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photo link: Mt. Cuba Center

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Faithful Friends Saving Pets



WilmU to Offer Esports Certificate



Odessa Ducks Stadium Newest in the State

photo link: Vincent Deskiewicz



# Headlines

**DELAWARE**  
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BY JAREK RUTZ

It's official: the [Wilmington Learning Collaborative](#) has finalized the contract for its executive director, Laura Burgos, who will sign sometime in the next few days. A special meeting was called for the agency's governing council Thursday, and after about an hour of its members meeting executively in private, the group publicly announced it had agreed to hire Burgos, who said Friday she plans to sign the contract as soon as possible. Burgos will make \$170,000 annually. The original listing for the position listed a range between \$156,257 and \$175,616.

# 'I'M READY TO GO' SAYS WLC'S FIRST EXEC. DIRECTOR

"I look forward to signing it as soon as possible, so as soon as I'm able to sign I will sign," she said. "I'm incredibly humbled and honored to be the inaugural executive director."

She's currently in Fort Worth, TX, where she's observing a comparable model to the learning collaborative called the [Leadership Academy Network](#).

The goal of the collaborative is to give city of Wilmington families a voice in policy making while aiming to improve academic and social outcomes for students. It's made up of nine city elementary schools across Brandywine, Christina and Red Clay school districts and was officially created in November 2022.

Delays in hiring an executive director have caused the governing council to ask the three districts to amend the memorandum of understanding and extend the planning year into the 2023-2024 school year.

In her role, Burgos will oversee the 15-person governing council's business and affairs, and administer the budget and relay financial information to the treasurer. She'll be able to discuss and introduce initiatives, but will not have voting power.

"We have a unique opportunity to be very innovative in co-designing teaching and learning solutions through increasing the autonomy and decision-making at the school level," Burgos said. "This is going to require us to focus on root causes and not symptoms while working together to remove barriers to success."

The collaborative's ability to meet the needs of all students, Burgos said, will ultimately be determined by how effective it is with supporting city teachers, school leaders and support staff.

"Over the next few weeks, my top priorities will include meeting with principals to better understand their success plans for the year, their needs, their aspirations," she said, "as well as working with Delaware State University to determine a strategy that will guide us in the design of a school performance framework."

The nine schools will play a critical role in determining the indicators that the collaborative will measure, Burgos said. Some of those indicators will focus on academic achievement, health and wellness for both students and staff, as well as enrollment and staff retention.

"The next few weeks will be very busy on the ground, getting into schools and making sure that I know exactly what is on everyone's mind," Burgos said. "I'm ready to go."



# SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS QUESTION VALUE OF STATE ASSOCIATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

Some Delaware school district boards are questioning what they get from their membership in the [Delaware School Boards Association](#). The cost of joining is not insignificant.

In [Caesar Rodney School District](#)'s July board meeting, John Marinucci, former executive director of DSBA, said it would cost the district \$10,500 per year to be part of the association, That includes a discount on using BoardDocs, a use-friendly way to post district business, such as school board meetings and materials.

Christina School District's fee would have been \$16,500 this year, but the board voted to discontinue it.

In [Red Clay](#)'s July 13 meeting, board members Kecia Nesmith and Cathy Thompson butted heads because Nesmith wanted to table the vote on whether to join the association so she could get further information about it to judge if it's worth the financial expenditure.

"I'm more in favor of moving forward right now and I think it's important that we join because we're the

largest school district in the state of Delaware and we've gotten a lot of benefits out of the DSBA," Thompson said in the meeting.

Thompson said the board, which was not a member last year, missed out on opportunities to network at the National School Board Association conference, having a voice in the legislature and board training activities.

David Tull, the new executive director of the association, was a former school board member in Seaford School District. He said the national conferences he attended were definitely one of the highlights of his time on the board and a great way to learn from boards across the country. He also cited the extensive training and development opportunities available as members of the association.

Most Delaware school districts are members of the association. Christina School District's board voted in July to quit the association with a vote of four to three.

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# Culture

photo link: Delaware Art Museum  
photo by S. Woodloe



## FAITHFUL FRIENDS: 50% MORE PETS SAVED IN FOUR YEARS WITH NEW HQ

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Faithful Friends Animal Society** is hoping to have the capacity to save 25% more animals in the next two years with its new headquarters, its founder said after a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday.

“When we started Faithful Friends [in 2000], publicly-funded shelters in Delaware had a 90 percent kill rate, and today, Delaware is one of just three no-kill states in the country,” said Jane Pierantozzi, founder and executive director of the animal welfare nonprofit.

The organization moved from its previous location at 12 Germy Drive in Wilmington to 165 Airport Road in New Castle.

“We have space for about 65 dogs and about 200 cats and kittens, plus our foster care system which we support is another 300 animals,” Pierantozzi said. “We hope that the lifesaving will increase by 25% in two years because of the new location...and hopefully a 50%

increase in four years.” Based on the current numbers of animals being helped by the shelter, Faithful Friends wants to expand its services to about 140 more animals in the next two years and 280 more in the next four.

One challenge the shelter is facing, she said, is a slowdown in dog adoptions across the country, which she says is largely because of the struggling economy.

The shelter has an annual operating budget of \$3.9 million. “We rely on individual donors mainly for running this facility,” Pierantozzi said.

