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March 26, 2023

Vol. 4, Issue 12

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photo link: Longwood Gardens
(photo by Carol Gross)

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School Mentors Might Surprise You



Federal Program Helps Pay Internet Costs



Gene Delle Donne To Head Salesianum Football



photo link: Longwood Gardens
(photo by Brianna Reid)

Headlines



SCHOOL MENTORS: WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY DO MAY SURPRISE YOU

BY JAREK RUTZ

Two months ago, fifth-grader Jeraniah Jackson joined the 150 students in Cape Henlopen School District's mentoring program. She had been disrespectful of teachers and generally not nice to people around her when someone suggested she consider the program.

"It's definitely helped," said Jackson, who attends [H.O. Brittingham Elementary](#) in Milton. "I talk to my mentor about things that happen in my life in and outside of class and we discuss how important it is to show kindness to others."

Her case illustrates why state legislators supported a resolution to create a 17-person task force to focus on

mentoring and improving literacy rates for Delaware's youth. It's awaiting Gov. John Carney's signature.

Unlike an academic advisor or a tutor, mentors largely focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of a student, partly to foster the students' academic achievement. Issues can include the things affecting attendance, staying focused on work, finishing assignments and more. Mentors in the programs are all unpaid volunteers and often people who have worked with children in the community in one form or another. Many mentors are members of the community served by a school, but have no direct connection with it.

The widespread use of mentors in charter and private schools is one of the things that prompted Rep. Kim Williams, D-Marshallton, and Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, to propose [House Joint Resolution 1](#).

Sturgeon said the idea for the resolution partly came from Matt Denn, former state attorney general and lieutenant governor and now co-chair of the Redding Consortium, which is devoted to improving education and learning achievement in Wilmington. Mentoring is a passion project for him, she said.

"One of my top missions as a legislator is to equip our schools with the tools they need to improve student success," Sturgeon said. "This initiative directly bolsters our ongoing literacy efforts, because it will integrate evidence-based literacy practices into the training for these mentors."

Denn said he proposed the resolution on behalf of [Action for Delaware's Children](#), a group which he helped form.

"Teachers who serve on the board of Action for Delaware's Children told our board that teachers needed help, and that an expansion of school mentoring would be a great way to allow Delawareans who care about kids to step in and help educate our kids," Denn said. "Our board has made the expansion and improvement of school mentoring a priority, and we are grateful that the General Assembly and Governor are addressing it so quickly."

Many state schools have some sort of student mentoring program, said Alison May, public information officer at the Department of Education.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



43 TO COMPETE FOR 23 SCHOOL BOARD SEATS IN MAY 9 ELECTION

BY JAREK RUTZ

The list of school board candidates for the May 9 election has been finalized after delays caused by new background check regulations. Forty-three candidates will run for 23 vacancies across 16 school districts. That’s one less candidate than 2022’s 42 candidates competing for 19 open seats.

State education groups had hoped that more people would run, but First State Education took the high road in appraising the numbers.

“First State Educate is pleased to see so many community members step up to run to serve on their local school board,” the organization said in a statement. “We look forward to meeting and talking with the candidates over the next nine weeks.”

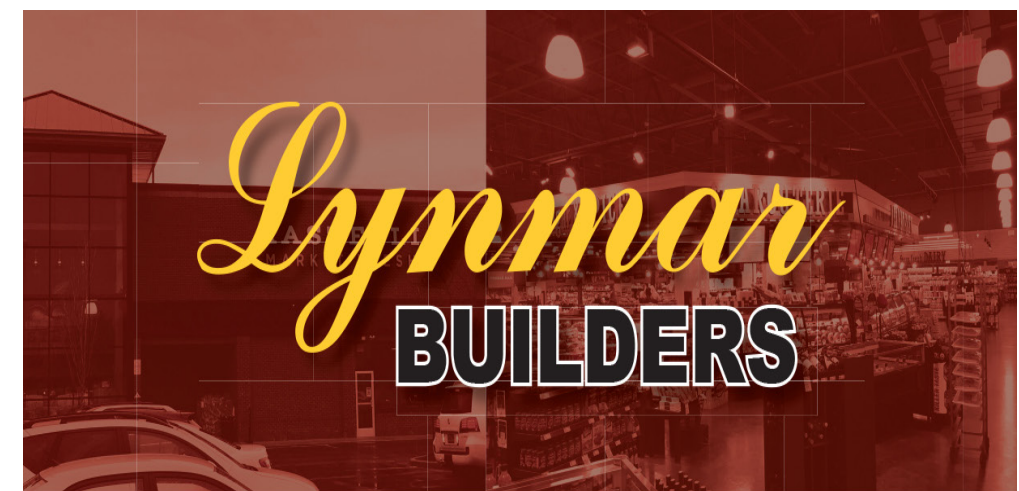
First State Educate, an advocacy group that wants to catalyze change in education by empowering Delawar-

eans, will participate in a series of forums designed to let district residents get to know their candidates. See the list below.

March 3 was the deadline for filing, but a 2021 **law** requires school board candidates to complete a criminal background check and a child registry check before their name is listed on the Department of Elections **website**. According to Delaware Code, the **State Bureau of Identification** must complete a criminal background check within 15 days of the candidate’s request.

Laurisa Schutt, executive director of First State Educate, **previously** raised questions about the transparency of who filed. Candidates should have been listed as “pending” if they’re waiting on checks to be completed, that way the public is aware of who’s running, she said.

