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April 23, 2023

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photo link: Michele Buckler

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Avelo Airlines to Add Routes, States in June



Cemetery Pay & Hiring Vet Families



Spring Sports Week 4

Michele J. Buckler

photo link: Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek



Headlines

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MARIJUANA LEGAL IN DELAWARE SUNDAY; CARNEY WON'T SIGN, VETO

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney said Friday that even though he disagrees with legalizing marijuana and creating a regulated and taxed industry, he will allow the two bills that do that to become law without his signature.

“I want to be clear that my views on this issue have not changed,” he said in a Friday afternoon press release. “I understand there are those who share my views who will be disappointed in my decision not to veto this legislation.

“I came to this decision because I believe we’ve spent far too much time focused on this issue, when Delawareans face more serious and pressing concerns every day. It’s time to move on.”

House Bill 1, which decriminalizes marijuana possession for personal use, will become law at the end of Saturday night. It takes effect Sunday, April 23.

House Bill 2, which creates a taxable, regulated industry for the growing and selling of marijuana, will become law at the end of Wednesday night. It takes effect Thursday, April 27, but it’s like to be months to a year before the regulations are put in place that allow the industry to take root.

Carney made his announcement one day too late for marijuana advocates to celebrate when they light up on April 20, also referred to as 4/20. That day has become a kind of holiday for those who want weed legalized across the country.

“As I’ve consistently said, I believe the legalization of recreational marijuana is not a step forward,” Carney said in his press release. “I support both medical marijuana and Delaware’s decriminalization law because no one should go to jail for possessing a personal use quan-

tity of marijuana. And today, they do not.”

Rep. Ed Osienski, D-Newark, has repeatedly introduced versions of the bill to legalize marijuana use. The one that passed last year was vetoed by Carney and could not be overcome by the state House.

When he reintroduced the bills this year, Osienski said he thought there was a chance that he would have better luck in the governor’s office.

The governor’s office suggested changes on the industry bill, which passed in an amendment.

And earlier this week, Carney told a town hall meeting that he thought the state had more pressing problems, including lost learning because of COVID-19 and the opioid epidemic, and had spent too much time focusing on marijuana.

“After five years of countless meetings, debates, negotiations and conversations,” Osienski said, “I’m grateful we have reached the point where Delaware has joined a growing number of states that have legalized and regulated adult recreational marijuana for personal use. We know that more than 60% of Delawareans support the legalization of marijuana for adult recreational use, and more than two-thirds of the General Assembly agreed.”

He said he understood the governor’s personal opposition to legalization.

“So I especially appreciate him listening to the thousands of residents who support this effort and allowing it to become law,” Osienski said. “I am committed to working with the administration to ensure that the effort to establish the regulatory process goes as smoothly as possible.”

[READ MORE HERE](#)



EDUCATION TOWN HALL FOCUSES ON WOKE AGENDAS, PARENTAL RIGHTS

BY JAREK RUTZ

Speakers at a town hall Tuesday night said Delaware’s education system is in crisis, Delaware’s students are being indoctrinated by the woke agenda and that America is falling behind in international comparisons. About 30 people attended the Save Our Schools Town Hall in Dover sponsored by **Citizens for Delaware Schools**. It is the first of three offering conservative views on education designed to help residents make an informed decision when they go to the polls for the May 9 school board elections.

Elana Fishbein of the national nonprofit **No Left Turn in Education** is an immigrant from Israel who said in the meeting that America is the shining city on a hill because people’s rights and freedoms are protected by the constitution. People risk their lives to enter the United States “because they know they have rights in the country, and they are protected.”

One of those is allowing parents to be the primary authority in their children’s education, an idea she thinks has been lost.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Fishbein joked that she “interrogates” her son when he gets home from school, going class by class and asking him what he learned. When she hasn’t been okay with aspects of his classes, she’s called the school administration to exempt her child. She encouraged the crowd to do the same.

Once, her son came home and told her that his teacher was talking about transgender people. She was sure he’d never heard that word at home.

“I know that an eight-year old is still figuring out their own identity and their brain is still developing and they’re not really understanding what’s going on with their life,” she said.

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DELAWARE SPORTSMEN TAKE AIM AT HANDGUN PERMITTING BILL

BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware State Sportsmen's Association took to **social media** Monday to condemn a bill that would create a permitting process for getting a handgun.

"We knew it would be coming back and it's finally here," the Facebook post said.

"In the wake of the violent criminal actions of the last few weeks in Delaware, our single partly overlords have decided that the best course of action is not to hold criminals accountable, but to make it harder for citizens to defend themselves, even though police cannot be everywhere and are not required to protect citizens."

The bill, which hasn't yet been filed in the General Assembly, is expected to be sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth Lockman, D-Wilmington, and House Majority Whip Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle South.

It requires someone planning to buy a handgun to have a permit, unless they are a qualified law-enforcement officer, retired law-enforcement officer, or already have a concealed weapons permit.

The Sportsmen's Association, which is Delaware's National Rifle Association affiliate, said the permitting process would add significant costs and create delays for getting a concealed carry permit. The association pledged to fight the bill in the legislature and in the courts, just as it is battling last year's **ban** of high capacity magazines and assault rifles.

Efforts were unsuccessful Monday to reach Lockman or Minor-Brown for comment.

Drew Volturo, the deputy chief of staff for Communications for the House Democratic Caucus, said because the bill originates in the Senate, any comments on the bill should come from the Senate.

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Culture

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photo link: Clear Space Theatre Company





HOPEFULS START TRYOUTS FOR STATE PARKS LIFEGUARD JOBS

BY RACHEL SWICK MAVITY

Delaware State Parks Beach Patrol Capt. Bailey Noel wants to have all four park-managed beaches open this summer. But he needs to recruit 20 to 30 new beach patrol lifeguards to do that. Last year, the Tower Road beach had to be closed most weekends outside of holidays because he didn't have the staff to guard the beach.