Construction on the new \$11 million facility began in May 2017 and was supposed to be done in 2021, but delays were inevitable with the pandemic. Through the legislature’s Bond Bill, the shelter received about \$1.4 million from the state over a few separate allocations for the new headquarters.

During the ceremony, three pet owners who adopted

from Faithful Friends shared their stories on the importance of saving animals and how their pets have become an integral part of their families.

One was a police officer, Rick Jones, in Pennsylvania who trained his adopted dog to become a certified police dog. He said his dog Jack is the first rescue police K-9 in Pennsylvania and he predicted that more rescue dogs will become members of the police force.

“Pets are essential to human mental health and sometimes physical health,” said New Castle County Executive Matt Meyer, who is running for governor next year. “This piece of land makes a tremendous statement about the values of our community.”

Among a slew of gratitude for individual and group donors, construction workers, designers and more, Board President Bob Wasserbach thanked Colonial School District for gifting the land to the shelter.

Some of what Faithful Friends has done since its inception to protect animals in Delaware include:

- Working with state officials on Delaware’s first spay/neuter legislation, which created a public spay/neuter fund for pet owners on public assistance and required all shelters to spay/neuter pets before adoption.
- Opening Delaware’s first free pet food and supply bank, which became a model for other organizations throughout the state.
- Leading the creation of Delaware’s Animal Shelter Standards Law, which overhauled how shelters manage animals that are in their care and required shelters to publish their animal outcomes.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



## DELAWARE ART MUSEUM: NEW RESIDENCY BRIDGES PAST AND PRESENT

BY JAREK RUTZ

From now until Aug. 13, the [Delaware Art Museum](#) is partnering with contemporary visual artist Charles Edward Williams and the [Wilmington Alliance](#) for an artist residency focused on linking history with the present.

“We are thrilled to welcome Charles back to the Delaware Art Museum for this inaugural residency,” said Margaret Winslow, chief curator and curator of contemporary art for the museum. “Charles excels at weaving history and social justice together to create powerful imagery.”

Much like Williams’s own art practice, which he describes as, “excavating history, taking the past and bringing it into the present,” this new residency builds on the Delaware Art Museum’s previous partnership

with the artist and established commitment to uplifting local community voices in the arts.

The museum invites the public to contribute to Williams’s artwork for the residency by visiting the [Art-O-Mat](#) on Aug. 4, 7 and 8. Wilmington Alliance’s Art-O-Mat, which opened a few weeks ago, is located on the corner of 7th and Washington Street. The former liquor store and laundromat is now a multi-use space benefiting the residents of West Center City with art programs, art exhibits, meetings and community workshops.

Created in August 2019, the Wilmington Alliance partners with community, civic and business leaders to prioritize the city’s highest needs to drive economic opportunity and social vitality.

Williams’s residency echoes his own artistic practice of “excavating history, taking the past and bringing it into the present.” He continues his excavation of history and undertakes one of his largest projects to date, using multicolored wax and black paint to reinterpret the famous 1940s photo “Negro Boys on Easter Morning,” shot by Russell Lee. The effect will mimic the “magic” scratch pads kids use to create rainbow art.

“[The work] is designed to evoke the nostalgia of childhood, while taking inspiration from the local community he’s hoping to reach,” said Zoe Akoto, education initiatives coordinator for the museum.

Residents of the West Center City neighborhood and museum community members are invited to visit the community space and participate in creating the multi-colored wax layer of the project. Williams hopes to have young members of the Wilmington community play an active part in creating the work.

“My interest in having teens and kids involved in this residency stems from my own passion for teaching and inspiring students to pursue creative arts—not simply as a pastime, but as something you can build your life around,” Williams said.

A professor of drawing and painting at North Carolina Central University, Williams said “there are career paths in the arts and I want to model that for them.”

Williams earned a BFA from Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia and an MFA from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# PLEIN AIR ARTISTS DESCEND ON HAGLEY FOR A DAY OF PAINTING

BY BETSY PRICE

On Thursday morning, plein air artist **Denise McDaniel** was scoping out just the right setting for her work at Hagley Museum and Library. Location is key, said McDaniel, a Columbus, NJ, resident who was part of 50 artists with the American Impressionist Society visiting Hagley and Winterthur Museum, Gardens and Library this week as part of their 24th Annual National Juried Exhibition.

The national exhibition, on display at **Somerville Manning Gallery** just up the road from Hagley, rotates through states including Colorado, Utah and New York.

Plein air painters are dedicated to painting directly from life, usually landscapes and nature scenes.

“Finding the right place to paint is actually one of the biggest parts of my art,” McDaniel said. “One of the

reasons I love plein air is I love to work inside my subject. I will frequently walk around for hours and look at things from all different angles. I also take photographs and try to pick out the best composition.”

McDaniel and the other painters are free to choose their locations, but Hagley did help by sending out a map of the site of the property with potential scenic locations marked.

**Katie Dobson Cundiff** of Sarasota, FL, said she was looking for strong contrast with light, shapes and color. “That’s how I design my work, by the light and shadow shapes,” she said. “I just walk around and look...Today is kind of an overcast day so the light is more even and there’s less light, but you can still find contrasting color.”

