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Salesianum Dominates Saint Mark's



photo link: Marcia Reed



# Headlines

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# WILMINGTON CONTINUES TO SEE WEAK DEMAND FOR OFFICE SPACE

BY PETER OSBORNE

Weaker demand for Wilmington office space coupled with rising interest rates and continuing corporate cost-cutting efforts is painting a dismal picture for the immediate future, according to a new [3Q 2023 Office Market Overview](#) by Newmark.

“Chief financial officers are looking at their remote and hybrid workers and thinking they can cut costs by downsizing,” said Newmark Senior Managing Director Wills Elliman.

Downtown’s vacancy rate of 31.3% particularly shocked him when he first reviewed the raw data, he said. “But are they cutting costs at the expense of the culture and soul of the firm? How do you advance in your career if you never see people—except behind a screen?” Elliman said. “There’s so much good about an office—conversation, collaboration and collegiality—that’s being lost.

“One of the reasons we’ll go back to the office is especially young people...they’re worried about their jobs. They have FOMAP: Fear Of Missing A Promotion.”

Elliman said the Wilmington Central Business District Class A market having 1.4 million square feet of available office space against a base of 4.6 million square feet base is completely out of bounds for where a normal office market should be.

“You normally see vacancy rates in the low teens when a market is in balance and landlords can gamble with concessions such as free rent and tenant improvements to entice tenants,” Elliman said.

“Landlords would love to have you, but the rising costs to upfit the space and higher interest rates can push rates from the mid-\$20s to the mid-\$30s” per square foot to make deals pencil out.

Wilmington’s downtown vacancy rate has steadily increased since the onset of the pandemic. Other statistics from the report include:

- Wilmington South (New Castle, Bear, Glasgow, Newark, etc.) had the biggest block of vacant space in the Wilmington MSA at 739,000 square feet.
- Wilmington West (Greenville, Hockessin, Pike Creek, etc.) had the lowest vacancy rate at 6.8%.
- Wilmington North (Highlands through Claymont) had the highest average Class A average asking rent at \$31.33, compared with the lowest Class A rate vs the lowest in Wilmington South at \$23.36 per square foot.

## OFFICE SPACE GIVEBACKS

Footprint reductions and space givebacks by some of the area’s largest office-using employers such as Capital One have created a large void difficult to backfill in a period of weaker office demand. There has only been one lease over 100,000 square feet completed in the past five years in downtown and that was the renewal for a law firm, with 133,000 square feet. Therefore, there was no associated absorption. Absorption is the rate at which commercial space is sold, leased or vacated over a specific period in a given market, described as positive or negative.

While that was happening, eight vacant blocks of space of at least 80,000 square feet were added to the downtown inventory. Those eight blocks combine to total more than 1.2 MSF of negative absorption.

[READ MORE HERE](#)





# JANVIER JEWELRY STORE'S STUNNING MURAL WOWS CUSTOMERS

BY BETSY PRICE

Joseph Janvier Jewelers doesn't go out of its way to call attention to itself—from the outside. The Elsmere business is housed in a nondescript brick building on Kirkwood Highway. Customers walk from a modest parking lot to the front door and press a bell to be admitted.

They walk in, and their mouths drop open. “Wow” is usually the next thing they say, or maybe, “No way.”

They're not reacting to the store's fine jewelry, glittering before them from brown and black wooden cases. They are talking about a dramatic 110-foot black, white, gray and red mural that wraps around the walls of the store. It's the work of landscape designer turned muralist Kent Krech of Wilmington.

“I wasn't trying to do an exact recreation by any means,” Krech said. “I just kind of make it up as I go along.”

The mural starts by depicting a swank jewelry row in a teeming metropolis (a fictional Philly?), shifting into a shopping and dining area in a smaller city (a fictional Wilmington?). It continues along a river waterfront (the Delaware? the Christina?) leading to a marshy bird sanctuary ([DuPont Environmental Education Center](#)?) with a biplane flying over the water in the direction of twin bridges (the Delaware Memorial?) that end with a scene featuring a sign pointing toward the beach.

Joseph Janvier had long told friends he didn't want big photos of jewelry on his wall. He wanted a mural of some kind. Then he met Krech at a networking event. Krech was subbing for a friend who couldn't make it and asked Krech to take his place and talk about his business.

“So what that means,” Janvier translates, “is he had the opportunity to give a 30-minute commercial about himself.”

Janvier invited Krech to his shop. “I want to show you something,” he told Krech.

When Krech walked in and saw the blank gray walls, the artist said, “Man, here we go. I like this idea.”

The original piece that Krech and store owner Joseph Janvier agreed on was the swank jewelry row, which takes up about 20 feet behind one counter. Krech showed him a crude sketch, complete with stick figures, and said he'd be back with a more detailed one.

“Yeahhhhhh. That's the idea,” Janvier said, when he saw it. “You might as well make this your gallery,” Janvier told Krech, reasoning “that way, he'd have time to do more than just my ideas. His ideas, too.”

They chose the color scheme from a piece of Riley Rae art already hanging on the wall, partly to be set off by the store's red carpet. Krech started in late February 2020, intending to work mostly on weekends because of his landscaping jobs. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and Krech was suddenly able to devote more time to it.

As the mural's jewelry row took shape, it was getting a lot of attention from customers, and both Krech and Janvier liked it so much that Janvier told him to do the next wall, then the next. Then the next.

Finally, “he was like, nah, let's do the whole store,” Krech said. The artist has been working on the mural for almost four years.

As COVID-19 restrictions relaxed, Krech's landscape jobs picked up and he's more limited to work on weekends.

[READ MORE HERE](#)



# SCHOOL CHOICE

## HERE'S WHAT PARENTS SAY DEALING WITH SCHOOL CHOICE IS LIKE



BY JAREK RUTZ

As Mia McIntyre navigates her first rodeo of school choice for her daughter, she's found it fairly easy, but with some surprisingly stressful points in Delaware's process. Xavia Davis finds the process burdensome and said she was treated rudely by district employees who seemed entitled to know why she wanted to choose her children away from the district. Nicole Kowal, a teacher at **Providence Creek Academy** in Clayton, also thinks the process isn't easy.