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Culture

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SALSTHON SMASHES FUNDRAISING GOAL: \$243,791 TO HELP CHILDREN

BY JAREK RUTZ

Students from three Wilmington catholic schools spent eight hours on the dance floor last weekend to raise \$243,791 for children in need. [Salesianum School](#), [Ursuline Academy](#) and [Padua Academy](#) shattered their \$175,000 fundraising goal by nearly \$70,000 in this year's SALSTHON.

“At the beginning, I was worried about hitting our number,” said senior Jack Gormley, the student body president at Salesianum. “You see that final number and everyone was just taken back by how much three high schools can raise and how much it’s gonna mean for the kids.”

About 1,000 students across the three schools participate in SALSTHON each year, according to Alison Hildenbrand, a college counselor at Salesianum who

helps organize the event. Each participant needed to raise at least \$250 for a ticket. The event took place from 10 p.m. March 18 to 6 a.m. March 19.

The annual event started 11 years ago and is inspired by Penn State University's THON, a popular all-night dance marathon for charity that many high schools in the country have adopted. Over the years, SALSTHON has raised \$1,640,000 for local non-profit organizations, including the [Delaware Center for Homeless Veterans](#), Child Inc., [B+](#), [SL24: Sean's House](#), [St. Patrick's Center](#), [Limen House](#), [Nemours Children's Hospital](#) and the [Summer Collab](#).

All proceeds from this year's overnight party will go to the [Ronald McDonald House of Delaware](#), which helps families whose seriously ill children are getting

care at Nemours nearby. Each family that checks into the house has a private guest room and access to laundry facilities, a fitness center, four playrooms, multiple kitchens, a movie theater and an outdoor playground. They're also served a hot meal every evening, which is partly what the money will go towards. Not only will the money fund a full year of meals for the foundation, it will also help the house replace a lot of the old furniture in its building.

Fundraising efforts gained traction at the beginning of March when the school held a dunk tank to raise money, in which three of the school's priests were on the plank. The largest donation was \$10,000, which was solicited from a local foundation by Nicky Vadas, a Salesianum student. Hildenbrand declined to identify it.

“Jack reached out to some area businesses and sought some fundraising support from them, which they hadn't done in the past,” Hildenbrand said. “There was also more contact with alumni this year, so fundraising efforts were more thoughtful and deliberate with community engagement this year than in the past.”

Hildenbrand said the students will try to surpass this year's total next year, but that might be hard with only three schools participating.

“We'd like to again be more deliberate about community involvement next year and maybe involve the beneficiary earlier on in the year so that we can form relationships and get going on fundraising as soon as possible,” she said.





PETE DU PONT RECORDS ARCHIVE OPENS AT HAGLEY LIBRARY

BY BETSY PRICE

A collection of Pete du Pont's papers is now open to the public at Hagley Museum and Library. It includes decades of the former Delaware governor's public writing, as well as photos, scrapbooks, recordings and correspondence with family members.

Among the material in the archive are items related to du Pont's 1988 campaign to be the Republican nominee for president of the United States and du Pont's push to bring credit card processing facilities to the First State after the Dupont Corp. became a lesser force in Delaware's economy. That move shifted Delaware's unemployment rate to the lowest in the nation at the time.

Eric Rau, director of the Hagley Library, said he found some of the presidential campaign material particularly interesting.

"Just how he ran the campaign, when he started and when he stopped," Rau said. "There's material there about managing the campaign."

du Pont would go on to cede to George H.W. Bush, who became the Republican nominee and was elected president.

The collection springs from a partnership with [Pete du Pont Freedom Foundation](#), chaired by Pete's son, Thère du Pont. The initiative makes Pete du Pont's papers available to a wider audience as his foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary, Thère said in a Hagley press release. Rau said the two organizations began talking about the archive about three years ago. The materials arrived at Hagley shortly before the governor died May 8, 2021.

Hagley is a former du Pont estate that includes the first [du Pont family](#) home and garden in the United States, the company's first powder yards and a 19th-century machine shop, as well as a library that focuses on materials related to the history of American business and technology.

Pete, whose full name was Pierre S. du Pont IV, was the great nephew of Pierre S. du Pont, who developed Longwood Gardens. The former governor also was an attorney, state legislator, member of Congress, commentator and columnist.

When the du Pont administration began, Delaware faced enormous challenges, including a financial structure that drove employers away, the Hagley release said. du Pont was able to win the confidence of the Democrats and pass the 1981 Financial Center Development Act with bipartisan support. It opened doors for national banks and credit card companies to start their operations in Delaware. That created thousands of new jobs and transformed the Wilmington skyline in a way no other single piece of legislation has done, the release said.

du Pont also co-founded Leadership Delaware and founded Jobs for Delaware Graduates, a workforce preparation program for high school students. The foundation was established in 2003 to honor du Pont, but also highlight Delaware innovation and projects that reduced the barriers to private enterprise.