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# DELAWARE SYMPHONY STARTS SEARCH FOR NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Symphony Orchestra has announced the search for its next music director, expected to begin work in the 2025-26 season. The process started with forming a 13-member search committee for the person who will succeed David Amado, who served as the symphony's music director and conductor for 20 years before stepping aside and becoming music director laureate in the spring.

The committee will accept applications for the post through Sept. 29. The committee members expect hundreds of applications from around the globe.

"Because of the way information travels now, the pool of applicants is larger than it would have been in previous decades," said J.C. Barker, chief executive officer of

the orchestra. "There are so few positions open at any one given time that an orchestra of the stature of the Delaware Symphony is going to receive a lot of attention."

**Detailed information** is available on the symphony website and will be advertised in national and international industry outlets. It says the duties of the person who wins the job will include repertoire selection, programming and artistic production as well as active participation in the orchestra's fundraising initiatives.

Frank Clowes, president of the Delaware Symphony Association, said the orchestra is stepping forward into a new era and that musician and community support is a pivotal ingredient in the search.

"I am eager to witness the creative direction the DSO

will take under this fresh leadership," Clowes said. "It's an exciting time, and we are all looking forward to the transformative journey ahead."

## SYMPHONY PROCESS

The committee—composed of five orchestra musicians, five members of association board, two community leaders and Barker—will review all candidates. They were told to expect two years of hard work.

Finalists will be announced in spring 2024 and will appear with the orchestra during the 2024-2025 season. Surveys will be distributed to members of the audience and orchestra after each performance to gauge their reactions.

"There will be a different energy with every conductor who appears," Barker said.

The appointment of a music director is expected to come in summer 2025.

"The search for a new artistic leader is a crucial stage in the growth of any orchestra," said Barker. "This is an exciting and busy time for our organization, and we are eagerly looking forward to the process."

Amado was the 100-year-old-plus orchestra's fifth music director. He will conduct the symphony twice during the 2023-24 season, opening and closing it. In between, guest conductors will take the baton. They include Michelle Di Russo, an associate conductor with the North Carolina Symphony; André Raphel of Philadelphia, the former music director for the Wheeling, WV, symphony; and Scott Speck, music director of the Joffrey Ballet as well as the Mobile (AL) Symphony.





BY BETSY PRICE

Old-school Motown, Disney costumes, favorite comedians and world music are among the shows that **The Grand** will bring to Wilmington for its 2023-24 season. The season will start Sept. 6 with Byrds co-founder and acclaimed guitarist Roger McGuinn.

Also set to appear are Lyle Lovett and John Hiatt Together on Stage Oct. 5; Disney Junior and Marvel characters Sept. 26 in Disney Junior Live On Tour: Costume Palooza!; comedians Tig Notaro Sept. 17, David Sedaris April 5 and Lewis Black May 2; the Pedrito Martinez Group Sept. 29 and Tablao Flamenco Sept. 30; Alan Cumming Oct. 28; and Sutton Foster March 2.

“There is absolutely something for everyone,” says Pamelyn Manocchio, executive director. “It is our sincere hope that we continue the rich history of this historic building as Delaware’s home for the performing arts and place to create lasting memories.”

The performing arts center also plans an announcement later this summer about

# THE GRAND SETS 50 SHOWS FOR 2023-24 SEASON

The Grand’s 47th annual Grand Gala. It will feature the Commodores and a return to the Hotel Du Pont for the Ultimate After Party.

The Grand also will party with the Christina Cultural Arts Center to celebrate the music and culture of the community with the annual Soul of the City Festival Sept. 16 from noon until 4 p.m. This year’s festival will celebrate unique Wilmington arts organizations, while highlighting the 50th anniversary of Hip Hop. The hip hop continues on Sept. 22 at Frawley Stadium with the 50th Anniversary of Hip Hop Concert featuring Rick Ross, 2 Chainz, Fat Joe, Big Daddy Kane, Doug E Fresh, EPMD, Rakim and Slick Rick. Universal Attractions Agency’s Co-Owner Jeff Epstein, who conceived the collaboration with Doug E. Fresh, says the concert is unprecedented.

“To have such an elite group of Hip Hop icons from the golden era coming together to celebrate 50 years of Hip Hop music this way...it’s truly mind blowing,” he said.

Tickets are now on sale to the general public and can be purchased online at [www.TheGrandWilmington.org](http://www.TheGrandWilmington.org) or by calling 302-652-5577 or 302-888-0200. The fastest and easiest way to guarantee the best seats is to purchase online. The Grand offers discounts for purchasing multiple shows. Buying three will save you 10% per ticket and buying six will save you 20% per ticket and give you free parking vouchers as well as a dining discount card.

Up Market Street, The Grand’s **Broadway in Wilmington** series, will take place at The Playhouse on Rodney Square. It opens in October with “Pretty Woman: The Musical” Oct. 13-15. From March 7-10, see “On Your Feet!” featuring the lives and music of Emilio and Gloria Estefan. “Come From Away,” an uplifting story about the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, plays April 19-21. “Little Women” runs May 9-1; “Million Dollar Quartet Christmas” plays Nov 17-19 and “Annie” will play Jan. 5-7.