"But I don't think it was as cumbersome for me as it would be for a lot of parents who don't work in a school setting," she said.

Working your way through the state's school choice system is an annual tradition for thousands of Delaware parents trying to get their children into one of Delaware's 200-plus public schools they think will most benefit them. At least, they say, parents are no longer

required to fill out forms and deliver them to schools they'd like to choose into. Now the entire process is **on-line**.

The window for school choice is from Nov. 6 to Jan. 10, 2024. First, though, parents must register their children for the school they are assigned to through their district's feeder pattern. Many parents question the need for that when they have no intention of sending their child to that school and several parents said it allows the home district to grill them about why they are choosing out.

Parents also find it irritating that it's hard to track when schools have open houses or information nights. McIntyre was stunned to find out that some schools do it at the start of a new school year, rather than waiting until October or November.

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photo credit: Rockwood Park & Museum

# Culture

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# FESTIVAL OF TREES STARTS FRIDAY IN NEW CASTLE; DEC. 1 IN MILFORD

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware Hospice elves will be scurrying around Brantwyn Estate this week ahead of the opening Friday of the 36th **New Castle County Festival of Trees**. Downstate, an entirely different group of dedicated volunteers are heading into final stretch of preparation for **Kent & Sussex County Festival of Trees** at the Delaware Hospice Center in Milford.

Proceeds from both benefit Delaware Hospice programs up and down the state. The events make money off the sponsorship for trees, sales of home decor such as wreaths and table centerpieces and food and entertaining items.

Here's a look at some items from previous years, but not this year. The New Castle County one won't be put up until Wednesday and Thursday.

The trees are decorated by volunteers in different themes, including one featuring snow white doves, each

representing a Delaware Hospice patient who died during the year.

The home decor and food are handmade by volunteers, who try to appeal to a variety of tastes so everybody who visits the free event can find something they want to take home.

The New Castle County festival runs Friday, Nov. 17, at the Brantwyn Estate at 600 Rockland Road, Wilmington. The Kent & Sussex County Festival of Trees will run Friday, Dec. 1, through Sunday, Dec. 3, at the Hospice Center at 100 Patriots Way, Milford. The doors will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday; and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.



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# ONLY IN THE FIRST STATE: OUR OBSESSION WITH LOW-DIGIT TAGS

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

This week was prime time for one of Delaware's odder rituals: a hunt for low-digit tags. The Delaware Department of Motor Vehicles every year runs an online **lottery** and in-person release of low-digit tags for motor vehicles.

This year's online **lottery** drew 17,408 entries and is already closed, but the last two in-person events are Thursday. If you're interested, you might want to get to the DMV early. Way early.

The first two people in line for Tuesday's release at the Georgetown DMV office got there at 8 p.m. Monday—12 hours ahead of the office opening. They brought a generator to keep themselves warm, according to a post on Delaware License Plates, one of two private Facebook groups focused on, well, Delaware license plates (aka tags). The other one is called Delaware License Plate Collectors.

To some, low-digit tags imply deep roots in Delaware, suggesting they've been passed down for generations, as far back as 1909 when Delaware first issued license plates. The cachet starts with a single 1, for the governor. The lieutenant governor gets 2 and the secretary of state gets 3.

To some, the numbers have personal meanings (say 12787, if you were born on Delaware Day). And to some, money is a lure. One family's collection of 17 Delaware tags, including three with just one digit, was worth more than \$3 million in 2016, Philadelphia magazine **reported**.

The owner of No. 5 turned down \$1 million for it, fan Jordan Irazabal told DelawareLive.com in 2020. Yowza.

## THE LOVE OF LOW-DIGIT TAGS

Delaware is one of a small number of states where residents share a fixation with low-digit tags. The Delaware

License Plates Facebook group has 10,000 members and Delaware License Plate Collectors has 1,100. A business called **Delaware Tag Traders** has 5,000 Facebook followers. Irazabal's **TheDelaware3000.org** has 5,000 Facebook followers interested in its collection of photos of 3,000 low-digit tags. There is probably a lot of duplication in those numbers, but they reflect a significant amount for a state with only a million people.

William D. Emmert and John T. Wakefield have sold hundreds of low-digit tags, mostly online, over the past 20 years, they write on Delaware Tag Traders. They sell 35 to 50 at auction each year. This week, they are listing about 100, with the most expensive being 1471 for \$20,000.

Although the biggest draw is low numbers, Delaware complicates the situation by starting some tags with letters: C for commercial, PC for passenger car, T for trailer, MC for motorcycle, RT for recreational trailer and RV for recreational vehicle. Some fans therefore want sets—matching or related numbers across or within the various categories.

Wilson's Auction in Lincoln maintains a page on its prices for Delaware tags and highlights this year include \$16,500 for RT3 and \$14,200 for T40, T45 and T46. Each.

The DMV's online lotteries, which end Friday, involve 1,585 tags each day of various types. The in-person events include 100 tags. The final two in-person events were at the DMV offices near **Wilmington** and **Delaware City** on Thursday, Nov. 9. Or earlier, if you count the wait.

READ MORE HERE



# ST. HELENA'S CANCELS ITS LONG-RUNNING CARNIVAL

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

The springtime carnival at St. Helena's Church, a tradition in North Wilmington that dates back at least to the 1960s, has been canceled. The parish council made the decision "with great reluctance and sorrow," said Monsignor Stanley Russell, who has served the Bellefonte Catholic church since 1994.

The carnival was damaged by unfounded reports of trouble one night in 2022 and the parish increased security in 2023. But on May 6, the last night of the 2023 carnival, a group of young people climbed the fence surrounding the carnival, Russell said. When they were discovered without wristbands denoting that they had paid admission, they were ejected.

They then walked over to a nearby Wawa, ransacked the store and threw items from the store at vehicles moving along Philadelphia Pike, he said.

"Apparently, conditions are such that we cannot continue without fear of violence," Russell said. "We came very close to having something terrible happen."


