depravity dwells,” Allen said. “I hesitate even to bother guessing at whether they hate all people of color, fear a world in which BIPOC (Black and Indigenous people of color) have seats at the table, worry about their own marginalization, or even weep over travails such as poverty, unemployment, violence in their neighborhoods, educational and health care disempowerment, or political disenfranchisement.

“Regardless, here is what I say to these bullies, these fearmongers of our day: ‘We shall not be moved.’”

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling on Tuesday called on those in the United Methodist Church’s Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences to pray for the students and faculty at the universities.

“United Methodists stand in solidarity with historically Black colleges and lament the violence and hate that threatens them,” Easterling said in a statement. “We also recognize that these threats can traumatize and re-traumatize people and that the trauma can have a profound effect on their lives. We encourage people to care for not only their physical safety, but also their mental health as well.”

Allen said Historically Black Colleges and Universities were built on a common rejection. “In our attempt to find a place of usefulness and honor in the world, we opened doors,” he said.

Those doors have welcomed Black men and women, underserved groups in rural and urban communities regardless of their color, children of undocumented workers and more, he said.

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NEW GROUP SEEKS TO GET PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS ACTIVE IN EDUCATION

America and realizing how many students were not thriving. In addition to the problems imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Schutt said school systems don't have control of how their monies are spent and that means they have no flexibility to put money where it is needed or to solve a local problem.

Among the issues she sees are too many children in classes, particularly elementary classes. That makes it hard for teachers to give children the individual attention they need. "Nobody has been set up for success," she said. "Students are not reaching their potential."

Schutt said she's interested in parent power because she's seen it work.

One teacher she supervised was stunned to find that most of her fifth grade students could not read at the grade level. So the teacher began calling parents and asking to meet with them. Few realized their children were not reading at the grade level. When the teacher and parents starting working together, reading comprehension and interest soared, Schutt said.

The money pouring into schools through the American Rescue Plan Act caught Schutt's attention. "It's time for cures, not band-aids," her website says. "It's time to be bold with our school leaders and ask the hard questions."

The organization wants parents and the system to shun the status quo, admit it's time to do things differently and stop making small tweaks to a system that doesn't work, according to the website.

Truiett also is a former teacher who felt burned out and left the classroom to go into public relations. When she met Schutt, she realized their interests aligned and joined First State Educate.

"We are unapologetic and partner with people demanding excellence and transparency," Truiett said. "When we were planning for this year, we said that the parent voice is missing. We want to empower our parents to show up, to speak up, to act together."

First State Educate had some focus groups in October and met on Zoom with other parents, national parent organizations and others. In the meantime, Schutt had become acquainted with Olga Sterling-Rossiter.

Parents have a right to be involved with what is and what isn't happening with their children, Sterling-Rossiter said. "I was already fired up as a parent because I believe that the only way to make things happen is to open your mouth," said Sterling-Rossiter. "You have to be able to communicate, you have to say what's wrong and you have to be willing to work towards a solution."

She has recently founded a nonprofit called A Necessary Noise to help teach parents how to advocate for their children.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BY BETSY PRICE

A Delaware education nonprofit that wants to foster radical change in state schools by activating the involvement of Delawareans is forming Parent Power, a group of mom, dads and grandparents who want to be involved in the system.

Step one, said Sharon Sade' Truiett, director of advocacy for First State Educate, is for parents to begin attending their local school board meetings, whether that's in-person or virtually, to educate themselves about what's going on.

Parent Power held an organizing meeting in January, attended by the president of the Virginia Parent Teacher Association president. It will meet again Feb. 28.

First State Educate Executive Director Laurisa Schutt said she formed the group after working for Teach for

PHOTO BY ALLAN MAS FROM PEXELS



HEALTH

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HIGHMARK CLIENTS CAN GET FREE COVID-19 TESTS AT PHARMACIES

BY BETSY PRICE

People who have Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield health insurance can pick up a COVID-19 test at any in-network pharmacy without having to pay for it, the company announced Monday.

Highmark is complying with an order by the Biden administration that insurance companies begin providing the tests for their clients at no costs. Highmark clients can get up to eight over-the-counter tests per month, the company said.

The program is meant to be used by individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 or are showing symptoms, said Bob Wanovich, vice president of Provider Strategy for Highmark. The program is not meant to be used by people who need testing to return to school or to work, or to stockpile. Many schools and work places will not accept the over-the-counter tests, he pointed out.

The Highmark announcement comes as demand for testing reached record highs during December and

January as the more infectious Omicron variety began making its way through the country. That has begun to wane a bit as the number of new cases drops.

Highmark customers should take tests to the pharmacy counter and show their Highmark insurance card in order to get the test for free, he said. Customers who have a separate pharmacy benefit card should show that card and ask the pharmacy to process the purchase under it.