READ MORE HERE



# VANDALISM AT ROCK MANOR GOLF COURSE UNDER INVESTIGATION

BY BETSY PRICE

New Castle County Police are investigating damages to the **Rock Manor** golf course caused July 27 by people who drove dirt bikes and all terrain vehicles on the course. The group did donuts and turfed large portions of the greens, causes thousands of dollars in damage, while posing a danger to patrons on the course. Some bystanders were able to film them in action and posted the video to social media.

The incident occurred at about 7 p.m. Thursday and police were dispatched to the 1300 block of Carruthers Lane. A photo on **Golfcity** shows one of the pristine

greens ruined by circles and trenches cut into the grass. It makes the hole unplayable and completely wastes the hundreds of hours it takes to nurture and care for a green like that, said Lou Stagner, who also posted **video** of some of the bikes riding around a green.

The officers are seeking witnesses. If you were on the scene and have photos or video, please contact the New Castle County Division of Police non-emergency number at 302-573-2800.





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# Business

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photo link: Delaware Division of Small Business





# NEW CASTLE CHAMBER PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Chadwick said it had been an honor and a privilege to work with the chamber. He started out as a contractor, then became director of the Economic Development Council, vice president for Business and Economic Development, executive vice president, acting president and finally president in 2018.

He will assist the Chamber's Executive Committee in recruiting a new president and assuring a smooth and effective transition.

"In the meantime, you will continue to see a vibrant, relevant and active chamber," he said. We will continue to lean in on serving our members each and every day and maintaining strong and effective government affairs and economic development programs."

Chadwick praised the "amazing staff at the chamber as well as a strong and engaged board of directors.

"While I will be departing at the end of the year, you can rest assured that the New Castle County Chamber will continue to be one of the most impactful business organizations in Delaware," he said.



**BY BETSY PRICE**

New Castle County Chamber of Commerce President Bob Chadwick will retire at the end of the year.

Chadwick, who has been working with the chamber since 2006, said he will be 64 this year and is expecting his first grandchild.

"I am eager to spend more time with family and more time pursuing my other passions which include music and travel," he said in a chamber newsletter.

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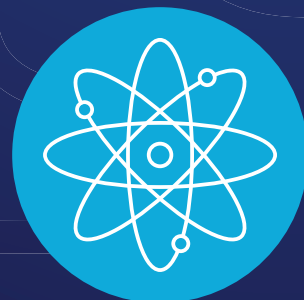
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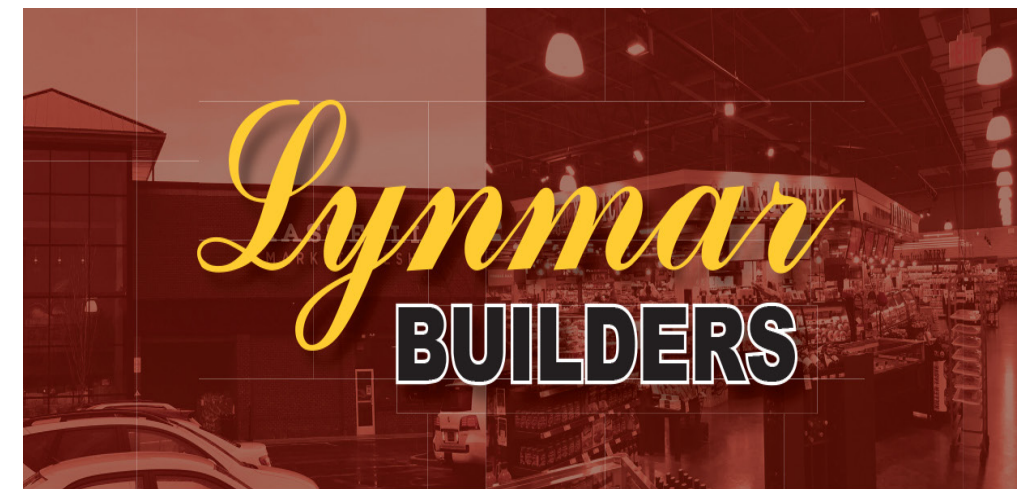


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# Food & Dining

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# BORO: NEW CAFÉ BRINGS TASTE OF EUROPE TO TALLEYVILLE



BY BETSY PRICE

Colin Dyckman and his wife, Kendal Reynolds, arrived in Italy just in time for a heat wave. “Like the natives, we just strolled from gelateria to gelateria,” he recalled.

Spooning the silky frozen confection was a sweet alternative to sipping alcoholic beverages—and the experience was just as relaxing, he maintained.

“It allows people to chill, literally,” Dyckman said of eating what Italians simply call “ice cream.” “You can’t eat gelato and be angry at the same time; it’s physically impossible.”

Brandywine Hundred residents can see for themselves at **Boro Café** in Talleyville, which Dyckman opened on July 7. The menu includes more than gelato, which has more milk than American ice cream. For instance, the

café serves scones, cookies, salads, sandwiches and quiche. But around Labor Day, the café’s lunch and dinner menu should be in full swing to highlight Dyckman’s impressive pedigree.

## THE CALL TO COOK

To be sure, the Delaware County native knows his way around a commercial kitchen. He cooked in restaurants to pay for his tuition at Drexel University, where he studied political science.

“I wanted to join the foreign service, but I took the exam three times and failed it miserably three times,” he said.