Fundraisers like the carnival—rides, games, a food court, a beer garden and other draws—were a significant part of the parish budget. The fiscal 2019 budget totaled \$832,000 in operating income and "parish fundraising activities, less related expenses" totaled \$202,000, with the carnival generating more than half of that.

At least the parish is getting some steady income from the Brandywine School District renting part of its old elementary school building, he said.

The parish is working on how to turn the convent on its compound from an expense into an asset. The Sisters of St. Joseph moved out in 2016 and "we continue to incur the maintenance and repair costs for this aging building," the 2019 budget said.

"A crowd of people at the event became alarmed April 30, [2022] when rumors of a person with a weapon circulated among carnival-goers," The Dialog, the diocese newspaper, [reported](#).

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# HERE ARE WAYS TO HONOR DELAWARE HEROES FOR VETERANS DAY

BY JAREK RUTZ

Fighting in World War I officially came to an end in the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, and 105 years later, those who serve the nation continue to be honored every Nov. 11 on Veterans Day.

Delawareans can choose from a variety of events this weekend to pay their respects.

“Veterans Day is a tribute to the sacrifices that our veterans make every single day,” said Miranda Mal, acting director of the [Delaware Office of Veterans Services](#). “It is a day in which we pay our respects to the countless individuals who have stepped up to the challenge to defend our freedoms, values and democracy with their own lives.”

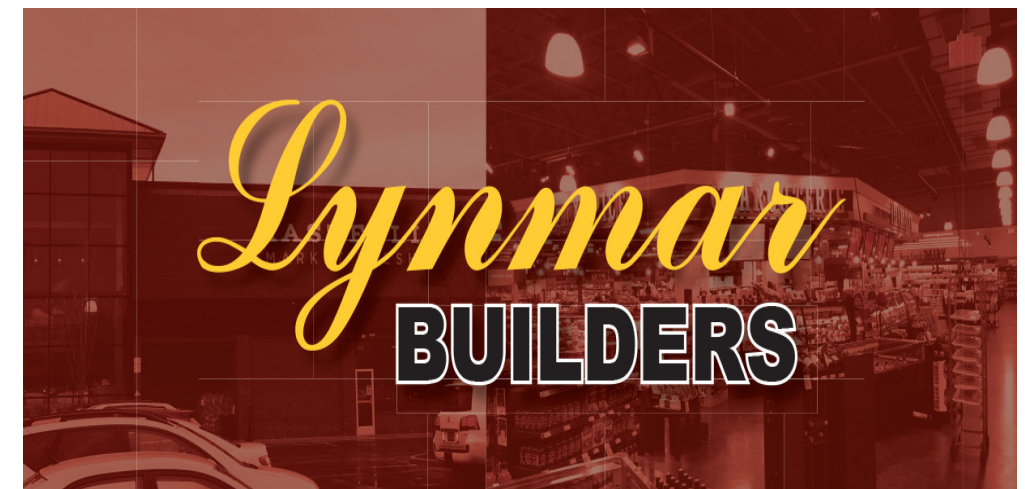
Some schools in the state also have events this week to honor past soldiers. [Mispillion Elementary School](#) in [Milford School District](#), for example, has for years had

a Veterans Day program for students to have a deeper understanding of the holiday and what it means to serve the country. The program is led by the school’s fifth grade students and includes a singing performance by students, essay contest winners reading about why Veterans are important to them, and a guest speaker who is a member of the Armed Forces.

Kelly Sharp, who runs the program, said this year’s guest speaker is Chief Master Sergeant Ford, who has more than 30 years of service and is currently stationed at the Dover Air Force Base. After the performances, Veterans and students have the chance to mingle with one another.

While the assembly is only attended by the fourth and fifth graders due to the size of the gym, all students in the school are invited to honor a Veteran, Sharp said.

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# Business

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# MOUNTAIRE TO BUY THREE GRAIN ELEVATORS FROM NAGEL FARM SERVICE

**BY BETSY PRICE**

**Mountaire Farms** plans to buy three grain elevators on the Eastern Shore of Maryland from **Nagel Farm Service**, the chicken producer said Friday. The grain facilities, located in Preston, Cordova and Wye Mills, are key locations for farmers on the Mid-Shore. Nagel Farm Service will retain their trucking, hardware and crop insurance businesses.

“Our intention is to operate these facilities with the same level of exceptional service that local farmers have come to expect from Nagel Farms,” said Rex Holstein, Mountaire’s vice president of agri-business.

Both companies are family-owned and share similar values, he said. “We appreciate how they’ve managed their business,” he said.

## **NAGEL-MOUNTAIRE CONNECTION**

The Nagel family said that Mountaire and their farm service were a good business fit.

“We both operate from two critical principles: 1) prioritizing faith and 2) providing exceptional service to the farmer,” the family statement said.

The Nagels plan to continue serving the farm community with the same level of care they had for nearly 80 years, they said.



“We are proud of the strong bond we have with our loyal customers and look forward to improving these relationships through unparalleled service,” the statement said.