Noel estimates he needs 14 guards per shift for Cape Henlopen State Park, four to eight for Fenwick Island, four to eight for Tower Road and 10-12 for the Indian River Inlet beach. Guards work five to six days per week. Full beach patrol guards earn \$18.75 and those who are under 16 or who are not full guards—called lifeguard assistants—earn \$16.25.

“I am very optimistic this year because we have had a good turnout for our tryouts so far,” Noel said. “If those

trying out don't pass all of the tests the first time, they are able to come back out for another tryout to try again.”

Potential candidates have to swim 500 yards, freestyle stroke only, in 10 minutes; run one mile along the beach in 10 minutes; and then submit to an interview. Applicants can try out several times to improve speeds.

“I've been training since February for this,” said Chris McCrae, 22, of Marydel. He is a firefighter who wanted to expand his skills by joining beach patrol.

“I like helping people and a friend of mine is on beach patrol, so he suggested I come out for tryouts,” McCrae said. “I hope to be on the beach patrol and have a good summer helping people out.”

Noel grew up on the beaches and started with the

beach patrol when he was 20. He left at point, but by the second summer without being on the stand, he knew he had to go back.

“It gets in your blood,” he says with a chuckle. “I am in love with it because I get to be at the beach and I get to help people.”

Beach Patrol Crew Chief Ethan McIntosh agreed. This will be McIntosh's third season with beach patrol and his first as crew chief at Cape Henlopen.

“We have seen a big shortage lately and that puts stress on the rest of us because we might have to work longer shifts or more days each week,” he said. “It especially affects us at the end of the season.”

McIntosh, who lives in Magnolia and commutes to Cape Henlopen each morning during the summer, says housing is one of the biggest hurdles faced by beach patrol members. While Delaware State Parks offers some housing, they try to reserve it for guards coming from out of state. Delaware residents may have to find an apartment with friends near the beach or commute, as McIntosh does.

Most of those trying out on April 16 lived in the area or had family with whom they could live.

LIFEGUARD HOPEFULS

David McCurry, 20, is from Calvert County, MD, but spends summers in Dewey Beach with his grandfather. This is his first year trying out for the beach patrol.

“I usually am a server but I am kind of tired of that,” he said. “I'm active and like to be outside, so I thought beach patrol would be good for me and more fulfilling.”

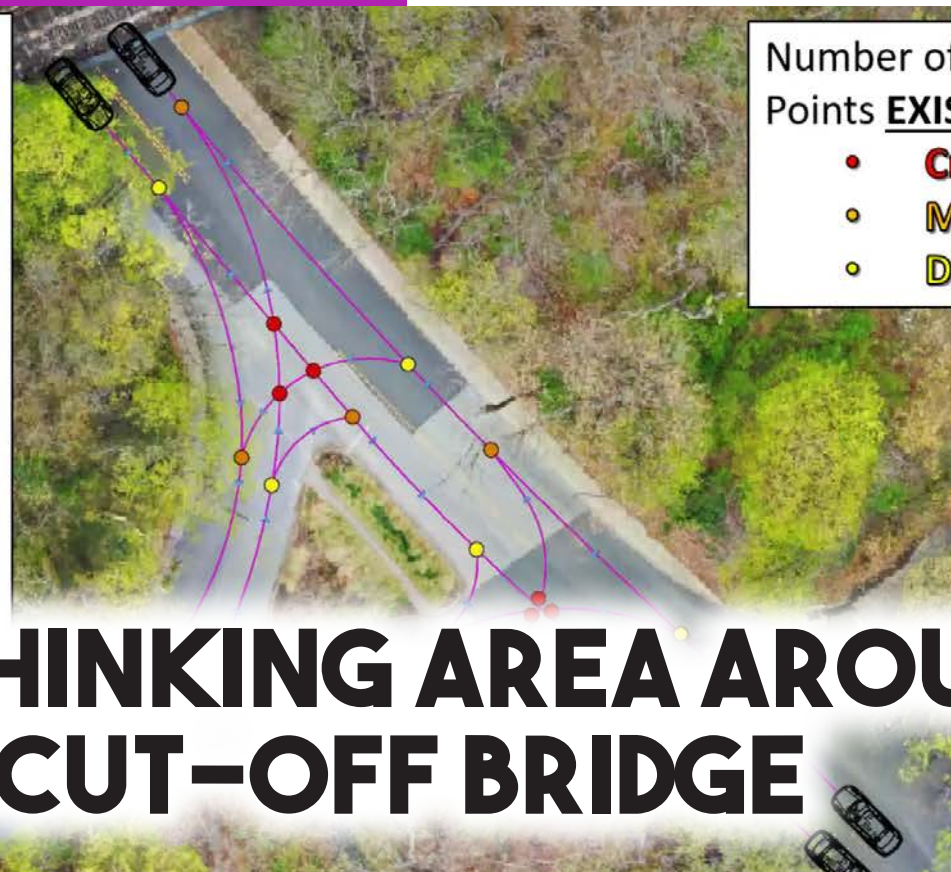
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Conflict Points

- Locations where turning vehicles may overlap, causing a crash

Types of Conflicts

- **Crossing**
Angle Collisions
- **Merging**
Rear End
Sideswipe
- **Diverging**



Number of Automobile Conflict Points **EXISTING**

- **Crossing: 7**
- **Merging: 7**
- **Diverging: 7**

DELDOT RETHINKING AREA AROUND AUGUSTINE CUT-OFF BRIDGE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Plans are underway to make roadways around the Augustine Cut-Off bridge over the Brandywine safer and better for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. And slower for drivers.