He excelled, however, at cooking. So, he earned a degree at The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College and spent 18 years working in Philadelphia-area restau-

rants, including the Wayne Hotel with Jean-Francois Taquet and Cuvee Notredame, which specialized in Belgian cuisine.

Dyckman’s wife is a Chadds Ford native who’s worked in the Wilmington area, so the couple moved south.

The chef helped open the short-lived Vault in downtown Wilmington and worked at The Gables in Chadds Ford. He also worked in a Key West establishment.

Not all his work was in restaurants. For 20 years, he had many jobs with Costco, including positions at the King of Prussia, Christiana and Concord stores. But the pull of the restaurant industry kept tugging at this imagination, and the trip to Italy was the spark.

## BORO’S FLAVORS OF EUROPE

Boro is a teeny tiny municipality in Italy and Boro Café occupies a nook in **The Concord**, the new live-work-play community from **The Buccini/Pollin Group**. **El Camino Mexican Kitchen** and **Taverna**, owned by Platinum Dining Group, are Boro’s neighbors. Like those restaurants, Boro also fronts Silverside Road. There are 36 seats inside and 24 on the doublewide sidewalk.

Dyckman hopes the restaurants’ customers will impulsively stop for a sweet dessert or after-dinner drink on their way to their cars. (A liquor license is in the works.) Meanwhile, breakfast bowls, smoothies and coffees should attract members of the gym on the building’s opposite side.

Dyckman is broadening his breakfast and lunch items, and as the menu expands to include dinner, expect dishes with French, Italian and Swiss flair.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

## RESTAURANTS: BLUE CRAB MOVES; COCO MANGO GRILLE, SIROCCO OPEN

BY PAM GEORGE

For parents, August is summer's swan song. It's harvest season for foodies. And for beach locals, it's almost the "second season," when the weather is still pleasant, but the crowd of tourists has thinned.

Meanwhile, there are still festivals and new restaurants to try. Put the following on your to-do list:

### Moving in Newark: **Blue Crab Grill**

Blue Crab Grill, a Newark fixture in Suburban Plaza for 24 years, plans to move to a new development on Creek View Road behind Timothy's Restaurant. The location is on the same site as the Chapel Street Players' new theater, which resulted from a land swap with Lang Development Group. The old theater on Chapel Street will make room for Lang's latest apartment complex.

### New to Rehoboth: **Scirocco**

In downtown Rehoboth Beach, **Coast Rehoboth Beach**, part of the Tapestry Collection by Hilton, is open on SandCastle Motel's old site. The operators also manage Hyatt Place in Dewey Beach and Hyatt House

in Lewes. A stay in the new hotel includes free parking, Wi-Fi and an indoor pool and fitness center.

Of particular interest to readers of this column, however, is the hotel restaurant, Scirocco, which offers a Mediterranean-influenced menu. The menu has a selection of small plates, including flaming saganaki (\$12), charred octopus (\$16) and carpaccio (\$18). Mains include pan-seared scallops (\$38), fresh branzino (market price) and, for landlubbers, a center-cut filet with parmesan-truffle gratin.

### New Wilm restaurant: **Keem's Cuisine**

In Wilmington, Keem's Cuisine recently opened in the same shopping center as Shop Rite near the Riverfront. Dinner items include crab cakes with creole remoulade sauce, fried whole snapper with creole pepper sauce, jerk chicken Alfredo and a Nashville hot chicken sandwich. Entrees range from \$15 for the sandwich to \$60 for lobster tails stuffed with crab.

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Government

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# WILMINGTON WATER BILLS GOING UP. AND UP. AND UP. AND UP.

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Wilmington in July increased its water/sewer rates for its customers in the city and the suburbs. And it's planning to increase them in 2024. And 2025. And 2026.

"Water/sewer rates increased on July 1 by 5.7% for all categories of our customers (city and non-city)," said John Rago, deputy chief of staff for Mayor Mike Purzycki. "The projected increases for the next three years (fiscal years 2025, 2026, 2027) will be 5.7% each year," he added.

"The rates are based on a six-year comprehensive water utility financial plan, which is updated every year," he said, adding that the future projected rate increases are "subject to change as the six-year financial plan is updated."

Wilmington serves 39,000 customers in the city and nearby suburbs.

Wilmington's water bills, like many utilities, **break down** rates. There's a monthly facilities charge, a block rate for the first gallons used not covered by the facilities charge and a second rate when lots and lots of water is used. Wilmington's rates have one chart for businesses inside the city, with different rates for commercial, industrial and apartments. A second chart covers the same three categories outside the city. Two more charts cover residences inside and outside the city. All the charts are arranged by the size of the intake water main.

All told, the charts include 154 cells with dollar figures. Rago said a link to these rates is planned off of the Public Works Department home page.

"Inside city" rates are lower than "outside city" rates because of the higher costs to maintain and expand

infrastructure, Rago said. "When there is a rate increase, except on rare occasions, the increase is applied evenly across the board for every class of customer."

## WATER BILLS ELSEWHERE

Other local water utilities are also planning to increase their rates. Veolia in April **filed** a \$43 million infrastructure plan with the Delaware Public Service Commission. It would **raise** the average residential water bill for New Castle County customers by \$4.51 per month. The PSC allowed new, provisional rates to start June 27.