Many of the records relating to du Pont's years as governor are in the state archives, Rau said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

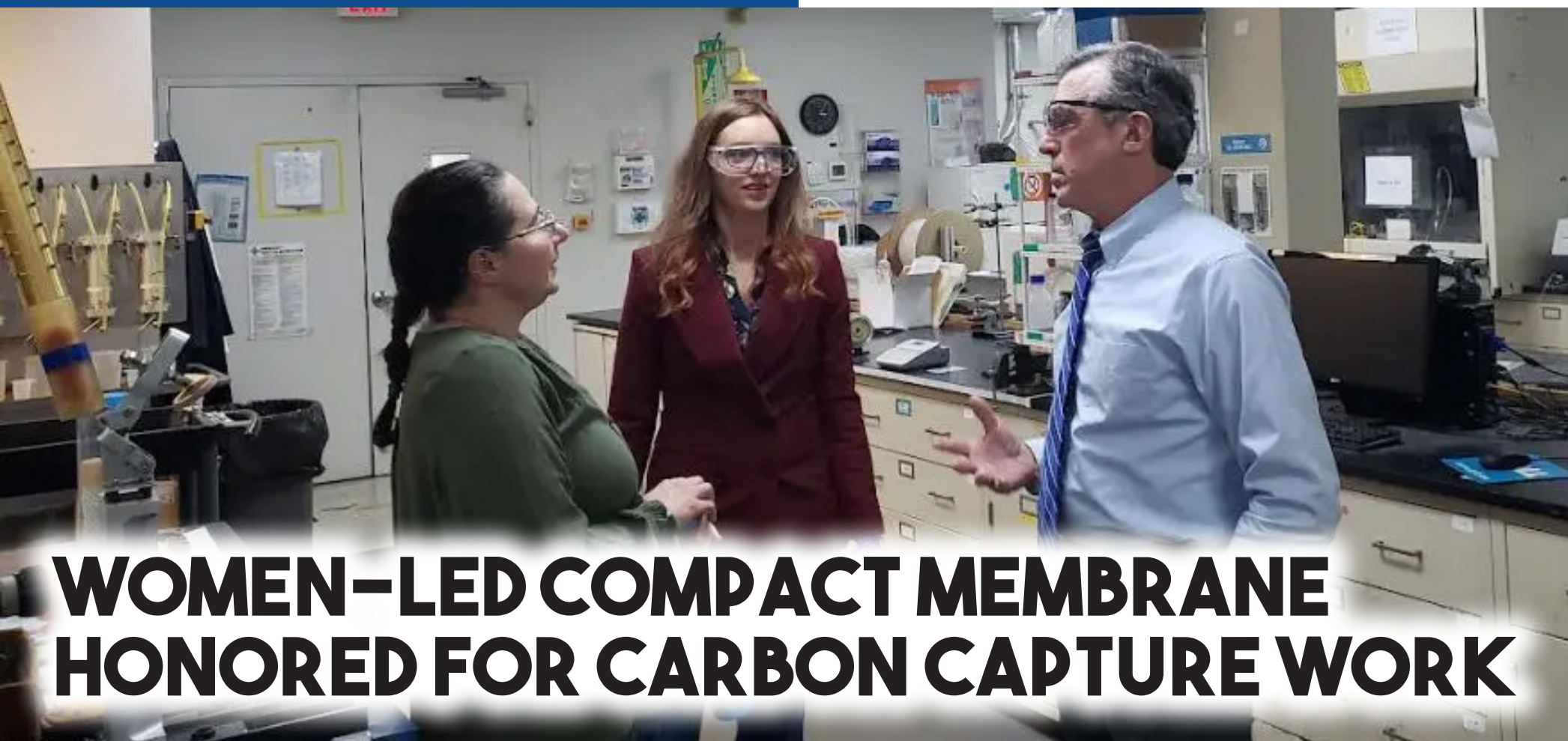


photo credit: Vlada Karpovich / PEXELS

Business

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WOMEN-LED COMPACT MEMBRANE HONORED FOR CARBON CAPTURE WORK

BY SAM HAUT

The two women representing Compact Membrane Systems became accustomed to being treated differently than their male counterparts. CEO Erica Nemser and Christine Parrish, the business development lead, were asked “a lot of basic, stupid questions, because the assumption of what you know is zero” when they first started making calls together, Parrish said. It was incredibly insulting for Nemser and frustrating for them both.

“You only have 30 minutes of useful time because they spent the first 30 minutes pressure testing to see whether or not you were dumb,” she said.

That’s changed in the last five years.

“There’s a lot more respect because the industry is

changing,” Parrish said. “It doesn’t look the way it did 10 years ago and you’re starting to see a difference.”

Compact Membrane Systems was one of two women-led businesses that Gov. John Carney visited Thursday to highlight women’s business during Women’s History Month. The other was JennyGems in Georgetown.

At Compact Membrane, the governor gave the company a proclamation honoring them for their leadership in carbon capture technology.

Nemser was unable to attend, but Parrish and Ken Loprete, the vice president of product development, greeted Carney and gave him a tour of the company lab where products are made.

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DEVELOPMENT CORP. HIGHLIGHTS RIVERFRONT EAST IN HEARING

BY SAM HAUT

Details of the planned development of Riverfront East in Wilmington were spelled out Wednesday to a state committee that oversees capital projects. Megan McGlinchey, executive director of the **Riverfront Development Corp.**, told the Bond Committee during a budget hearing that the effort to repeat the success of Riverfront West on the opposite side of the Christina River now is focusing on infrastructure and property acquisition. She said she hoped it would end up being as successful as the 25-year development of the west side of the river, which has generated \$616 million in revenue on \$495 million in state investments since 1996.

