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Delaware Futures Fest for Student Pathways



William Penn Over Appo High

photo link: Red Clay Schools



Headlines

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EDUCATOR PAY RAISE PROPOSALS TO GET JOINT HEARING JAN. 11

BY JAREK RUTZ

Delaware's General Assembly will have its first public look and discussion about proposed educator pay raise recommendations next week. At 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 11, the House and Senate education committees will come together to listen to a presentation on the final report from the [Public Education Compensation Committee](#). Watch the meeting [HERE](#).

The 15-person compensation committee—made of school leaders, educators, government officials and financial experts—has spent the past year evaluating the pay scales for the state's various educator groups. It recommended raises that will total hundreds of millions in the next four years, if enacted as suggested. Those groups include teachers, custodians, nurses, bus drivers, administrators, secretaries, information technology workers, paraprofessionals and food service workers.

The purpose of the committee is to make Delaware regionally competitive in order to strengthen its educator pipeline and ensure the recruitment and retention of school employees. Added pressure came notably from neighboring Maryland, which passed a law that would bump teachers' starting salaries to \$60,000 by 2026.

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, who is on the Senate Education Committee, said one of his concerns about the raise recommendations stems from that fact.

"The challenge with the committee's findings is that it chases a fictional starting salary number of \$60,000 a year that was generated by neighboring states whose revenue comes from higher taxation of its citizens and a sales tax," Buckson said. A spike in taxes is something Delaware has stayed away from, he said.

"My concern is the only way to meet the recommen-

dations will be to ask for more money from the middle class," he said. "That's a real challenge in a budget year where inflation and other economic challenges are impacting everyday Delawareans."

Hefty salary raises proposed by the committee are going to the legislature at a time when the state isn't raking in the same massive surpluses it has in recent years. The effect of the raises on the state budget came up several times in compensation committee discussions.

Members like Sen. Laura Sturgeon, D-Hockessin, who is the chair of the Senate Education Committee, has said the job of working recommendations lies within the Joint Finance Committee, while the job of the compensation committee is strictly to make recommendations on educator salaries to make the state more competitive.

Others, such as compensation committee member Cerron Cade, who is the director of the Office of Management and Budget, argues that the recommendations are essentially pointless if they are not realistic for the state to achieve and work into the budget.

Here's what the committee recommended for each employee group:

- 1,305 – teachers and professional staff: a 2% increase plus a \$1,875 stipend (state cost = \$212,658,997 over next four fiscal years).
- 1,308 – secretaries: a 2+ increase plus a \$500 stipend and condensing the scale from five positions to three (state cost = \$1,407,799 for fiscal year 2025).
- 1,311 – custodians: a 2% increase, stipends ranging from \$439 to \$1,105 and condensing the scale from six to four positions (state cost = \$2,472,787 for fiscal year 2025).

[READ MORE HERE](#)



KENT COUNTY RESIDENTS FIRST TO SEE NEW PROPERTY VALUES

BY JAREK RUTZ

Kim Patterson Luton of Dover got a Christmas present nobody would want: A letter detailing the new reassessment of her family's property. The letter, which arrived in mid-December, concerned property built in 2005 and long assessed at \$59,300. Under the new evaluation, her home is assessed at an eye-popping \$419,300.

"My husband and I are seniors and living on fixed retirement incomes, so of course we are concerned about any increase in property taxes," she said. The Lutons were among the first Delawareans to see the results of a statewide property reassessment.

Property reassessments have not been done in New Castle County since 1983, in Kent County since 1987, and in Sussex County since 1974. That's meant people are still paying taxes on decades-old old valuations, rather than current ones, affecting a variety of government services, including schools.

Kent County was expected to have its reassessments done by the end of 2024, but completed them early. Paul Hertz, commissioner of the [Kent County Levy Court](#), District 6, said all letters of new reassessment values have been sent out, about 3,000 in total. New Castle and Sussex counties should have their assessments done by the end of 2025.

"New Castle and Sussex were delayed a year and their reassessments are happening," he said. "That's because they have so much more property, so their assessment will not go into effect this year, while our new assessments will be affected for fiscal year 2025."