The Delaware Department of Transportation **project** extends from Brandywine Hundred down to Lovering Avenue in the northern edge of Wilmington. The most prominent change involves reconfiguring the triangular intersection of Lovering Avenue and N. 18th Street into a more traditional T-shape. Officials also want to eliminate left turns between Augustine Cut-Off and Wawaset Street.

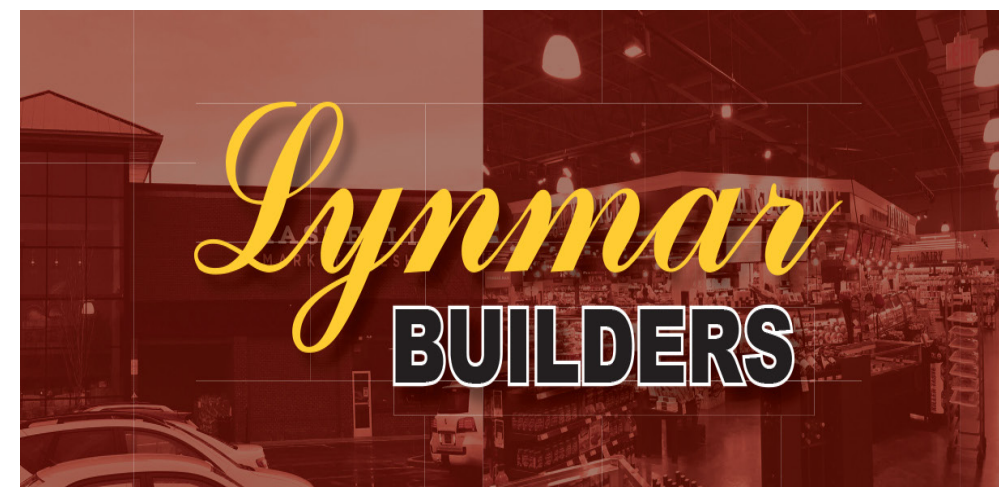
Improvements will be made throughout for bicyclists and pedestrians, such as a protected bike lane across the bridge and a shared roadway to the north.

Officials are also considering an outdoor stairway for pedestrians between Augustine Cut-Off and N. 18th and addressing “conflicts and safety issues created by illegal parking” on Augustine Cut-Off.

“There is a lot of interesting pedestrian activity in the area,” DelDOT planner Paul Moser said in a presentation showing a slide of a landscape where people have, footfall by footfall, created a dirt path.

The area’s dominant features include Incyte, a pharmaceuticals firm seeking approval from New Castle County to expand on acreage acquired from Wilmington Friends School; the Salesianum School and its Absessinio Stadium; a Wilmington fire station; and scattered retailers, restaurants and other businesses.

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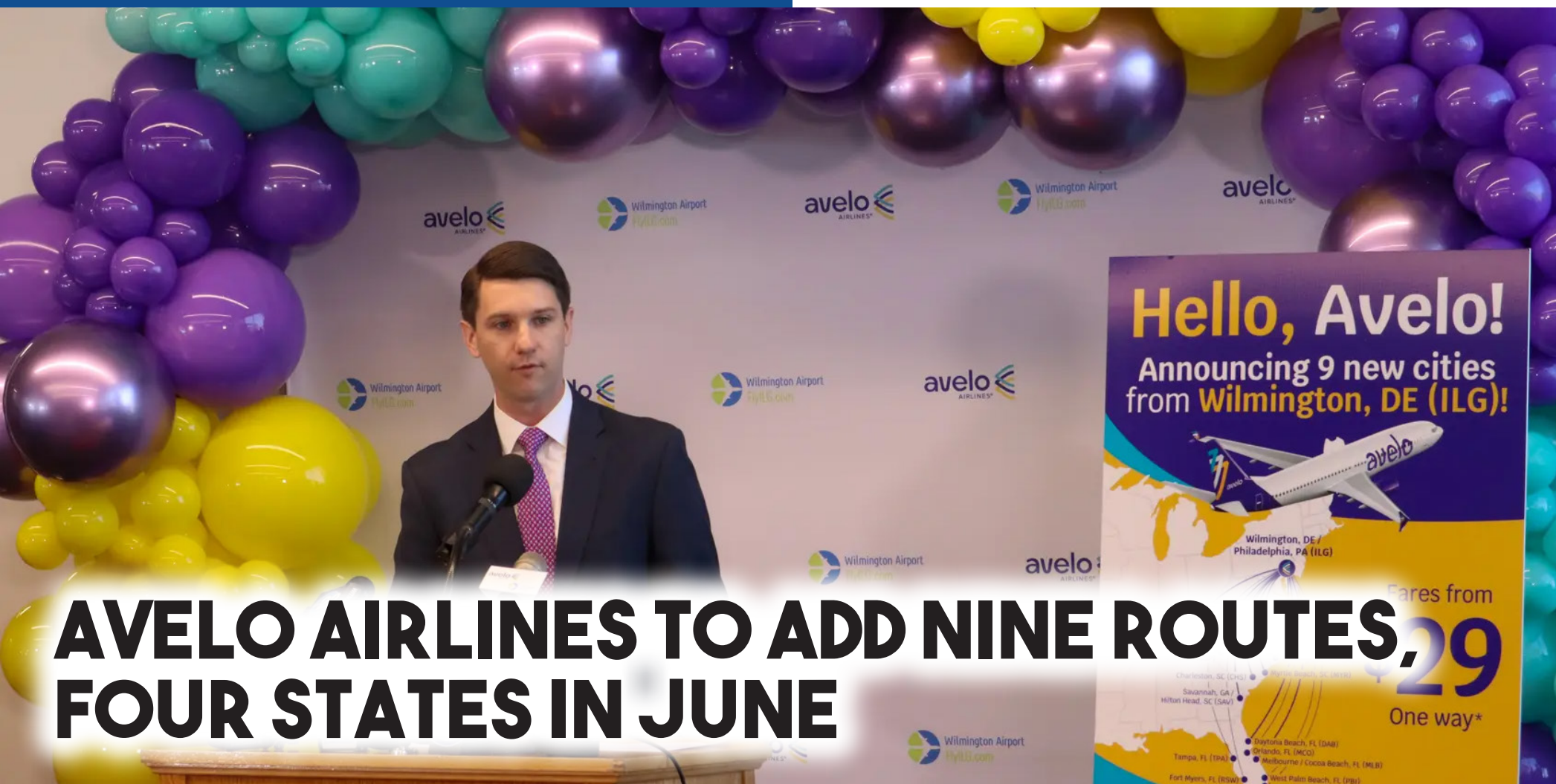