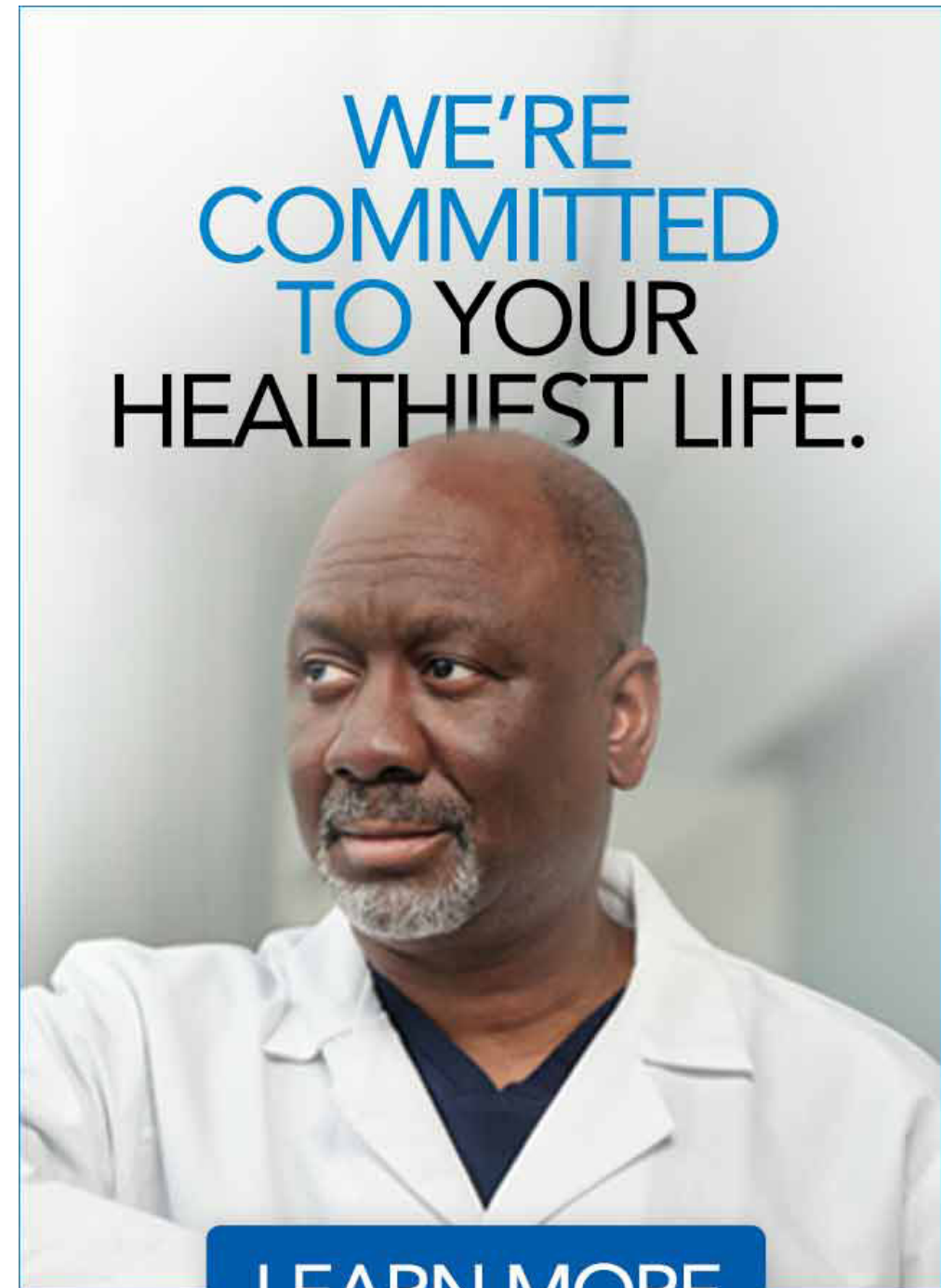
The two companies signed a letter of agreement, and, subject to due diligence, Mountaire will finalize the purchase in coming weeks and then work with employees to transition their employment, benefits and seniority to Mountaire.

Mountaire already owns nine grain elevators on Delmarva and three feed mills.





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# Food & Dining

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## HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE BRANDYWINE RESTAURANT

BY PAM GEORGE

Nothing gets Wilmington residents quite as excited as a new restaurant—unless it's a celebrity sighting. I recently experienced both thrills on one evening.

**The Brandywine Restaurant** at 2000 Pennsylvania Ave., which many call “the old Michael Christopher’s building,” had an invitation-only preview and Brent Celek, a former Philadelphia Eagles tight end, was in attendance. I don’t follow sports, so I relied on a friend to fill me in and Celek graciously posed for photos with his enthusiastic fan.

However, I follow restaurants and I am as giddy about the eatery as my friend was about Celek.

The Brandywine Restaurant officially opens to the public on Tuesday, Nov. 14, and Bill Irvin, a partner at Snuff Mill Restaurant, Butchery & Wine Bar in Independence Mall, is the owner. Not surprisingly, expectations are high, and here’s a peek at what to expect.

### THE 21ST-CENTURY BRANDYWINE

Despite the name, The Brandywine Restaurant has no connection to the wainscoted Brandywine Room in the other than the shared salute to the river and valley that define this area. There are no Andrew Wyeth paintings on the new eatery’s walls. Instead, cranes fly across salmon-colored wallpaper from Asia, European mirrors and a barrel ceiling painted a metallic shade of steel blue.

It’s a narrow room with just over 40 seats until outdoor dining is available. Suffice it to say that you’ll get cozy with your neighbors. For more elbow room, consider the underlit bar stretching down one side of the room that boasts handsome tweed-covered chairs. A banquette runs down the other side and the tufted back has a mid-century modern vibe, as do the drum shades on the pendant lights.

Between the appointments and the dining room’s size, I felt like I was in the dining car of the Orient Express in the late 1930s. But there’s also a Parisian bistro sensibility, complete with white table linens and custom-made French napkins featuring a fox with glasses, a restaurant mascot. In short, the place shimmers with retro glamor.

### DREAM TEAM

It’s a sumptuous space thanks to **Stephen Mottola**, a well-known realtor with a flair for design. To be sure, Irvin—a hospitality veteran who previously worked for Ruth’s Chris Steak House and Phillips Seafood Restaurant group—has a knack for finding good, local talent. Consider that Robert Lhulier is his partner at Snuff Mill and a consultant for the new project.

For The Brandywine, Irvin recruited Chris Unruh, who has decades of area experience and previously worked for **Bardea Food & Drink** and **Bardea Steak**. Unruh handles the beverage program. Glennon Travis, the general manager, comes to Delaware from the Hamptons and he’s opened Soho Houses in the United States and abroad. The front-of-the-house crew is polished, no easy feat given the shortage of industry workers. Chef Andrew Cini, a native Delawarean, has worked in Philadelphia and fine-dining establishments in Wilmington.