McGlinchey noted that a University of Delaware study found that in the past five years, the state invested \$105 million there and received \$169 million in revenue. In the past year, she said, the state had received \$33 million from that area and the city \$8.5 million.

“As we enter our 27th year of operation, the RTC has never felt better about the progress that we’ve made along the riverfront and the results that we’ve achieved for the state,” McGlinchey said.

The west project turned a polluted industrial playground into a place for people to live and play.

Gov. John Carney’s proposed fiscal year 2024 budget

recommends \$6.5 million for the Riverfront Development Corp. That does not include money that will be spent on roads by the Delaware Department of Transportation.

RIVERFRONT EAST PLANS

The RDC announced in 2021, that it would spend \$100 million for an 86-acre expansion of the riverfront project on the east side. It is expected to have 1.9 million square feet of office space, more than 4,000 residential units, 350,000 square feet of retail space, 9,000 parking spaces and 650 on-street parking spaces.

McGlinchey said the RDC was happy to have the move of a Salvation Army warehouse and 78-bed rehabilitation building to South Walnut Street completed in the last year. The corporation has divided the east project into three sections. It’s buying property in all three, but has focused most work on area 1, which hugs the curve of the river. A \$30 million project set to start this year will put in roads, signs, sidewalks and utilities. Moving utilities will be a massive job.

One of the key projects there will be creating a central green for that side. The two-acre park will sit in the middle of the development and the RDC hopes to get started with design this year, which cannot be paid for by DelDOT. About a dozen investors are interested in helping develop the area, she said.

McGlinchey also said Wednesday:

- The RDC’s inaugural holiday light display brought in 109,000 visitors, a 21% increase from the previous year, with 20% of the visitors from out of town.

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photo credit: Pixabay / PEXELS



Food & Dining

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DRIP CAFÉ CELEBRATES 10 YEARS IN HOCKESSIN

BY PAM GEORGE

A lot has happened since April 22, 2013, when Greg Vogeley opened **Drip Café** in Hockessin. He expanded the **Lantana Square Shopping Center** eatery twice and opened a second location in Newark.

“Hockessin is my baby, and Newark is my pride and joy,” he said. He also started roasting his own coffee, and more recently, he signed a lease for a new concept.

That’s not to say it’s been an easy ride. There was a time when Vogeley didn’t have enough to pay all his staff, and not all his ideas panned out the way he expected. But on the cusp of Drip’s 10th anniversary, Vogeley is in a good place, and he plans to celebrate with a custom beer from Dew Point Brewing, the return of classic dishes and a May 3 wine dinner.

It’s a double anniversary in some respects. The hospitality veteran is also marking nearly 25 years in the industry.

AN EARLY START

Vogeley was 14 when he got a job washing dishes in a Glen Mills, PA, pizza parlor. His older brother had just bought a car and the young teen wanted to start saving so he could buy one, too.

At Clarion (PA) University, the Grateful Dead fan studied the business behind the music industry, including finance. He wrote a business plan for a music club for one class, demonstrating the early start of an entrepreneurial spirit. However, jobs in the music industry weren’t plentiful in the Philadelphia region, and to earn

money, Vogeley sold shank-proof pencils and bullet-proof vests to prisons.

When a series of sales jobs ended, his mother suggested a job with benefits at Starbucks. Vogeley found his calling at the espresso machine and moved to **Brew HaHa!**, where he trained baristas for the rapidly growing chain.

He managed the Panera Bread on Kirkwood Highway but missed the coffee culture and latte lovers. He realized that he wanted to own a coffee shop.

DRIP CAFÉ ARRIVES

While working at RedFire Grill & Steakhouse, Vogeley wrote a business plan for a food truck, Drip, specializing in coffee. A friend, however, suggested opening in a vacant space in Lantana Square. Vogeley knew it well. It was in the same shopping center as Redfire, and the friend, Ben Cordova, had opened Over Coffee Café in the same space. After Cordova closed the business, he’d rented the equipment to Café Reve, which also closed.

Vogeley jumped at the opportunity, and Drip Café quickly built a following for its coffee and brunch fare.

Jessica Ruff of Wilmington, for instance, comes for the London Fog, a tea latte, and the bacon-flecked pancakes with apples, bacon and salted caramel.

She’s not alone. *People* magazine featured the dish in its pages and Fox 29 traffic reporter Bob Kelly spotlighted the pancakes on his segment “Breakfast with Bob.”

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Government

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STATE TO PUSH FEDERAL PROGRAM THAT HELPS PAY INTERNET COSTS

BY SAM HAUT

Delaware officials are mounting a campaign to tell lower-income families about a federal program that can cut their costs for broadband internet service. The [Affordable Connectivity Program](#), established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will provide eligible households a monthly discount of up to \$30 on their internet bill and a one-time \$100 discount toward a laptop, desktop computer or tablet.

The program grows partly out of the realization during the COVID-19 pandemic that many homes do not have access to the internet, either because of the expense or because there was no service to their houses. That made it tough for children to connect to classes when they went online.

The state has asked town governments in places such as Dover, Georgetown, Milford, Seaford and Wilmington to offer programs throughout the next month to educate residents about the federal program and help

them access it. Emily Hershman, director of communications for the governor's office, said towns will plan their own program, but they are expected to use community events and locations, such as libraries and service centers. Nonprofit groups will help, she said, including My Sister's Keeper, [NereditNow](#), Boys and Girls Club of Delaware, First State Community Action Agency, La Esperanza and the Central Baptist Community Development Corp.