Artesian—which serves a third of Delaware's residents—a day later **filed** a plan to raise rates for the average homeowner by \$6.83. The PSC voted in June to ask Artesian to refile the request. Both utilities **cited** the cost of infrastructure investments.

When Artesian submitted its first proposal, it said the bill for the average residential customer using 4,000 gallons per month would increase from \$49.90 to \$56.73. In Wilmington, a residential customer using 4,000 gallons would pay \$41.90. A residential customer outside the city would pay \$63.45.

The University of Delaware's Water Resources Center, which has been researching water rates in the region since 2000, says rates are four times what they were 20 years ago, WHYY reported in December.

"Private utility costs are about double that of municipal rates, according to the university," the radio station added.



# NEW LIBRARY BUILDINGS IN THE WORKS ACROSS DELAWARE

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

New public libraries are being built across Delaware, as part of a state government goal to have one square foot of library space for each resident. That space and that expansion is a shorthand way to understand libraries' increasingly broad roles. They have a long history of lending books and answering reference questions, but today's libraries are adding to their status as community information centers with new items and new programs.

For instance, there's the library of things, where patrons can check out board games, medical devices, gardening equipment and dozens of other items. Kiosks provide spaces for people to have confidential tele-meetings with healthcare providers, government officials and potential employers. Libraries served as distribution points for COVID testing and some are hosting social workers. And in some ways, the library

has become the place to meet people," said Kay Wheatley, president of the Rehoboth Beach Public Library board.

All these new services need space, which is why the state's 33 public libraries today cover 636,952 square feet—more than **doubling** in the past decade. These libraries are run by multiple governments and institutions and are connected through the Delaware Division of Libraries.

**The American Rescue Plan Act Capital Projects Fund** included \$40 million for library improvements throughout all three counties:

- \$11 million to North Wilmington Library for a new building.
- \$7.8 million to Friends of Duck Creek Regional Library to build an expanded library.

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BY BETSY PRICE

Still think “Super Mario” is magical? Kooky about “Call of Duty”? Freaky over “Fortnite”?

You’re not alone.

Gaming is wayyyyyyyyyyy beyond a pastime. Lifelong friendships are being made online. Lovers bond over their favorite games. Leagues and teams are forming everywhere for esports professional play. And now Wilmington University is offering Delaware’s first college-level certificate for serious players who want to to take their talents up a notch.

The new 18-credit, 100%-online certificate was created with Futures First Gaming, a STEM.org accredited Ed, Tech, Media and Esports Entertainment company. The certificate can stand alone, or its credits can count toward an associate or bachelor’s degree.

It combines six credits of esports-specific coursework, including esports events and production, and esports and data, with nine credits of industry skill-based

# WILM U TO ADD ESPORTS CERTIFICATE TO LIST OF OFFERINGS

curriculum designed to provide students with many flexible career opportunities.

“Three billion people worldwide are identifying as gamers,” says Stephen Sye, CEO of Futures First Gaming. “I like to say, ‘Gaming’s the carrot, but the learning is the nugget.’ This is an opportunity for both students and parents to really understand that their children can pursue their passions and still be successful.”

## EGAMING INTEREST

Wilmington University is not the first educational institution to realize the draw of gaming. Saint Mark’s School used part of its capital campaign fund to build a state-of-the-art **Esports Center** and Red Clay Consolidated School District already has a partnership with Future First Gaming to turn **A.I. duPont’s esports club** into an active class pathway with ties to the University of Delaware’s esports program.

In addition to hosting esports competitions and conferences, the Wilm U program broadens gamers’ perspectives of the many possible career options in the world of gaming and esports. Students who complete the Workforce Development Program with six academic credits will be allowed to apply directly to the new WilmU Esports Certificate program.

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# CHARGES DROPPED IN CASE OF CHRISTINA GRAD ARRESTED BY UD

BY JAREK RUTZ

After weeks of public outcry, charges were dropped against 18-year-old Mohammad Sanogo who was arrested by the **University of Delaware** police June 15 less than an hour after he received his high school diploma there. The decision follows UD police finally releasing **bodycam footage** of the incident.

A **Newark High School** student, Sanogo was on campus because **Christina School District** rented the Bob Carpenter Center for its high school graduations. Sanogo, who had a grade point average above a 4.0 and plans to attend the **University of Maryland** for aerospace engineering, was arrested after police ordered him and friends to leave. Police said he resisted arrest. Sanogo and witnesses said an officer ordered Sanogo, who is Muslim, out of his car and threw him to the ground, despite Sanogo telling them he could not breathe. He has asthma.

A statement from Attorney General Kathy Jennings

said it was dropping charges after Sanogo attended a course, which it didn't identify, and accepted his responsibility in the incident. Again, it was not specific about what that responsibility was. Efforts were unsuccessful Monday morning to reach Sanogo for comment.

Christina school board member Naveed Baqir has been a prominent voice in the defense of Sanogo, calling the arrest "another George Floyd moment." Dozens of community members testified in support of Sanogo in a June board meeting, condemning **UD Police** and accusing them of misconduct and excessive force.

Along with the bodycam footage the university reiterated that its police officers acted appropriately in addressing behavior that posed a risk to public safety.