Irvin drew inspiration for the restaurant from the upscale eateries of the past, including posh lunch spots in tony department stores. It was up to Cini and Lhulier to turn that vision into a menu—or “Bill of Fare.”

READ MORE HERE





## MEXICAN RESTAURANTS, AVONDALE CLOSURE, THANKSGIVING IN/OUT

BY PAM GEORGE

Delaware can't get enough of Mexican restaurants, or so it seems. Along with the new spots listed below, more are reportedly on the way.

And First State families are also eager to reduce Thanksgiving stress.

The number of places offering to-go and in-restaurant dining keeps growing, and we've added some to the list.

### NEW MEXICAN RESTAURANT RUNDOWN

**Roja & Verde Taqueria** is up and running next to Drip Café at 60 N. College Ave. in Newark. Greg Vogelely owns both. The new restaurant's signature dishes include gordita—spicy masa cake stuffed with chicken, queso fresco, pico de gallo, cilantro, shredded lettuce and sour cream—and tamales, which are corn husk-wrapped masa cakes packed with salsa verde and either chicken or peppers and onions.

The restaurant has counter service and limited seating, and a scene-setting mural by **Kent Krech**.

**Taco Reho's** Middletown location—the former Steak & Shake—at 100 Sandhill Drive quietly opened and like the original Rehoboth Beach restaurant, a former Burger King, there is a drive-thru, although it's not always open. The second restaurant, however, has a more extensive bar.

The chipotle-and-tomato-braised chicken tinga filling is perhaps the most popular and you can get burritos or bowls. The concept is the brainchild of Billy Lucas, who once catered for touring musical acts. As a result, the concept sports a rock 'n' roll theme and has a Southern California vibe—it's best not to compare it to a mom-and-pop taqueria.

Taco Reho, which started as a food truck, is part of **La Vida Hospitality**, which has two **Crooked Hammock Brewery** locations in Delaware.

**Agave Mexican Grill** is new to **The Chancery Market Food Hall & Bar** at 1313 N. Market St. in downtown Wilmington. In addition to burritos, tacos and tostadas, Agave makes tortas, which are sandwiches on a soft roll.

### CHICK-N-SALAD COMING

The Chancery Market announced that Chick-N-Salad will open soon in the food hall. Chicken wings, tenders, salads, bowls and soups will highlight the menu. The restaurant fills the niche that opened after Fuku, a spicy fried chicken sandwich concept, closed. The remaining two Fuku shops are in New York.

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## NICOLA PIZZA MOVE TO LEWES ONE YEAR AGO 'BETTER FOR EVERYONE'

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Dan Huber of Wilmington, a self-dubbed “weekend townie” who’s had a second residence in Lewes since childhood, vividly recalls being at Nicola Pizza in Rehoboth Beach when it opened half a century ago. He was 12 and said his family was the third or fourth group to be seated at Nicola’s First Street location on June 11, 1971.

“We felt like we were friends after the first time we left,” he said. “They were so friendly and the pizza was so good.”

He also was there last fall when Nicola opened its new 17,000-square-foot Lewes location on the Coastal Highway last October.

“The quality of the pizza hasn’t changed since day one,” said Huber. “It’s the best pizza on the planet.”

Nicola’s huge, free parking lot—a welcome amenity for customers who formerly had to hunt around Rehoboth for street parking—is almost always packed.

Owner Nicolas Caggiano gambled that his current customers would follow him and new customers would find him when he sold his downtown Rehoboth property for \$4 million and moved to the larger Coastal Highway site to expand.

“It worked out great,” said the Caggianos’ niece Kelly Munyan, who has been Nicola Pizza’s general manager since 2010 when their second restaurant opened on

Rehoboth Avenue to meet the constantly growing demand. “It’s been busy.”

Revenues are running ahead of forecasts and she credits that partly to the parking and the 260 indoor and 90 outdoor seats, but also to Nicola’s place in beach community culture. “If Nicola was their tradition, it has stayed their tradition,” Munyan said.

Huber feels like it’s more than that. The owners and staff have always been warm and friendly, he said. And the quality of the food is consistent. He should know.

### NICOLA PIZZA HISTORY

Huber says he and his family ate there at least once a week after Nicolas and his wife, Joan, opened the original location in 1971. They had been selling pizzas out of their house to help pay their daughter’s medical expenses.

Like many other beach businesses, the restaurant was meant to be a seasonal operation. “They were supposed to close that first winter,” Huber said. The Caggianos planned to return to their jobs as teachers, only running the restaurant in the summer to earn extra money.

“By the end of that summer, you couldn’t eat there after 5 p.m. without waiting and everyone was content to stand in line and wait,” Huber remembers.

Betting that business would continue into the fall and winter, the Caggianos decided to quit their jobs and keep Nicola Pizza open.

“You felt like you were in someone’s home having pizza,” Huber said. “They were so friendly and the pizza was so good.”

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photo credit: Delaware State Police

# Government

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# SENATE REPUBLICANS ASK CARNEY TO OUST AG SEC. MICHAEL SCUSE

BY BETSY PRICE

Six Delaware State [Senate Republicans](#) on Thursday asked Gov. John Carney to immediately remove Delaware Agriculture Secretary Michael Scuse following an ethics report that said he violated state bidding processes.

The [Public Integrity Commission](#) released a report saying Scuse improperly used \$100,000 in taxpayer money to employees of the department to house seized farm animals without public notice or a public bidding process, said a statement from six Republicans.

One employee, referred to as “her” in the report, took in nearly 500 chickens rescued from an alleged neglect case. That employee was paid over \$90,000 for boarding the birds but none survived beyond 30 days.

Contracts involving existing employees are supposed to be open to public bidding if they are for more than \$2,000, the commission said. The commission employees had exclusive access to the contracts with the department they already worked for.

A state deputy attorney general advised the secretary not to pay his employees to house the animals, but Scuse did it anyway, the statement said. This was all discovered only after complaints were made to the integrity commission, it said.

“This behavior and apparent nepotism are unacceptable and further sows the seeds of public mistrust of its government,” said Republican leader Gerald Hocker, R-Ocean View; Republican Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown; Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel; Sen. Bryant Richardson, R-Seaford; Sen. David Wilson, R-Lincoln; and Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover.