Households that are eligible include those with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and those who qualify for help through the supplemental nutrition programs, free and reduced-price school lunches, Medicaid, SSI, federal housing benefits, Veterans pension or survivor benefits, or federal Pell grants.

140,000 HOMES ELIGIBLE FOR INTERNET HELP

So far, 32,000 Delaware households have enrolled out of an estimated 140,000 additional households eligible.

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Some households can get internet for free, though it was unclear which households qualify.

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki said the city was happy to help residents sign up so they could maximize their potential.

"High-speed internet is essential in today's world for people to learn, compete and thrive," Purzycki said.

Other towns participating in the push include Arden, Bethel, Bowers Beach, Cheswold, Clayton, Delaware City, Kenton, Newark, Smyrna and Townsend. The campaign to get people signed up is another step in the state's march toward full broadband and internet coverage in Delaware.

Delaware also is in the middle of a statewide broadband [initiative](#) expanding services statewide in areas that previously have not had access to internet connections.

REVENUES FALL SLIGHTLY AS STATE NOSES INTO POST-COVID ECONOMY

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware may have passed the peak of a rise in post-COVID revenues, the **Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council** heard Monday. Financial experts call that peak an “inflection point,” akin to that moment when roller-coaster riders feel a brief lift in their tummies before the coaster takes a plunge.

That doesn’t mean the state’s finances will plunge. Only that they likely will return to the same kind of smaller, steady growth of 2% to 4 % per year, as opposed to the 16% of 2021, said Rick Geisenberger, secretary of the Delaware Department of Finance.

The council lowered its current fiscal year 2023 estimates by \$79 million and lowered the amount that can be appropriated in fiscal year 2024 by \$36.2 million to \$6,268.7 billion. That’s actually an increase of \$270 million over the council’s October estimates. Fiscal year 2024 starts July 1.

This is the first time revenue has fallen since April of 2020 when the pandemic started. Even so, Delaware is

still expected to have a nearly \$1 billion surplus for 2024 and council members characterized the revenue changes as marginal. State Sen. Bryan Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, a new member of the council, said he was surprised revenues weren’t softer.

“It’s better than the scenario I had in my head,” Pettyjohn said.

Coping with the loss of \$36.2 million in a \$6 billion budget is not a tragedy, both Geisinger and Pettyjohn said.

“We’re not talking about a \$400 million hole or a \$800 million hole that we have to fill as we get closer to the end of the year,” Pettyjohn said. “And when we get some of the final DEFACs, we may actually see the numbers improve marginally.”

It’s hard to predict what will happen, council members were told, partly because of what’s happening nationally. While S&P Global has said it no longer believes there will be a national recession and instead



predicts a “pause in activity,” which Pettyjohn said is a short type of recession, with a little bit of pullback and slowdown in economic growth, but nothing long enough or big enough to trigger a full recession.

All the data in the committee hearing was put together before Silicon Valley Bank went belly-up, leading to the last two weeks of turmoil in the stock market, including the takeover of international banking giant Credit Suisse. Robert A. Glen, state Banking Commissioner told the council that Delaware banks seem solid and not at risk.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

STATE EMPLOYEE INSURANCE PREMIUMS TO RISE 9.4%

BY SAM HAUT

The State Employee Benefits Committee agreed to increase rates for workers on state health insurance by 9.4%. Chris Giovannello, who advises the state on benefits, said the committee had the option of a 16.8% increase at the beginning of July, or the 9.4% increase next year to address a \$140.5 million deficit. The committee is expected to vote for the same increase in the two years after that.

The deficit increase reflects a \$1.8 million increase for covering **weight loss medication**, \$3 million from the previous fiscal year and \$4.4 million from claims. If increases aren't made, the program's deficit will increase to \$305.5 million in the 2025 fiscal year, \$534.3 million in the 2026 fiscal year and \$829.1 million in the 2027 fiscal year.

This 9.4% increase would increase employee costs for the healthcare plan by between \$2.84 and \$27.88 a

month starting July 1, 2023, depending on which plan the worker chooses, and increase the state subsidy by \$68.20 to \$183.98 per month per employee.

If the committee had gone with a 16.8% increase, the cost for employees would have been between \$5.08 and \$49.82 per month, while the subsidy for the state would have been between \$121.88 and \$328.80 per employee per month.

Based on projections, the deficit would drop to \$52.2 million in the 2025 fiscal year, down to zero in the 2026 fiscal year and increase to \$1.5 million in the 2026 fiscal year.

Cerron Cade, director of the Office of Management & Budget and co-chair of the committee, said that the committee has avoided raising rates for the past five years because the program once had a large enough surplus to deal with it.



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DELAWARE GOP SETS FIVE TOWN HALLS ON ELECTRIC VEHICLE MANDATE

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware GOP has scheduled five town hall meetings during the next two weeks that will focus on Gov. John Carney's electric vehicle mandate. That mandate to make 35% of new vehicles electric in Delaware by 2025 and 100% of new vehicle sales electric by 2035, is expected to trigger a raft of new regulations from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control this spring. The GOP is opposed to the switch.

"Delaware does not need an EV sales mandate," said Rep. Danny Short, R-Seafood. "EVs are not the right choice for everyone. EV range, utility and load-hauling capability remain challenges in many situations.