What Delaware's residents really want to know is what the assessments mean to their bank accounts. Hertz said county taxes will not be raised overall and Kent County expects to bring in \$14.5 million in revenue next fiscal year, the same as this year.

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ALAN DERSHOWITZ LEFT \$5 MILLION IN CHANCERY COURT

BY BETSY PRICE

Famed lawyer **Alan Dershowitz**'s lively appearance Thursday in a Delaware **Court of Chancery** included debating former Harvard student and now Chancellor Kathaleen St. J. McCormick and eventually dropping checks worth nearly \$5 million onto the defense table. It essentially paid in full what **TransPerfect Global** owes the Chancery Court.

Along the way, the hearing—to decide if Transperfect should be charged with contempt for not paying—meandered into the Clinton Whitewater scandal, Charles Dicken's "Bleak House," Joseph Heller's "Catch 22" and Transperfect's desire to never be in a Delaware courtroom again.

Dershowitz's presence came during the latest skirmish in the long-running legal battle between Philip Shawe, owner of transcription company TransPerfect Global, and Robert Pincus, formerly of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP.

Pincus was appointed by the Chancery Court to oversee the sale of TransPerfect when Shawe and his former co-founder could not agree on a way forward for the

company. In that arrangement, TransPerfect was required to pay Pincus' fees. After the sale for \$770 million to Shawe, Shawe filed suit in federal court, saying that Pincus inflated the cost of the sale. It also battled in Chancery Court, arguing that TransPerfect should not have to pay Pincus's invoices without knowing how the fees were accounted for.

Thursday's hearing was focused on TransPerfect's refusal to comply with two orders from McCormick to pay nearly \$5 million in fees to Pincus as well as more than \$441,000 to Pincus's lawyers, represented Thursday by Douglas D. Herrman of Troutman Pepper.

Dershowitz's appearance comes during a busy week for him. His name popped up again in documents related to convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein, whom Dershowitz had represented. Dershowitz responded with a 31-minute video welcoming the release of the Epstein material and saying it would prove he never did anything wrong. Dershowitz's wife, Carolyn Cohen, was in the courtroom Thursday.

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photo link: Delaware Ballet

Culture

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WILMINGTON NAMED WORLD WAR II HERITAGE CITY

BY BETSY PRICE

Wilmington has been named an “American World War II Heritage City” for 2023 by the National Park Service. The city’s ship-building and other military history isn’t on display as much as it was then, but one place to see it is at Drava Plaza on the riverfront where one piece of equipment remains.

While the official announcement doesn’t say exactly why Wilmington was honored, it does say contributions by a city to World War II included defense manufacturing, such as ships, aircraft, uniforms and equipment; production of food and consumer items for Armed Forces and home consumption; volunteer participation; and civil defense preparedness.

Only one American World War II Heritage City can be designated in each state or territory.

HERITAGE SITES

Wilmington was one of 11 cities or jurisdictions added to the heritage list in 2023. Others included Foley, AL; Tempe, AZ; Richmond, CA; Waterloo, IA; Baltimore County, MD; Johnson County and Warrensburg, MO (nominated jointly); Hastings, NE; Boulder City and Henderson, NV (nominated jointly); Yonkers, NY; and Bedford County, VA.

Delaware’s largest city joins the other Wilmington in North Carolina, on the list. That Wilmington was the first city named a World War II Heritage City on Sept. 2, 2020.

“Wilmington certainly played a played a critical role throughout the course of the Second World War,” said Wilmington Mayor Mike Purzycki. “Wilmingtonians

enlisted in the military, conserved at home, raised funds through massive Bond Drives and worked in our City’s shipyards and other factories among their many other contributions.”

Evidence of the city’s history at that time, include Dravo Plaza along the Christina River, the Walnut Street YMCA, the former E.I. du DuPont Nemours Co. headquarters and Timothy Duffield’s World War II Memorial in H.B. du Pont Plaza.