“Agriculture is Delaware’s number one economic industry and it is vital that the department overseeing it has the trust of those within the industry,” their statement said. “Quotes in media reports from those interviewed and personal conversations we have had with farmers display a great level of concern with the DDA



“

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and its current leadership.

“We urge you to take immediate action and remove Secretary Scuse from his position.”

The commission held a closed-door meeting July 24 to weigh the validity of the complaints. Minutes of the meeting made public in September show that the Commission substantiated the allegations against at least three Delaware state employees for taking state funds not associated with their government roles.

The employee who took on the 500 chickens received checks in the amount of \$74,410 and \$15,655, respectively, for contracted services outside the employee’s official responsibilities.





photo link: Wilmington Friends School



# Education

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# SCHOOL CHOICE APPLICATION WINDOW NOW OPEN; CLOSING JAN. 10

BY JAREK RUTZ

Monday, Nov. 6, was the first day Delaware's school choice window opened, allowing parents to file applications to send their children to a school outside of their neighborhood.

"Every child learns differently, which is why Delaware being a 'school choice' state is so important," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the [Delaware Charter Schools Network](#). "This week, the school choice window opens and parents will have an opportunity to put in applications for the schools that they believe will best fit the needs of their child." The window will stay open through Jan. 10, 2024.

Only **12 other states** have school choice, allowing parents to apply to as many public schools—district or charter—as they wish for their children. States that don't offer school choice assign children to schools based on where they live.

Delaware's children are no different—each are assigned to a school based on their residency, but they also have the hundreds of other state public schools as options.

There's about 25,000 applications submitted each year. "It isn't always an easy process, though," Massett said, "There are two top things to remember."

First, she said, there are many choices out there and not all are going to be right for every child. For example, a student interested in the arts should probably apply to choice into a school like the [Cab Calloway School of the Arts](#) and a child passionate about science or math could consider the [Conrad Schools of Science](#).

"If your child doesn't like wearing a military uniform, learning military history, having extra physical fitness training and marching, then they should not go to either of the two military charter schools," Massett said. "If your child doesn't want to learn a trade or have vocational and technical training as part of their high school journey, a vo-tech school will not be right for them."

The opening of school choice can serve as a perfect time for parents to find out what is available and what might be the right fit for their child.

Virtually all districts and charters have some sort of an information night, sometimes several, during which parents can learn more about a school and its academic programs, as well as have a chance to meet teachers and other faculty.

Massett said the second important factor to remember is that Delaware now requires students to be registered in their district of residence before choice applications can be accepted. Even if a parent has no intention of sending their child to their assigned residential school, they still have to go through the registration process.

Delaware does not have a universal registration process, but it does have a universal choice application. Each district has a different online process, she pointed out, so parents must check the district's website for what they need to do.

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# DSU LANDS NASA GRANT TO HELP FIND LIFE RESOURCES ON MOON

BY JAREK RUTZ

**Delaware State University** instructors have been awarded a \$899,000 grant from **NASA** to contribute its engineering and optics services to the future moon Lunar Land Rover Mission. DSU's Mohammed Amir Khan, professor and director of the Engineer Physics Program, and Yuri Markushin, associate professor, will be leading the three-year project.

Khan and Markushin will design and develop infrared sensing and laser technology for installation on the Lunar Land Rover that will enable the detection and correlation of water isotopes with the characteristics of the elemental composition of lunar rocks and dust.

In layman's terms, the work will help the rover find potential resources for living creatures.

Khan said he and Markushin will collaborate with the **Goddard Space Center** in Maryland on the project.

"NASA wants to use the moon to see how humans can live outside of the earth's environment," Khan said. "The detection of water isotopes is an important factor in that question."

The grant is part of a larger \$14 million initiative that NASA is investing in U.S. colleges and universities to grow their STEM capacity in order to participate in critical spaceflight research. The initiative also aims to prepare a new generation of diverse students for careers in the nation's science, technology, engineering and math workforce.

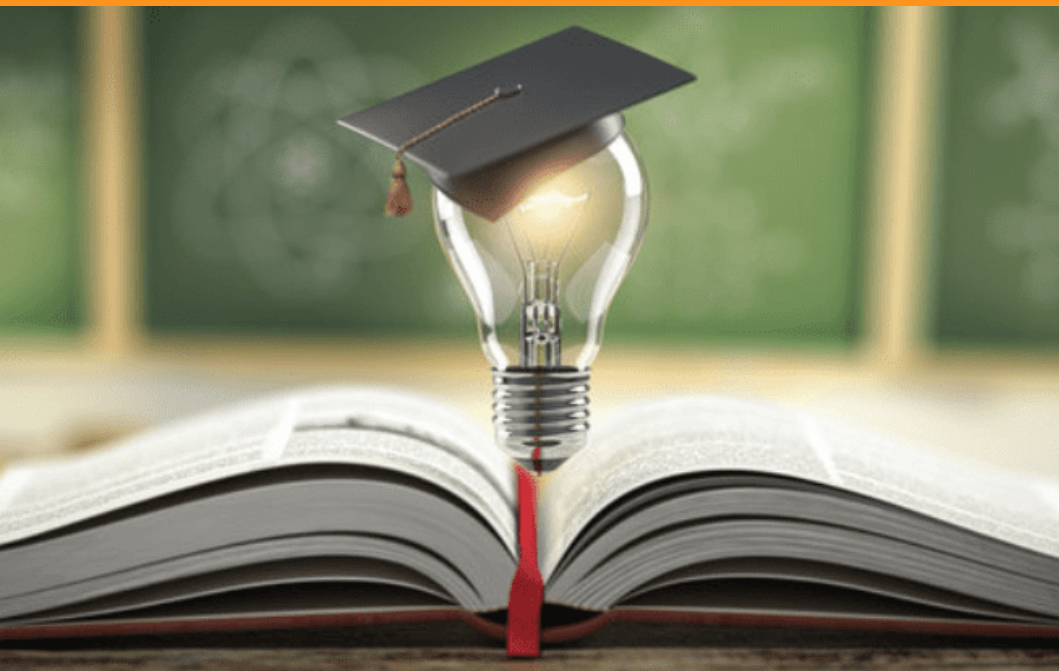


DSU has been involved with space exploration for some time. Nouredine Melikechi, a former DSU professor of physics, and Alissa Mezzacappa, then a second-year optics Ph.D. student, played a critical role in the development of the ChemCam technology used on NASA's Curiosity Rover that landed on Mars in 2012 and explored the planet's surface.