"And EVs impose greater hardships on modest-income families, and those living without in-home charging

options (apartments, condos, urban areas with on-street parking)."

The town halls are expected to include three speakers: Dr. David Legates, a former Delaware state climatologist; David Stevenson, director of the Caesar Rodney Institute's Center for Energy & Environmental Policy; and Shawn Garvin, secretary of DNREC.

Garvin will come to two of the five town halls, on March 23 and 30, and send a representative to at least one that he is not able to attend because of scheduling conflict. The five town halls will all take place from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The first, on Tuesday, was at the Indian River Senior Center; the second was Thursday at the Brandywine Hundred Fire Hall; March 28 at 160 Peoples Plaza; and March 30, at Chambers Memorial Hall/

Mill Creek Fire Hall. A March 29 meeting doesn't yet have a location.

Carney's executive order is based on California's **zero emission vehicle regulations**.

Legates and Stevenson served the Trump administration. Legates served as assistant secretary of Commerce for observation and prediction at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Stevenson was a part of Trump's EPA transition team.

Public hearings on the proposed regulations will take place after DNREC releases its regulations.

"The underlying hubris of the electric vehicle mandate proponents is that anyone who disagrees must be forced to comply for their own good," Short said. "I believe most Delawareans know when they're being sold a lemon, even when the pitch is delivered with the skill of a used car salesman."

Jane Brady, chair of the Delaware Republican Party, said Legates will talk about how carbon dioxide doesn't impact climate change, while Stevenson will say that electric vehicles are too costly, don't last long enough and are damaging to the environment.

Brady said electric vehicles one day will be able to solve many of the issues they currently face, but they should not be mandated until then.

"Taking away the option of choosing a different mode of transportation is the wrong way to go," Brady said. "The technology certainly isn't there to support the way that we live...Maybe someday electric cars will be so cheap everybody will want them, and they'll be so good at going long distances that everybody will want them."

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Education

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ONLY TWO OF FOUR APPO SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES ATTEND Q&A

BY JAREK RUTZ

Appoquinimink school board candidates answered questions about transgender bathrooms, equity and inclusion, goals for the board and more Wednesday night. The district's school board hosted a question-and-answer session to allow families in the district to get to know candidates. Two of the four attended: Tim Johns, a pastor, and Ray Petkevis, a realtor. The other two candidates, Madeline Locke, a former IT professional and realtor, and Tashiba Graham did not participate. Shawn Rohe, who filed March 1 to run, withdrew from the race Monday.

Appo appears to be the first district in the state to hold a forum for school board candidates in the May 9 election. [First State Action Fund](#), an advocacy group that to change education by empowering Delawareans, plans a series of forums. See the schedule below.

Appo School Board President Michelle Wall and board member Richard Forsten led the questioning, which focused on the candidate's background, previous

participation in the district, opinions on hot-button issues and goals for the school board. Here's what the two had to say:

Tim Johns

A graduate of the University of Louisville and a Middletown resident, Johns is a pastor at [Heavens Gate Ministries](#) in Newark. He thinks success as a board member relies on having a familiarity of what teachers go through and the needs of students and their families.

When asked what books made an impression on him as a youth, he said "Curious George."

"At heart I'm a dreamer, and an adventurer, and you could accomplish anything by thinking and putting effort into what you believe," he said. "That has been a mainstay of my development as a child and even as a young adult."

What he loves most about Appo is the family and close-knit relationships formed within it.

He said "not all people are good people," and that as a

Black man he's experienced some uncomfortable and negative interactions with parents.

"It didn't make me feel any negativity to the district overall, but that's just the way it goes with life," he said.

Johns said he's a firm believer that people have to become the change they want to see.

"Everybody is responsible for being the example, and I think it begins with us as individuals," he said. "On the board I would just be my authentic self, be who I am supposed to be and that will speak for itself, that will influence the masses...authenticity is the key."

In the aftermath of several school incidents involving guns and physical altercations this year, Johns said he wants to focus on making schools safer.

"We need to have more collaboration with the local police and the school district and the schools," he said. "If we do that, there are things that the police know that the teachers don't know and there's things that teachers know that the school doesn't know."

With collaboration, he said, the district can come up with a comprehensive plan to prevent incidents and better handle potential dangers. He pointed out that a lot of the safety challenges arise because of the district's continued growth.

"I serve as the chaplain of the Smyrna Prison, and we were coming up with a concept to interview some inmates to get a video out there to high schools to show kids what could happen if you go the wrong way," he said.

Johns believes in equity over equality, and that every child's needs should be met. Appo needs to be flexible to understand that everybody learns at different paces and provide solutions for each level that the child is on, he said.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



EDUCATIONAL GROUPS SEEK MILLIONS FOR CAPITAL NEEDS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Department of Education, Delaware State University and the University of Delaware requested millions of dollars from the state Friday for critical and minor capital projects. Leaders from the three bodies presented their requests to the Joint Capital Improvement Committee. Also known as the Bond Committee, it's made up of six state representatives and six state senators who are responsible for writing the annual Bond Bill, which supports capital projects.

Here's what was requested:

DOE: \$216,081,500

"Given existing funding pressures we did not approve any requests for new projects in the fiscal year 2024 capital budget," said Secretary of Education Mark Holodick. "That doesn't mean there aren't needs in our districts and schools, as many of you probably know from the schools in your own communities."