Business

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photo credit: fauxels / PEXELS





AVELO AIRLINES TO ADD NINE ROUTES, FOUR STATES IN JUNE

BY JAREK RUTZ

Avelo Airlines was supposed to start expanding its destinations from Wilmington Airport in a year or two, but instead, it nearly tripled its routes in less than 90 days of service.

Local, state and airline officials held a press conference Thursday morning to announce that the airline is adding nine new nonstop destinations spanning five states: Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia: Charleston, SC; Myrtle Beach, SC; Greenville/Spartanburg, SC; Nashville, TN; Raleigh/Durham, NC; Wilmington, NC; Savannah, GA; Melbourne/Cocoa Beach, FL; Daytona Beach, FL.

Since arriving at Wilmington Airport less than three months ago, Avelo has flown more than 25,000 customers.

“This is about the three C’s,” said Thomas Cook, executive director of the **Delaware River and Bay Authority**. “Avelo has cost friendly fares, Avelo has excellent customer service...and finally, this airport is convenient.” The added routes will bring addition of a second Boeing 737 to the airport, and the airline is hoping it will bring more jobs to Wilmington by adding at least 35 jobs at the terminal as well as at least 100 crew members. The new plane fits 189 passengers.

Flights to these destinations begin June 22, with one-way fares starting at \$29. In addition to the new routes, Avelo has five existing destinations from Wilmington to Florida, which are Orlando, Tampa, Fort Lauderdale, Fort Myers and West Palm Beach.

New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer said that he and others were skeptical of Avelo’s commitment, since other airlines have come and gone. The quick expansion mitigated his doubts, he said.

“I don’t know if any airline has announced what Avelo has announced today,” he said. “I don’t know if they’ve come and said we’re doubling down, or I guess quadrupling down on Wilmington.”

Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki pointed out that this isn’t just for Delawareans flying south, but it’s also for people from other states to fly into Wilmington to stay in the First State. He’s excited that the airport will help people avoid the hassle of a larger airport.

“Going to Philly is work, going through Philadelphia is just hard,” he said. “Everything about it including getting there and checking your bag and then getting out to where you’re going, it’s a workout.”

For all the divisions in America, Purzycki said the entrepreneurial spirit of a project like this shows how close-knit the community of Wilmington is. “It’s a blessing to be here,” he said.



RETAIL THEFT CONTINUES TO PLAGUE DELAWARE BUSINESSES

BY SAM HAUT

While retail theft continues to increase in Delaware, according to state police records, it doesn't seem to be happening at the level reported in some cities.

"I am not aware of any widespread looting or any type of cases where there's just been storming, just an overpowering into an establishment," said Jason Hatchell, public information officer for the Delaware State Police.

At least one retail official says her stores see organized looting by groups. Julie Miro Wenger, executive director of the Delaware Food Industry Council, which represents grocery and drug stores with a total of 12,000 employees, said that most of the retail theft they're seeing is from organized groups.

"We're not talking about individual shoplifting to be able to feed their families," Miro Wenger said. "We're certainly talking about folks that are coming in an or-

ganized fashion that are going through our stores and are aggressive and blatant and have taken to stealing shopping carts full of product."

She said she couldn't cite any specific incidents. Retail theft in Delaware in 2023 is on pace to be higher than in recent years, state police records show. State police have had reports of 1,059 incidents of retail theft or shoplifting this year, he said. In 2022, it had reports of 3,319, up from the 2,477 incidents in 2020.

Those numbers, however, don't include incidents dealt with by municipal police departments in Wilmington, Dover and Seaford, Hatchell said.

Police and business officials say that it's possible more theft is occurring, but with hiring problems in police departments, manpower is often steered to more serious crimes.

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Food & Dining

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10 NEW OR IMPROVED SPOTS IN DELAWARE FOR OUTDOOR DINING

BY BETSY PRICE

Even before COVID-19, Delaware diners upped the demand for outdoor dining options, and alfresco spaces have become essential to many restaurant designs. Not surprisingly, space affects the size and style of the seating. Here are 10 to consider:

Quoin Rooftop

The Quoin Hotel & Restaurant in downtown Wilmington covers a lot of bases. The renovated Romanesque brownstone sports a below-ground cocktail lounge—the Simmer Down—a boutique hotel and a bar. But the talk of the town is a rooftop lounge with sunset views.

Lewes Oyster House

This will be the first full season for this new hotspot in the heart of historic Lewes. Because the old brick Walsh Building fronts the sidewalk, there's not much space for seating. Nevertheless, the owners fit four tables that can hold three people each. Select diners can

see and be seen.