“My own office window overlooks the Holocaust Memorial that has graced Freedom Plaza since 1979 and which serves as a somber reminder of that human tragedy and the lessons it has bequeathed us,” he said. “Those lessons, sadly, need to be revisited today as much as they ever have.”

Purzycki and the city’s Land Use and Planning Director Jeff Starkey credited Wilmington’s Historic Preservation Planner Debra Martin for her hard work and dedication in preparing Wilmington’s heritage application. You can see it [HERE](#).

Among other things, she cited the Dravo Corp.’s ship-building in the city. It employed thousands of men and women to build landing ships for tanks, destroyer escorts and landing ships for soldiers and equipment.

“During the course of the war many sailors and soldiers wrote to the company thanking the workers for their efforts,” said an article in Urban. “The government awarded the yard numerous distinctions for efficiency and safety.”





photo link: [Bethany Beach Events & Entertainment](#)

Business

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FLORIDA FINTECH COMPANY NOVO TO EXPAND IN WILMINGTON

BY BETSY PRICE

A Miami-headquartered fintech company has opened a Wilmington office. **Novo**, a two-time member of the *Forbes* Fintech 50, has built a platform for small businesses that combines a checking account with an ecosystem of financial applications. It's designed to help small businesses access their revenue faster, save time on business-critical tasks and manage their money any time on any device.

Novo's decision to choose Delaware for its expansion further confirms the state's status as a hub for financial services and fintech companies, says a press release from the **Delaware Prosperity Partnership**. Wilmington continues to be the site of significant growth for existing businesses in the financial services and fintech sector while also attracting new firms to the area.

Companies with recent Delaware expansions include

Ally Financial, City National Bank, Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase.

"Small businesses make up more than half of Delaware's workforce—an incredible testament to the work Delaware has done to make small business creation and growth as accessible as possible," said Grant Sahag, vice president of operations at Novo. "The Novo team is honored to be a part of Delaware's thriving small business community."

Since launching in 2018, Novo has surpassed \$20 billion in small business transactions and was named to the *Forbes* Fintech 50 list, which highlights "the top private companies that are transforming finance through technology," in both 2022 and 2023.

NOVO'S NEW PRODUCT

In Delaware, Novo is operating from the Stat Interna-



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tional space on Orange Street. Novo has hired a dozen employees since May and will continue to grow the office in the coming years.

One of Novo's recently developed offerings is Novo Funding, a fast and flexible way for small businesses to access working capital. Since its launch, Novo Funding has issued more than \$70 million in working capital.

"Novo's decision to expand to Wilmington is great news for the First State," said Gov. John Carney. "We want to be the place companies consider when starting and growing their businesses. Novo's move to Wilmington shows that our efforts to make Delaware inviting to corporations are working and that the Delaware Prosperity Partnership is making a difference."

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Food & Dining

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BRANDYWINE HUNDRED MAN RATES DELAWARE CHEESESTEAKS

BY BETSY PRICE

It is a regional debate that has lasted for generations— which restaurant has the best cheesesteak? After meeting a date at Claymont Cheese Steak in Claymont, Jim Pappas took that question to heart. She shared his love of Philadelphia’s—and therefore Delaware’s—iconic sandwich, and they decided to ask friends and family to reveal their favorite spots.

An Uber driver, Pappas also began asking customers and the responses became passionate. The Brandywine Hundred resident realized that finding the best cheesesteaks was a quest, not just a pastime to share with a friend, and he embarked on the Philadelphia Cheesesteak Adventure.