Many districts have pressing needs, he said, but as the Department of Education developed its budget request this year, the top priority was the \$188.8 million necessary for previously authorized projects to ensure their progress toward completion.

The department is also prioritizing \$15 million for minor capital improvement and equipment as well as architectural barrier removal. These priorities left no room for new projects, Holodick said.

"We understand the disappointment of some of our district colleagues and recognize the challenges they're facing and we hope that in future budget years, our request will be able to include some, if not many of those needs," he said.

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BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware Technical Community College is asking the state for \$24,815,300 for next fiscal year in order to address critical capital needs. DelTech President Mark Brainard told the Joint Capital Improvement Committee in a hearing Tuesday that there's six projects that the college is prioritizing as "critical," which amount to a price tag of \$19.8 million. Here's how DelTech would spend the money:

- \$7,428,500 on entrance renovations, heat pumps, fire alarm and a chiller for Stanton campus
- \$4,771,200 on roof, HVAC and technology updates for Wilmington campus
- \$4 million on chiller replacements and air handling units for Georgetown campus
- \$2,199,700 on the Terry Building for Dover campus
- \$1,345,900 for public safety, paving, accommodations for disabled individuals, lighting and project contingency throughout all four campuses.
- \$1,000 for mechanical upgrades, masonry repairs and a chiller for Dover campus

The Joint Capital Improvement Committee, also known as the Bond Committee, is made up of six state

DELTECH ASKS STATE FOR \$24.8M FOR 'CRITICAL' CAPITAL NEEDS

representatives and six state senators. It is responsible for writing the annual Bond Bill, which supports capital projects.

In addition to the \$19.8 million, DelTech is requesting \$3.5 million for minor capital improvements, \$300,000 for technology and \$1.2 million for expanding the parking garage on its Wilmington campus.

"We've always got technology needs at the four campuses," Brainard said. "The one item that's been hanging on the list over time is a parking garage expansion at Wilmington because we're landlocked there."

Gov. John Carney's proposed 2024 budget for higher education already mentions:

- \$20 million—Deferred maintenance, capital improvements and technology upgrades at DelTech.
- \$932,000—Year 3 of the DelTech Compensation Stabilization Plan to reduce faculty and staff turnover.

Enrollment dropped by 2,000 since the beginning of the pandemic, but the school still primarily serves First Staters.

"Ninety-six percent of our 13,000 credit students are Delawareans," Brainard said. "That reflects that we remain focused on our mission serving Delawareans and Delaware businesses."



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REDDING CONSORTIUM: NEED TO ADD MIDDLE, HIGH SCHOOL SERVICES

BY JAREK RUTZ

The [Redding Consortium for Educational Equity](#) wants to add the same kind of support and wraparound services that elementary schools get to middle and high schools that need them. Those services include before- and after-school programs, summer programs, interventions, tutoring, wellness centers, child care and other social services.

The topic took up about a half-hour of the consortium's Social Determinants Work Group meeting Monday night. The 19-person committee agreed to recommend the additional investments at the regular meeting next month.

Essentially, the services fill in a student's academic and behavioral gaps they have during a school day. Last year, the consortium implemented wellness centers and wraparound services at the Bancroft School, the Bayard School and Kuumba Academy Charter School. It also

helped fund full-day preschool at the Kingswood Community Center, the Latin American Community Center, A Leap of Faith Child Development Center and St. Michael's School and Nursery.

The services were paid for by the state, which granted \$12.8 million to the organization for fiscal year 2023. Gov. John Carney has recommended \$10.2 million in funding for the group for fiscal year 2024.

The consortium was created to recommend policies and practices to the governor and General Assembly to improve educational outcomes such as test scores for all pre-K to 12th grade students in the city of Wilmington and northern New Castle County.

Dorrell Green, who also is superintendent of the Red Clay Consolidated School District, said there is a disconnect in policies since the consortium hasn't provided the services to middle and high schools.

"That's an area where there's a gap, and we have to look at the alignment and where those programs are being offered, and ultimately how we're defining wraparound services relative to what we see in elementary school versus what we see in middle and high school," he said.

Green pointed out that many of the middle schools are in suburban areas, which causes transportation issues that the elementary schools—all in the city—don't necessarily experience.

Member Teri Lawler, who works at the Department of Education, said it was a good idea to start with elementary schools, but reminded the group what the goals of the consortium are.

"We are charged with looking at the needs for services that support students during and after school from early learning through high school," Lawler said. "Now we really want to start to dig into an exploration and an assessment for the needs of middle and high schools."

Member Jeff Menzer, who also is superintendent of Colonial School District, said it's a good idea for the group to start transitioning to middle and high school after spending the majority of the past few years heavily focused on early education.

Watch the Redding Consortium's next full meeting

[HERE.](#)



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Health

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25TH BREAST CANCER UPDATE TO FOCUS ON ACCESS, ADVANCES

BY STAFF WRITER

The Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition will offer its 25th Annual Breast Cancer Update virtually April 19.

“As someone who has seen firsthand the impact of medical care disparities on breast cancer patients, I am passionate about the need to address access and equity issues in healthcare,” said Dr. Karen Louie of Christiana Care said. “No one should be denied access to life-saving treatment because of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or any other factor beyond their control. It’s time for us to come together and work towards a more just and equitable healthcare system that ensures that all patients receive the care they deserve.”

The annual update will focus on Access & Advances in breast cancer care and therapies.