Starboard Claw

Dewey Beach visitors and residents have watched the construction of this new restaurant, which occupies the old Hammerhead's space and an adjoining lot.

"It's been a long, long road, but we're getting to the finish line," says Keith "Toastie" Kirk, a partner.

The restaurant, which should open this spring, has second-floor terrace seating, and the menu includes hard-shell crabs, Bethany Blues ribs and Ed's Chicken recipe. (Ed's Chicken & Crabs burned down in 2016.)

Brew Haha! at Avenue North

The newest location in the Delaware-based coffee chain is off Route 202 and sports a 1,400-square-foot outdoor area with lush landscaping that rivals the popular Trolley Square patio.

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DOGFISH HEAD'S BEER AND SPIRIT FESTIVAL COMING MAY 5-7

BY JAREK RUTZ

Craft beer lovers will have a field day—well, field weekend—as Dogfish Head hosts its annual beer festival May 5-7 in Sussex County. The event, dubbed the “[Weekend of Compelling Ales](#)” will feature the local brewery’s unique ales and spirits along with delectable food pairings.

The weekend will start with a kick-off party, a walking and tasting experience, and brunch. It will also feature the debut of the Summer’s Cauldron, a new Limoncello-style gin, which was created in a partnership with New Hampshire’s [Fabrizia Spirits](#). The newly-released unfiltered gin is 46% ABV and distilled with Sicilian lemons from Fabrizia’s own lemon grove in Italy, along with juniper, lemon drop hops, lavender, and pink and Timur peppercorns.

Cocktail expert and television personality Mia Mastroianni, who appears on the reality show *Bar Rescue*, will be mixing up some new cocktail recipes for attendees to try.

Here’s the schedule of events:

Kick-off party at Rehoboth restaurants

The weekend starts at 7 p.m. Friday, May 5, with an all-you-can-eat meal and drink menu at [Brewings & Eats](#) and at [Chesapeake & Maine](#).

Brewings & Eats will have a slider bar, build-your-own-pasta bowl and pub fare options. Chesapeake &

Maine will be the place to be for seafood lovers, with dishes like seafood paella and raw bar offerings. Both restaurants will have plenty of dessert options served in the courtyard between the two restaurants, which are located at 316 & 320 Rehoboth Avenue in Rehoboth. Tickets are \$100 per person and can be purchased [HERE](#).

Walking and Tasting Experience at Milton Tasting Room and Kitchen

From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, May 6, attendees can have a unique self-guided walking and tasting experience. Guests can explore the Dogfish Head’s Milton Brewery & Distillery, which includes 12 unique stations where they will be greeted with sample pours of beers, spirits or cocktails and some quick bites paired with them. Tickets are \$65 and can be bought [HERE](#).

Each patron is guaranteed 12 rare beer and spirit samples with 12 food samples, a souvenir glass and a tasting card. The event takes place at 6 Cannery Village Center in Milton.

Designated driver tickets are \$35 and can be purchased [HERE](#). The DD tickets include 12 food pairings, the glass, and 12 non-alcoholic beverages.

Once registered, patrons will be given a designated time slot for the walk-and-taste experience.

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photo credit: Delaware.gov

Government

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CEMETERY PAY RAISES, HIRING VET FAMILIES AMONG VA TOPICS



BY SAM HAUT

The Delaware Commission of Veteran Affairs plans to change the state's definition of veteran to include officers working at two federal agencies, and also will lower the commission status of Korean War Veterans groups, now that their last chapter has closed.

The group on Tuesday also discussed pay for state veterans cemetery workers and whether rules should be changed so family members can be hired there. Right now, the jobs are reserved for veterans and go unfilled.

The change to the definition would be made to include commissioned officers with the U.S. Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration so that they can get benefits from Veterans Affairs.

Joshua Matticks, executive director of the Delaware Office of Veterans Services, said adding federal officers keeps Delaware aligned with the federal Veterans Affairs definition.

Because the last of the state's three Korean War Veterans Association chapters closed last week after its members said they were too old to handle chapter duties, the organization will lose its seat on the state commission and be made an at-large member. The commission seat will be filled by a member of the National Association for Black Veterans.

The change in commissioners is governed by [Title 29, section 8720](#) of the Delaware Code and requires action by the governor, but is “really non-controversial” said

David Mangler, director of community relations for the Delaware Department of State. It oversees Veterans Affairs. The Commission will approach the General Assembly about the switch, and Mangler said he didn't anticipate any disagreement in the House or Senate Veteran Affairs committees.

Also Monday, Nolan Lewis of The National Association for Black Veterans said he thought the commission should seek to raise the pay for veterans' cemetery employees and to allow family members of veterans to work at the cemeteries. Lewis said cemetery jobs are restricted to veterans, which makes it harder for the cemeteries to find workers.

That issue was brought to the General Assembly right before COVID-19 hit in 2020, but never gained traction, said Matticks.

Matticks said he doesn't know how hard it would be to change rules to allow veterans' family members to work at cemeteries and he wasn't sure why the issue hasn't come up since 2020.

Matticks said allowing veterans' family members to take jobs at the cemeteries could be used to get more people to work, but the state also has to meet federal guidelines.

“Will we get there one day? Maybe,” he said. “But you gotta take baby steps to get to that point and this will be our baby step forward.”

Pay is an internal matter that the office is working on, Matticks said. He offered to talk to Lewis about it privately.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



NEPOTISM LAW SHOT DOWN IN WILMINGTON CITY COUNCIL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Wilmington City Council ordinance that would prevent nepotism failed to pass Thursday night after initially garnering strong support in a committee last month. The ordinance got five yes votes, five no and two “present” votes, meaning it lacked the numbers it needed to succeed.