DSU's science students will be engaged in the different parts of the current project, Khan said, including assisting in the design of the opto-mechanics and electronics of the experiments with the laser prototype.







BY JAREK RUTZ

**Christina School District** held a community town hall Tuesday night to allow parents, district staff and students to ask questions and share concerns with the school board. This was the first town hall the school board had held in two years.

“We want to know the good things that are going on in the district, we want to know the challenges are in the district,” said board president Don Patton. “We want to know what you think about the district so that we can go back and speak with the leadership tomorrow or days following so that they know what the public feels and thinks.”

Part of the responsibility of being an elected school board member is making sure there’s connections and engagement with the residents that voted them in, he said. Christina is expected to have at least one more town hall during the school year.

## CHRISTINA SCHOOL DISTRICT HOLDS FIRST TOWN HALL IN TWO YEARS

In Monday’s meeting, the dozen people to address the board were parents of students, district residents or staff. Comments dealt with teaching civics, the cost of being a volunteer and the lack of specialists.

“This event itself is a manifestation that this board wants more voices,” said board member Naveed Baqir. “I was hoping that we’ll have some students here as well, because this is open to everyone, but the turnout makes me feel that we probably need to have another town hall just with the students, too.” Even so, Baqir said, the district is planting the right seed and hopes more students will take advantage of the opportunity.

Alethea Smith-Tucker, a board member, said she’d like to see parent advisory councils developed in the district.

“It’s very important for parents to have actual say, on par with principals...in the formation of what takes place in our schools,” she said. “It’s important for us to be able to start thinking of how we educate our children differently from the parent perspective.”

Christina’s “clients” are its students, she said, and parents should have valued input into how students are served.

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# Sports

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## SALESIANUM DOMINATES SAINT MARK'S IN RENEWED RIVALRY

BY JASON WINCHELL

They started arriving on the Saint Mark's campus early, fans eagerly awaiting the renewal of the Holy War, the football game between the Spartans and longtime rival Salesianum. The outcome wouldn't change much as far as tournament seedings were concerned, but that is normally secondary in this series.

The Sals scored early, building up a 26-0 halftime advantage on the way to a 47-12 victory on a chilly and foggy night at The Graveyard. They improved to 9-1 and will be the top seed in Class 3A when the brackets are announced on Sunday. Saint Mark's finished 4-6 in the program's first year at 3A.

The tone was set early, as two turnovers pushed the Sals into the lead. R.J. Johnson recovered a Saint Mark's fumble on the first play from scrimmage. After a 15-yard pass from Brady McBride and a personal foul put the ball inside the Spartans' three, McBride found an

open Hunter Balint in the end zone for a 7-0 lead just 16 seconds into the game.

The Sals would add six to that lead within a matter of plays. Saint Mark's started a drive at its 29, and on third down, the Sals' Nick Strusowski intercepted an Aidan Lehane pass and returned it 31 yards to the house.

The Spartans moved the ball at times on the Sals' defense, primarily on the ground, but they were unable to score in the first half. Salesianum, meanwhile, added two more touchdowns in the second quarter to pull away on the chilly, foggy evening. B.J. Alleyne scored his first touchdown of the game with 5:49 to go in the half, taking a direct snap and running nine yards on a fourth down and three. The Sals got the ball back with 1:07 to go before the intermission, and McBride returned to the air.

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## BLUE COATS FALL IN OPENER AFTER BEING REWARDED CHAMPIONSHIP RINGS

BY PATRICK GARYANTES

The 2022-2023 Delaware Blue Coats were awarded with their G-League Championship rings prior to their season opener against the Westchester Knicks on Friday night.

Charlie Brown, now a Westchester Knick, Pat McCaw, Aminu Mohammed, Derek Culver and Jared Brownridge were all rewarded with their rings pre-game and a nice championship banner now sits along the wall behind their bench in the Chase Fieldhouse.

Only four players have returned to Blue Coats from that championship team, mainly due to the objective of the G-League. Develop players to advance their careers to the NBA, something the Blue Coats have been very successful at doing in recent years. Players like the aforementioned Brown, “B-ball” Paul Reed, Justin Champagne and Jaden Springer have all made the jump from the Blue Coats to the NBA in the past few seasons.

This year’s team has a few players that have the potential to jump into the NBA in the coming years with first-year players Ricky Council IV (Arkansas) and Terquavion Smith (NC State). Both players would make their mark in what was a competitive opener through one half of play. Council was in the starting lineup for the opener, alongside Chris Clarke, Brownridge, Melvin Frazier Jr. and Javonte Smart. Smith was utilized off the bench for the opener.

As mentioned, this game was competitive through two quarters of play, as the Knicks led the Blue Coats 66-59 at the break. Council had eight points at the break, while Smith led Delaware with 19 first half points off the bench. Council’s athleticism and defensive potential popped, while Smith’s speed and shooting ability was eye-popping.

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## KEARNEY SCORES THREE TIMES TO LEAD SMYRNA AGAINST SUSSEX CENTRAL

BY BENNY MITCHELL

The math was easy—Smyrna needed a win to qualify for the Class AAA state tournament and a chance to defend their 2022 state title. What laid ahead of them was the District 2 champion Sussex Central.

Kahmaj Kearney scored three touchdowns for the Eagles, which was one more than his season total prior to Friday night, helping lead Smyrna to a 40-35 victory.

“We were able to run the ball more tonight, that was key and Kearney was a big part of that tonight,” Smyrna head coach Mike Judy said.