The event began as a small scientific meeting designed to provide physicians with the latest trends in breast cancer treatments and diagnosis. It has grown to an an-

nual educational conference that is free to the public.

According to the coalition, healthcare professionals and students seize the opportunity to not only earn CEUs and contact hours at no cost, but they are also provided the most up-to-date tools available for diagnosing and treating breast cancer.


Some of the topics that will be covered at this year’s update include access, equity and barriers to care, oncologic surgery, immunotherapy and breast cancer, research on fear of re-occurrence in partners as well as re-occurrence of breast cancer.

“Our goal is to have programming that empowers our community in the fight against breast cancer,” Bender said.

Register for the virtual event [HERE](#).



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Sports

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BY NICK HALLIDAY

In a press conference Thursday afternoon at Salesianum Eugene “Gene” Delle Donne was introduced as the new head football coach for the Sals. Gene is taking over for Bill DiNardo who stepped down as head football coach this season. Delle Donne becomes the 13th head football coach at Salesianum.

“My family and I couldn’t be more excited to be in this position,” Delle Donne told Delaware LIVE Sports. “Salesianum has always remained a huge part of our life.”

He thanked the Salesianum administration for its trust and faith in his ability “to help lead these young men and create a championship mindset on and off the field.”

“We will create a culture where excellence is expected,” he said. “Our student-athletes will have all the resources needed to succeed as successful football players, students and young men.

SALESIANUM NAMES GENE DELLE DONNE AS HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

“I am fired up to get to work building a staff and continuing the great connections and relations with our players!”

Delle Donne played high school football at Salesianum, where he lettered in four seasons for the Sals and was named Gatorade Player of the Year in 2004. Delle Donne told us all he remembered as a kid was going to games at Baynard Stadium. “And all I wanted to do was wear that gold helmet,” he said.

After graduating in 2005, Delle Donne went on to play two seasons at Middle Tennessee State University.

Gene most recently has served as Salesianum’s offensive coordinator and assistant varsity football coach. His responsibilities include handling practice and game-day install, team management and overseeing college recruiting for prospects in the program. He also serves as the school’s director of Community Relations, assisting with marketing, admissions and fundraising activities.

When asked what Salesianum means to him he said, “Other than my family, it’s Salesianum.”



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SALESIANUM, UD ALUM TROY REEDER TO SIGN DEAL WITH VIKINGS

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

Troy Reeder has found a new home for the first time since he entered the league as an undrafted free agent in 2019. The Minnesota Vikings announced Wednesday that they had come to terms with the former Salesianum and Delaware linebacker on a one-year deal. Reeder (28) will now leave L.A., the place he called home for the last three seasons, and join a familiar face in the Midwest.

There will now be a reunion with his former Salesianum teammate and Viking offensive tackle Brian O'Neill. The two had successful careers alongside each other in high school at Salesianum in Wilmington and even came back together last off-season and held a foot-

ball clinic at the Chase Fieldhouse. After the Vikings and Rams game back in 2021, the two swapped jerseys.

Reeder highlighted his enthusiasm to be joining both former coach Kevin O'Connell and former teammate Brian O'Neill when we spoke after the signing. "I'm just very excited to be joining such a great organization. Teaming up with Coach O'Connell and my good friend Brian O'Neill," Reeder said. "Eager to go compete for a championship."

Reeder spent the first three seasons of his career with the Los Angeles Rams. He appeared in all 16 games as a rookie and started in eight of them. In 2020-21, he played



over 550 defensive snaps and started in two playoff games. In 2021, Reeder played a career-high 864 defensive snaps and started 10 of 17 regular season games, as well as three postseason games on his way to a Super Bowl win in 2021. He spent last season reuniting with his former defensive coordinator Brandon Staley and joined the Los Angeles Chargers, where he mainly played special teams but also saw 63 defensive snaps.

Congratulations to Troy and his wife Mary on the birth of their son Beau Daniel Reeder on Feb. 15!

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BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

Delaware football held its 2023 Pro Day on Wednesday at the Newark campus of the University of Delaware. Nine from Delaware football's senior class lined up and participated in multiple drills in hopes to show their talent to NFL scouts.

Quarterback Nolan Henderson, safety Kedrick Whitehead, wide receiver Thyrick Pitts, cornerback Justis Hensley, linebacker Johnny Buchanan, running back Khory Spruill, offensive lineman Josh Stevens, defensive lineman Artis Hemmingway and long snapper Jake Reed, were among the group of Hens participating. A group that contains several Delaware record holders that includes Henderson, Pitts and Buchanan.

NINE PARTICIPATE IN DELAWARE FOOTBALL PRO-DAY

Linebacker Buchanan had seven All-American selections in 2022 and led all of FCS with 150 tackles. Buchanan has had his name floating around many teams ahead of the 2023 NFL Draft. Quarterback Henderson finished second all-time in touchdown passes in Delaware history, with 56 touchdowns among multiple single-game records. Wide receiver Pitts finished his UD career ranked among the top 10 in several career statistics including receptions (172), receiving yards (2,429) and touchdown catches (23). Pitts also set the program record with a catch in 43 consecutive games.

The Delaware Blue Hens currently have the second most active players on an NFL roster at the FCS level and will look to continue that come the draft in April. These nine Blue Hens will hope to find a way onto an NFL team's draft board or training camp roster. The 2023 NFL draft will take place in Kansas City, MO, on Thursday, April 27.



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