Ordinance 0273, sponsored by Councilman James Spadola, would prohibit members of the council from hiring close relatives of current council members.

A close relative would be considered a person’s domestic partner or parents, spouse, children, siblings by blood (whole or half), adoption or marriage.

The legislation was motivated by some issues at the state level, Spadola said, citing convicted former state auditor Kathleen McGuinness, whose charges stemmed from hiring her daughter.

“There’s also a carve out for current employees, so if anybody was elected to city council and their family member was already on staff, that person could remain on staff,” Spadola said.

Councilwoman Shané Darby supported the legislation.

“I’m in full support of this legislation and I think it’s important to put safeguards up to hold us accountable,” she said, “and for us to be ethical in our decisions that we’re making, and how we’re operating as a city council.”

An issue that has been brought up each time the ordinance has been presented is the fact that it only applies to the City Council.

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WILM. COUNCILWOMAN OLIVER REPRIMANDED FOR ETHICS VIOLATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

Wilmington City Councilwoman Zanthia Oliver was given a public reprimand by the city’s ethics commission after voting during a meeting to allocate \$200,000 to her brother’s nonprofit.

Norman Oliver’s organization, Our Youth, Inc., offers physical and educational services for children in New Castle County to help them stay on the right path and set them up for success in their future endeavors.

According to the Wilmington Ethics Commission’s public reprimand, the councilwoman voted in 2020 for a 196-page resolution which laid out numerous beneficiaries of different grants, one being her brother’s group.

The grant allocations were officially approved by the city council’s Community Development and Urban Planning committee on May 14, 2020, and the funds were given to Our Youth as part of the council’s 2021 action plan.

Whenever there is a conflict of interest, which includes actions that benefit a relative, Wilmington’s city code requires members to vote “present” instead of “yes” or “no.” Oliver voted “yes,” according to the ethics commission.

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DRAFT BILL WOULD STRIKE ALL REFERENCES TO GENDER IN STATE LAW

BY SAM HAUT

A legislative council voted Wednesday to create a bill that would allow all references to gender to be removed from Delaware law. The Joint Legislative Council, a bipartisan committee, unanimously approved a draft bill that would remove terms like he, she, his, hers with a noun that does not express gender.

For example, in [Title 14, Section 170](#), a student identification number is defined as “the unique identification number assigned to each student in the State under which his or her student records are maintained.” The his or her in that section would be changed to just say the student.

The process is referred to as creating a gender silent Delaware Code, and is being discussed or happening

across the country. Proponents say it makes laws clearer and less wordy.

While the bill itself hasn’t yet been released, Carolyn Meier, a Delaware code editor, said that if passed, it would require editing of state code as well as require removing references to gender in all future bills.

As volumes of the Delaware code are replaced, Meier said, they would be checked to make sure they were gender silent.

“Even if we’ve got bills that have already been released and are under discussion, if they are passed after this bill, they will be made gender silent by the revisors during their editing process,” she said. Ultimately, the entire code will be rewritten. “It’s just a matter of time,”

Meier said.

Mark Cutrona, director of the Division of Research, said that the code was originally changed to be gender neutral in 1995. That meant adding the word she in places where code said he. When looking through the code recently, he said researchers found about 50 sections of the code that weren’t gender neutral.

Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, D-Newark, mentioned that one part of the bill would change “his debt” to “the debt,” and Cutrona said that change also helps with clarity.

“Part of the problem with using he or she sometimes is that it becomes unclear which actor the he or she is referring to,” Cutrona said. “And in that case we could not figure it out, and so we went extra neutral and just said the debt.”

House Minority Leader Rep. Lyndon Yearick, R-Camden, asked about how the bill came about.

Cutrona said that the research department noticed that there were places in the code that were not gender neutral or silent and decided to ask for the law. He said Delaware Code Revisors Dan Wolcott and Jamie Sharp, who were appointed by the legislature, agreed with it. The current law dictates what revisors are and aren’t allowed to change when editing a bill.

Meier said that few states have made the decision to move to gender silent language, but many more are at least discussing it.

Rep. Valerie Longhurst, D-Bear, said the bill will help with clarity and it will be good to update language that just says he.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

BENEFITS SUBCOMMITTEES EXAMINE RISING COSTS OF HEALTH CARE

BY SAM HAUT

Two state health subcommittees focused Monday on the rising cost and utilization of health care. Those costs are the basis of predictions about how many healthcare services employees and retirees will use and are used to determine insurance premiums and more.

At a joint **SEBC** Financial and Health Policy & Planning Subcommittee meeting Monday, Chris Giovannello of Willis Towers Watson said expenses are rising about 8% per member year over year. He compared costs between March 2021–February 2022 with March 2022–February 2023.

During that period, for admission rates, maternity represented the largest number of hospital admissions at 39%, or 22.2 per 1,000 admissions, a 4% hike from the previous year. Surgical admissions, though, saw the biggest increase in numbers. They were up 13.4% to 10.5