In addition, Highmark customers who use the company's mail-order pharmacy, called Express Scripts, can order at-home tests through it.

Many boxes include two tests, Wanovich pointed out. He also noted that clients can't be guaranteed their pharmacies will have the tests. A pharmacy's inventory will depend on deliveries from the companies making them, he said.

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SPORTS

PHOTO BY DAVE FREDERICK

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APPO OUTLASTS SMYRNA IN DOUBLE OVERTIME

BY GLENN FRAZER

The Appoquinimink Jaguars scored six points at the free throw line in the final two minutes of regulation, forced a turnover to tie the game in the first overtime, then outscored Smyrna 16-11 in double OT for a 64-59 win Thursday night in boys' top 10 basketball.

The sixth-ranked Jags gained a late first quarter lead at 8-6, but would not lead again until the final overtime period, as Smyrna led for most of the game.

Smyrna took a 9-8 lead after the first quarter, and extended its advantage to 23-14 with 21 seconds left in the half on a three-point shot by Devin Demoe. Appo closed the gap to seven as Christian Barksdale made a basket with five seconds left for a halftime score of 23-16 in favor of Smyrna.

The Jags opened the second half on a 6-0 run, slicing into that seven-point deficit to a single point on five

occasions and tied the game twice in the third quarter using an aggressive back court press. With one minute left in the quarter, Majesti Carter made a short jumper and 15 seconds later, Demoe converted the traditional three-point play to increase Smyrna's lead to 39-33 with eight minutes left in regulation.

The Eagles grabbed a 10-point advantage early in the fourth quarter on baskets by Carter and Kevin Woodruff, but the Jags dialed up the back court pressure again, scoring 12 of the next 14 points (the final six at the foul line) to tie the game and send it into overtime. Eric Mathenge and Tommy Vaughn Jr. combined for eight of those 12 points in the quarter.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

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.

ChristianaCare: 302-216-3557
Bayhealth: 302-216-8328
Beebe Healthcare: 302-291-4380



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
 Division of Public Health
 Bureau of Chronic Diseases





LONG-RANGE ACCURACY KEY FOR NO. 3 SALS

BY GLENN FRAZER

The third-ranked Salesianum boys basketball team was “dialed-in” the moment they took the floor at Appoquinimink Tuesday night. On the strength of 10 first half three-pointers, the Sals extended their winning streak to five games with a 73-57 road win.

Head coach Taylor Trevisan received a tense moment just 18 seconds into the game when starter Justin Molen went down with an apparent leg injury. Molen sat out most of the opening quarter, but fortunately for him and Coach Trevisan, he got back in the game and promptly drained the first of his four shots beyond the “arc” with :10 left in the quarter.

It was the fifth long-range make for the Sals as they took a 23-14 lead into the second quarter. They would make five more threes in that second quarter (accounting for all 15 points), and needed every one of them as the home team Jags fought back, cutting the lead to 38-32 at the half. Owen Parrish led Appo scoring eight of his team’s 18 points in the second quarter as the Jags closed the half on an 8-3 run.

The two “top-10” teams battled back and forth in the third quarter until Salesianum pushed the lead to 10 on a three-pointer and two free throws by Isaiah Hynson at the 4four-minute mark. Then Christian Barksdale nailed a three and Parrish converted the “traditional” three-point play with a layup and free throw to bring Appo to within four points at 46-42 just 90 seconds later.

The Jags momentum quickly faded as Molen made three of four free throws following a technical foul, and the Sals would not be threatened the rest of the game, outscoring Appo 35-25 in the second half.

Salesianum would end up with a 24-point advantage from three-point range, making 13 three-pointers to five for Appo. The Sals were led by the sophomore Hynson with 21 points, while Molen and Kareem Thomas both scored 16. Molen and Hynson both made four shots beyond the arc. The third-ranked Sals evened their record at 6-6 and will travel to face No. 1 Tower Hill Thursday at 5:30.

The sixth-ranked Appoquinimink Jaguars had a four-game win streak snapped and fell to 9-3 overall. The Jags were paced by Parrish with 16 points (three-3’s). Tommy Vaughn Jr. and Christian Barksdale both added nine points. Appo will face the ninth-ranked Smyrna Eagles Thursday night at 6:30. The Eagles upset Dover and Seaford earlier this season, but lost at Caesar Rodney Tuesday night 67-63 as the Riders 6-8 center Messiah Antwi scored 21 points and pulled down 20 rebounds.

You can [watch](#) the Smyrna-Appo game Thursday on Delaware Live, powered by 302 Sports.



CLICK FOR WEEK 6 BOYS & GIRLS H.S. BASKETBALL

DELAWARE LIVE SPORTS

TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

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