It was Sussex Central that got the scoring started when Will Harmon capped off the opening drive of the game with a six-yard touchdown run. Rodney Escobar-Gonzales added the point after kick, giving the Golden Knights a 7-0 less than two minutes into the game.

Harmon struck again for the Golden Knights three minutes later when he stepped in front of a Drew Marks

pass and returned it 47 yards for a touchdown. Escobar-Gonzales converted the kick as Sussex Central jumped out to a 14-0 lead.

Smyrna drove down the field on its next possession finishing it off with a one-yard touchdown run by Kearney. Jesse Dixon converted the run attempt as the Eagles closed the score to 14-8 with three minutes left to play in the first quarter.

The Golden Knights answered quickly as Harmon reeled off a 46-yard run plus a penalty for a horse collar tackle moving the ball to the Smyrna seven yard line. Two plays later, Malik Bell scored on a three yard run giving Sussex Central a 21-8 lead as the first quarter came to an end. The Golden Knights would not score again until midway through the fourth quarter.

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## LAKE FOREST PREVAILS OVER MILFORD IN ANNUAL BATTLE OF THE BELL

BY GLENN FRAZER

The injury-riddled Lake Forest football team ended its season on a high note winning the Battle of the Bell at Briggs Stadium Thursday night. Head coach Fred Johnson's Spartans scored on their opening drive to take a 7-6 lead they would never relinquish. That first offensive series featured senior quarterback Jonathan Tyndall who has missed nearly his entire season due to a leg-related injury. Tyndall passed downfield to Jaymeire Snell for 33 yards on the initial play from scrimmage, and would go on to play a few more downs eventually taken out after a "hard hit." He was inserted back into the game when Lake went to the "victory formation" late in the final quarter.

The Milford Buccaneers honored 18 seniors prior to the game on Senior Recognition night. The Bucs promptly took the opening kickoff and marched 57 yards in eight plays culminating with a 17-yard touchdown run by DenNare Horsey to lead 6-0. However, Lake answered on a three-yard score by Ne'Von Pierce on their first possession. Senior Aidan Garey converted on the point-after try to give his team a 7-6 lead. The Spartans scored twice in the second quarter on a 55-yard pass from Pierce to Josiah Smith and a 28-yard run by fullback Nikhai Cooper, thus taking a 21-6 advantage at the half.

Lake Forest increased its lead to 27-6 as Snell used his speed on a 26-yard touchdown run. The two teams then traded scores with five total touchdowns made in the third stanza. Snell and Cooper both tallied their second touchdowns of the night in the third, while Milford thrilled the home crowd on an 80-yard run by Charles Shorts and a one-yard "sneak" by Jack Hudson. Lake appeared to have the game "in hand" with a 40-20 lead heading into the final 12 minutes, but coach Jed Bell's Bucs would not go quietly into the night.

Shorts ran 46 yards with 8:30 left and Horsey galloped 55 for a touchdown just five minutes later that closed the gap to 40-34. Milford attempted an onside kick and almost recovered, but the Spartans grabbed the loose ball and scored on the very next play as Snell ran 53 yards that ended the scoring.

Lake Forest keeps the Battle of the Bell trophy for the third straight year. The Spartans ended the season at 2-3 in district play and 4-6 overall. Snell paced the team with three touchdowns as he rushed for over 200 yards. Cooper added another 141 yards and two scores.

Milford was led by Shorts and Horsey, both gaining over 150 yards on the ground as they both finished their final season with more than 1,000 yards. The Buccaneers secured their first winning season since 2017 with a 6-4 record under first-year head coach Jed Bell.

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# DELMAR, NEWARK CHARTER ADVANCE IN STATE FIELD HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

BY SHANNON TIMMONS

The Division 2 DIAA tournament semifinals did not disappoint after a great night of field hockey the night before in the Division 1 semifinals, where Smyrna and Cape Henlopen advanced to Saturday's finals. Jodi Hollamon and her Delmar Wildcats played for what could be their eighth championship and Newark Charter under head coach Stacey Spiker is in the finals for the first time.

I want to extend congratulations to both Caravel and Wilmington Friends for their seasons and making it to the semifinals of the tournament. We are excited to watch your programs continue to grow.

## *No. 2 Delmar vs. No. 3 Caravel*

As we had seen the night before, teams were slow to settle into their style of play and that was true tonight as well. Caravel, as expected, played well on defense in the first quarter making Delmar work for every possession and shot. In the first 15 minutes of play, Delmar only forced four penalty corners, took five shots and scored once at the 10:30 mark on a reverse stick shot by Jordyn Hollamon. Goalkeeper Addison Van Rensler (Caravel) had Hollamon's goal just squeak between her feet to go in. Caravel's strategy to mark Hollamon man-to-man kept her at bay for awhile.

Three minutes into the second quarter, Hollamon would strike again for her second goal of the night on an assist by Emily Bitter, who inserted the ball to the

top of the circle on a penalty corner. At 10:36, Delmar would score again to go up 3-0 and start to pull away as Rylin Nichols was assisted by Laela Brown. Delaney Brunner from Caravel would thwart two more offensive attacks and make defensive saves to hold Delmar off.

Coming out of halftime, Delmar looked relaxed and settled in with the 3-0 lead and at 13:39, Hollamon from Bitters would score again to put the Wildcats up 4-0. The Bucs did not stop playing and adjusting. That hard work would pay off at 7:48 when Katie Cole would find the back of the cage off an assist by Delaney Brunner on a penalty corner, 4-1 Delmar headed to the fourth quarter.

Caravel gave its all and left everything on the field trying to climb back into the game. Peyton Rice had two defensive stops, but Delmar would force Caravel's defense into five penalty corners, one of which would result in another Bitters to Hollamon goal. Give Hollamon four goals on the night as she led her team to win and advance.

Caravel players Peyton Rice, Brunner, Haliey Haynes, Katelyn Judy and Karie Cole are to be congratulated on a great game. Unfortunately, the Bucs just couldn't string together enough offensive runs to create scoring opportunities.

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