"UDPD is a nationally accredited police agency with officers trained to handle situations such as these through the application of objective and reasonable force, utilizing appropriate de-escalation techniques to ensure the

safety of all involved—including Mr. Sanogo," UD stated. "The University will continue its review of this situation to look for learning opportunities."

Baqir wasn't satisfied with what he called a "carefully crafted and edited video."

"The video does not address the role of three trucks that blocked Mohammad's car from three sides," he said. "When Mohammad moved his car forward in anticipation of the truck to move once the signal light turned green is also being portrayed as if he was maneuvering the vehicle around those trucks when the fact is that the truck in front of Mohammad blocked traffic despite the green signal light."

Baqir also said the trucks that failed to move on a green light and UD unnecessarily created a needless stressful situation to justify their actions to make an unwarranted arrest.

"The Christina graduate was neither speeding in the parking lot nor did he have any person hanging out of his vehicle," he said. "His medical condition and panic was completely ignored and his life was put in an unnecessary imminent danger by UD staff. Even when a truck in front of Mr. Sanogo purposefully blocked his exit on a green light, he was picked up and mercilessly thrown on the ground face first."

A July 26 filing from Attorney General Jennings' office states that "after extensive review of the body camera and surveillance footage, conversations with University of Delaware Police and Mr. Sanogo's attendance at a Department of Justice-sanctioned course on Friday, July 21, the state believes that dismissal of the charges is the appropriate resolution."

[READ MORE HERE](#)





# FIRST STATE EDUCATE, ACTION FUND NAME NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BY BETSY PRICE

Julia Keleher, a Pennsylvania educational leader who once was sent to prison on fraud charges, has been named the new executive director of **First State Educate** and **First State Action Fund**, two linked nonprofits devoted to improving education in the Delaware. She succeeds Laurisa Schutt, who helped found the organizations. Schutt will remain on the board, but is pursuing other interests as well.

Keleher’s two decades of education leadership roles have been characterized by innovation and creative problem solving, the agencies said in a press release. She served as secretary of education in Puerto Rico from 2017-2019, led technical assistance and risk management initiatives at the U.S. Department of Education for seven years and taught as well as acted as administrator in the Red Clay Consolidated School District from 2000 to 2007.

**Keleher** became a controversial figure in Puerto Rico. After leading Hurricane Maria recovery efforts and passing an education reform bill, she became the target of a federal investigation and was sentenced to six

months in federal prison and 12 months of home confinement on conspiracy charges. That did not deter the interest of the First State Educate and First State Action Fund, who conducted a national search for Schutt’s replacement.

“Julia’s experiences these past 15 years have led to a deep understanding of the power structures and intricacies of educational systems,” said First State Educate Board President Thère du Pont. “The education and justice systems around our families are complex and unforgiving—Julia is uniquely positioned to spark significant change.”

Keleher was charged with fraud and accused of using her position to exchange 1,034 square feet of a public school in Santurce to a private company in exchange for an apartment in the Ciudadela apartment complex in San Juan, according to her Wikipedia profile. She found the charges and maintained her innocence, but eventually pled guilty to two counts of conspiracy to attempt fraud and went to prison for six months.

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## DAVID BAYLOR NAMED NEW DIAA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BY NICK HALLIDAY

David Baylor, a former state trooper, was appointed DIAA's new executive director July 17.

Born and raised in Wilmington, he graduated from Saint Mark's High School before he entered

the U.S. Navy. After leaving the military he spent 23 years with the Delaware State Police.

Baylor said the job intrigued him.

"I worked up and down the state in a couple of different roles including when I was a state trooper," he said "I thought it would be a good opportunity to help make things better for the student-athletes in our state."

Baylor spent years working closely with the Blue Hen football team, especially with freshmen and new student-athletes, in the areas of community service, personal development, leadership, and social responsibility.

He recently served as director of consumer affairs at N-K-S Distributors where he worked with educational institutions at all levels in the area of alcohol awareness and education and the prevention of underage drinking.

He also has served as a member of the boards of the Catholic Youth Organization, Saint Mark's High School,

Bear YMCA, the Delaware Mentor Program and the Delaware Crime Stoppers Board.

Since he has been in office, Baylor said he's learning how everything works. "It's like starting anywhere new," he said.

When asked what he's liked so far about the position, Baylor said, "I am excited about the relationships with the athletic directors, coaches and principals of the schools so we can come together as one unit."



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## ODESSA DUCKS STADIUM THE NEWEST IN THE STATE

BY JASON WINCHELL

Today I'm looking at the newest football program that enjoys playing at their home stadium. The stadium has some great seating and great sightlines and the atmosphere in the stadium is great. The stands seem right on top of the field but there is plenty of sideline room. The team enters through the crowd to "Enter Sandman" as their ever growing student section sings the song. The team running through the middle of the fans absolutely electrifies the home team stands and is one of the best entrances in high school football throughout the state.

Hardcore Odessa football fans have the option to also purchase a membership to the Touchdown Club. The Touchdown Club offers eight different levels to meet different needs and budgets. The Club offers preferred

parking, seating, meals and even a game day gift. If you are an Odessa fan this club is a great option. It helps support the team by funding, but also becomes a tax deduction for the fan. It is clearly the best option to have a premier time while attending home games for the Ducks.