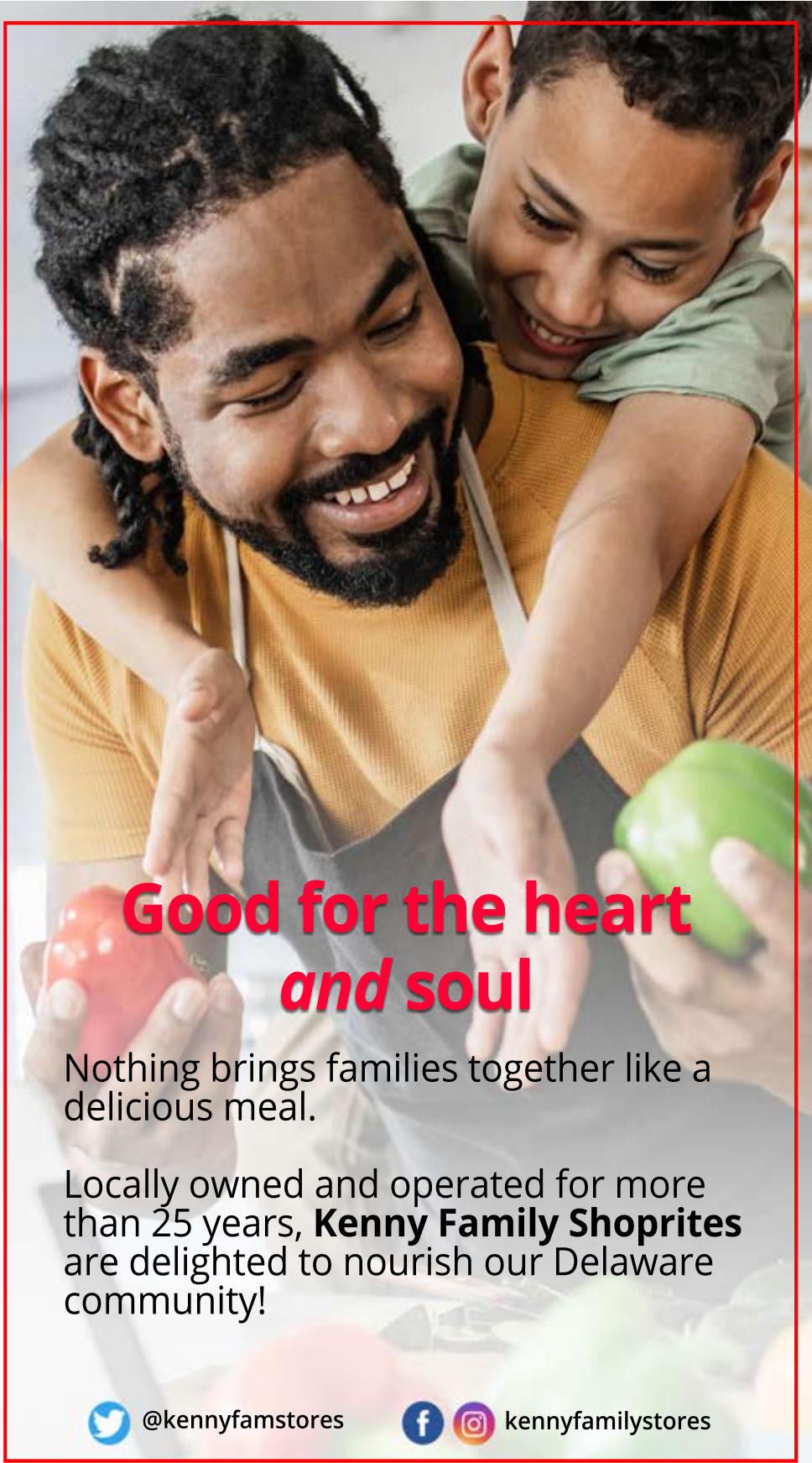
per 1,000 admissions, up from 9.3 in the previous year. The overall length of stay declined, Giovannello said.

Utilization of mental health outpatient services increased the most at 9.7%, from 2,283.7 per 1,000 to 2,504.1. That was followed by emergency room visits at 9.1%, from 1,912.2 per 1,000 to 2,085.4, and laboratory services at 6.8%, from 7,198.8 per 1,000 to 7,688.4.

Most routine prescription drugs, 89.6%, come from retail drug stores, compared to 8.7% for mail order drugs, and 1.7% for specialty drugs.

Giovannello said cost increases are due to both price increases, due in part to the pandemic and inflation, and increases in utilization, and that they will discuss what is driving those increases later in the spring or early summer.

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SCHOOL PAY COMMITTEE SETS RAISES FOR SECRETARIES, CUSTODIANS

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Public Education Compensation Committee voted Monday on recommendations for how to raise pay for school employees other than teachers, but including secretaries and custodial positions. The specific group is cited under Delaware Code [Sections 1308 and 1311](#).

The committee agreed to condense the five secretarial positions—clerk, secretary, senior secretary, financial secretary and administrative secretary—into three, which would be administrative assistant I, administrative assistant II and administrative assistant III.

Their salaries would rise through a one-time, 2% increase with \$500 flat increase. That will be in addition to the 3% raise for all education jobs included in the fiscal year 2024 state budget, which takes effect July 1.

Monday’s recommendations will affect 839 employees throughout Delaware.

The 15-person committee was formed at the beginning of this school year to make recommendations to

the state on how to raise pay in the education system to better compete regionally for teachers. Last month, in light of the ongoing national teacher shortage, the group voted to bring teacher’s starting salary to \$60,000 via a four-year plan. That model will give teachers a 2% salary increase and a flat dollar increase of \$1,875 to the base salary for teachers, nurses and administrators each year until it reaches \$60,000 by the 2027-2028 school year.

Gov. John Carney and the Joint Finance Committee will have to review the committee’s recommendations.

“We don’t want people to feel like this committee’s recommendation represents a promise,” said Chuck Longfellow, chief financial officer at [Christina School District](#). “This committee is not in a position to make this promise to allocate this money, others are.”

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WANT SCHOOL TAX EXEMPTION IN WILM? ALL FOUR DISTRICTS MUST OK IT

BY JAREK RUTZ

Brandywine School District exempted a Wilmington church and office building from having to pay school property taxes, even though they are not in the district. Both properties are part of **Christina School District**, but the state's tax code requires Christina, **Brandywine**, **Colonial** and **Red Clay** district school boards all must approve the abatement request in order for the owners to get it.

However, since Christina will be financially impacted the most and its board approved both abatement requests, it's expected the other districts will follow suit.

Before Wilmington split into four districts in 1981, the tax rate was 48.6 cents per \$100 of assessed property value. (For comparison: Caesar Rodney School District is now seeking to **bump taxes** up to 52.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value.)

The first location, 314 South Jackson Street in Wilmington, is owned by The Neighborhood Group, and the second, 250 Executive Drive in Newark, is a Pencader Corporate Center.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCH

The church is seeking the tax exemption because it is a religious institution. New Castle County's Office of Finance, Division of Assessment and New Castle County Office of Law did not grant The Neighborhood Group a religious property tax exemption until Aug. 26, 2022, due to COVID-19 delays.

The agencies determined the exemption would go into effect on July 1, 2023. Because of the delay, the property owners overpaid taxes for the 2021-2022 school year.

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STATE CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE USE OF LIBRARY PRIVACY KIOSKS

BY SAM HAUT

The state plans a marketing campaign to encourage more residents to use Social Service Kiosks that now exist in some libraries to access medical and other private services. The soundproof booths are located in 13 different libraries across the state.

Health and library officials hoped they would help some of Delaware's more disadvantaged populations get the help they needed to participate in telehealth services, online job interviews or legal appointments.

But the booths haven't gotten a lot of use, said Leesa Kellam-Sheppard, with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services. She believes most people aren't aware they exist and hopes the advertising campaign will drive people to the booths.

The campaign is expected to last at least two to three months and use billboards as well as social media and radio ads that will target Hispanic and Haitian Creole

communities. Some of a four-year, \$2 million grant to address substance use disorder and behavioral health care will be used for the campaign.

"There's a need, because in Sussex County you have a transportation issue," Kellam-Sheppard said. "And sometimes maybe they don't want to go to certain doctors offices because of the stigma. So that's just another way that they get the care they need."

Gail Bruce, director of the Laurel Public Library, said she said people occasionally use the booth installed there in 2021, but she thinks most people shied away from it because of COVID-19.

"People were still hesitant to use even that, at that time," she said.

A social worker who comes to the library twice a week sometimes uses it with clients if an issue is private, Bruce said. Mostly, though, the social worker will talk with

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people in the library.

The library also has a tele-service navigator who comes twice a week to help people with green cards, food stamps, Medicare, Medicaid or other social services.

Most community members feel more comfortable talking outside of the booth, she said. Bruce also thinks that so many people already have access to electronic devices, the booths aren't as useful as planners hoped they would be. A lot of people now have at home phones, internet access and even devices that have been provided through schools, she said.

"It's probably just a little combination of everything," she said.

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Sports

photo by Nick Halliday

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SPRING SPORTS WEEK 4 RANKINGS

BY NICK HALLIDAY

DELAWARE LIVE SPORTS TOP 10 RANKINGS

[READ MORE HERE](#)

INSIDE THE CIRCLE – TOP 10 WEEK 5

BY GLENN FRAZER

Tough news for Caesar Rodney and outstanding pitcher Peyton Shields. She suffered an apparent knee injury late in the game against Middletown on the April 11. Shields had a 1-0 lead when she left the game. The Cavaliers rallied to win 2-1 as Reese Founds recorded 17 strikeouts. Peyton told me she will see a specialist and have some tests performed. All of us at 302 Sports and Delaware Live hope the tests will be in her favor, and that she can return to top form soon.

As we approach the midway point in the season, here is the current Top 10 for Delaware Live-302 Sports:

- 1) Delmarva Christian (7-0): Hosted unbeaten Appo April 18 on 302 Sports
- 2) St. Marks (6-0): Visited Archmere April 17
- 3) Sussex Central (6-1): Big game Saturday (April 22) versus Middletown
- 4) Caravel (2-1): Impressive 7-2 win over Smyrna on April 11. Hosts Delmarva Christian April 25.
- 5) Appo (6-0): 2-1 win at IR April 15. Visited (7-0) Delmarva Christian April 18 on 302 Sports.
- 6) Milford (6-1): Had Mount, Polytech and William Penn this week.
- 7) Smyrna (5-3): Lost to Caravel April 11. Took on IR April 18 and played DMA Saturday, April 22.
- 8) Laurel (7-2): Busy week with Sussex Tech, Woodbridge, and Saint Mark's Saturday (April 22)
- 9) Middletown (4-1): Faced Polytech and Dover before Saturday game with Sussex Central.

10) Indian River (4-3): Only losses to Delmarva Christian, Central and Appo.

Others receiving consideration are DMA (3-2), Padua (3-2), CR (4-3), Red Lion (3-1).

Kasey Xenidis pitched a gem on our Delaware Live "GOTW" Tuesday, April 11, as she held Smyrna to two runs on just two hits. Haley Grygo hit back-to-back triples and also belted a home run. She was named our Player-of-the-Game.

We also had a chance to see Woodbridge and Cape Henlopen in an offensive display April 13 in Lewes. The Blue Raiders held an 8-4 lead through four innings before Cape roared back, scoring six runs in the sixth for a 12-9 victory. Abi Marsh recorded the win in relief.

This week we'll be at top-ranked and undefeated Delmarva Christian, as the Royals host the unbeaten and fifth-ranked Appo Jags. That game was scheduled for April 18. Two of the best pitchers in the state will be on display with Kaylan Yoder of the Royals and Savannah Laird for the Jags. Our coverage will begin around 4 p.m. Later in the week (Thursday) we got a look at Madge Layfield and the Sussex Central Golden Knights as they visit Cape Henlopen. Softball action provided by Delaware Live—powered by 302 Sports.



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