The turf field is in great shape and the cheerleaders will keep you entertained during stoppage of plays. They always seem to have a theme night and have done a good job of getting crowds to come and enjoy Friday night football. One of the newer nights this year will be their first Senior Night. The Ducks moved up 2A this year and will host Tower Hill on Oct. 27. It will be their chance to start their own Senior Night traditions.

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# THE GRAVEYARD, SAINT MARK'S SPARTAN STADIUM

BY NICK ALESSANDRINI

This summer, the 302 Sports staff is proud to feature some high school football venues where we have been fortunate to broadcast and view games. Our series of stories continues with the home of the Saint Mark's Spartans, "The Graveyard at Spartan Stadium."

The Saint Mark's football program has historically been one of the most consistent and successful in the state of Delaware. Saint Mark's has won four Division 1 state championships, with the most recent coming back in 2010. As the Spartans embark on their journey in 2023, we take a look at the place they call home.

Few schools in Delaware have the same appeal as the campus on Pike Creek Road. As you turn down the entrance and drive up a winding road, you can begin to see what separates the school from some others in the

area. It's a campus that includes a soccer, lacrosse, baseball, softball and football field. "The Graveyard" gets its name from being in close proximity to All Saint's Cemetery, which is directly next to the field. After winning the state championship for the first time since 1978 in 2010, changes were on the way. Due to an issue with the cemetery, it took the Spartans until 2011 to get lights put in so they could play night games at home. That same year, the school installed a new Bermuda grass playing field, improving the stadium on numerous fronts. The debut night game in Saint Mark's football history took place back on Oct. 15, 2011, a game I was fortunate enough to be a part of.

Now the Spartans have returned to Class 3A (Div 1) and are looking to find their way back on top with the

help of that home crowd. "The Graveyard" features a large hill on the north side of the field that allows for a huge crowd to have a unique viewing experience. There are bleachers on both the home and visitor sides, with the larger section belonging to the home team. The concession stand contains great choices, including the Chik-Fil-A chicken sandwich and a variety of drinks and snacks.

The Spartans also provide everything you need for a fall Friday game night. The multiple-time state champion Saint Mark's cheerleading squad and a fantastic Spartan band help set the mood and get the crowd going. Warm-up music over the sound system for pregame gets the crowd involved as well, building the hype early before kickoff. Not to mention one of the best public address announcers in the state in Brian Ratasiewicz, who always keeps the crowd informed and entertained. Not to mention the Spartan entrance, which has the players lined up in two rows as they walk down the hill in the dark for pre-game warmups. A unique tradition and one that is cool to see.

With the lights for the last 10 years, Saint Mark's has put itself in the discussion for the best environment for a football game. It has great spectating areas, a huge parking lot, fantastic food and entertainment. Having broadcast games at "The Graveyard" for the last couple of years I can say it's one of the better, more unique viewing experiences in Delaware.





## CHARLES V. WILLIAMS STADIUM, HOME OF THE SMYRNA EAGLES

BY GLENN FRAZER

This summer, the 302 Sports staff is proud to feature some of the high school football venues where we have been fortunate to broadcast and view games over the years. Our series of stories continues with Charles V. Williams Stadium, home of the Smyrna Eagles.

The stadium was dedicated in 1994 in the name of a man that served the school district for four decades, as principal, superintendent, athletic director and a multi-sport coach. Mr. Williams also served his country in World War II, receiving the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. He passed away in 2014 at the age of 91 years young—just one year shy of his beloved Eagles’ first state championship in football.

Prior to the opening of the “new” high school in 1970, the John Bassett Moore Middle School building was the

high school. The football field was located between Hamilton Lane and Frazier Street. The modern era of Smyrna high varsity football commenced in 1949 with a four-game slate under coaches Charles V. Williams, Frank Stellatella and Robert Everett. In 1950, lights were erected around the field and soon after that an electronic scoreboard with clock. The Eagles’ record from 1949-1969 was 89-71-6 at the JBM field. In the 60s, Smyrna competed in the original Diamond State Conference, which merged with the Henlopen Conference following the ’68 season.

In 1973, the Eagles won the conference title and in 1975 advanced to the state championship game in the newly-formed Division II, falling to Glasgow 38-30. It would take another 40 years before the Smyrna-Clayton

community could cheer on their beloved team in a state championship game. The first of three “back-to-back-to-back” titles was secured in 2015 at Delaware Stadium in overtime against Salesianum, as linebacker Eli Hutchinson tackled the Sals’ Colby Reeder for a loss on fourth and goal. The “sea of red” Smyrna fans in the East stands celebrated the win in one of the most exciting championship games ever.

Smyrna has enjoyed recent success at Charles V. Williams Stadium with capacity crowds in the bleachers and those that fill the fence line around the north end zone. The stadium is located behind the high school off Duck Creek Parkway, an easy ride from the north Smyrna exit off Route 1. The record at home since 2015 is 43-5 including a current streak of 14 wins. The atmosphere is electric on Friday nights, with an assist from the Regiment-of-Red marching band. Early in the season, the sun glare makes it a challenge for a broadcast crew calling the game from the pressbox, but as you can see from our photo, it also can provide an awesome setting.

Recent upgrades over the past few years include the entrance to the stadium, restroom facilities and concessions. The home side bleachers can accommodate many more fans than the visiting side, thus enhancing the intimidating atmosphere for an opponent.



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