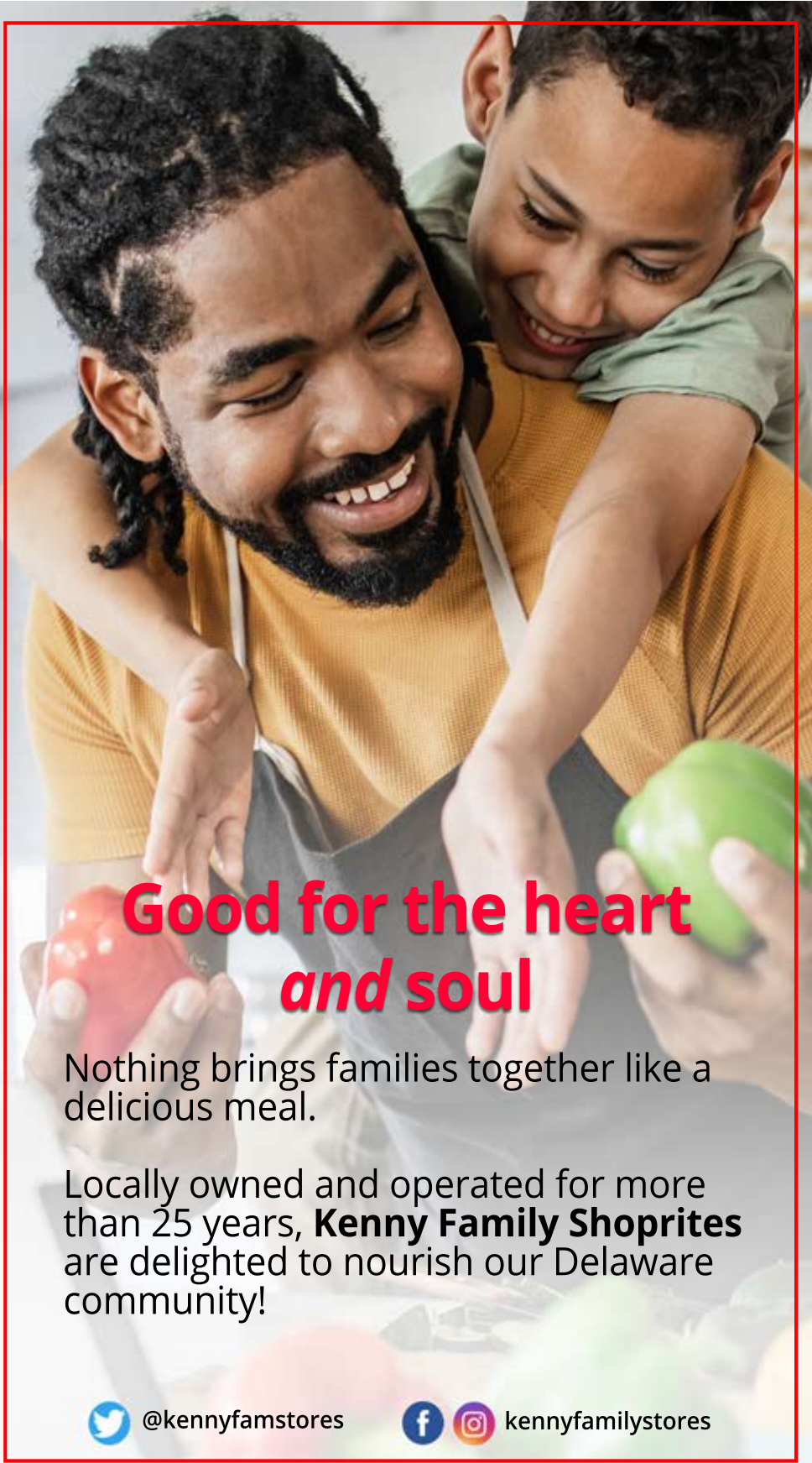
Over the past five years, Pappas has tried more than 1,100 different cheesesteaks and his calories are your

gain. He created a sortable spreadsheet of establishments, now available on his recently revamped [website](#). The list includes 100 Delaware locations, from Wilmington to Dover to the beaches.

LONGTIME CHEESESTEAK AFFAIR

Pappas’s fascination with restaurant cheesesteaks began in 1979 at Concord High School. One day, he and his cousin ditched class to visit [Claymont Steak Shop](#), the iconic restaurant on Philadelphia Pike. Unfortunately, his uncle was also buying lunch. He overlooked their cutting school and paid for their meal. Although the trio was distracted by a bank robbery next door, Pappas was hooked.

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photo credit: Delaware State Police

Government

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SEXUAL TOUCHING CHARGES LEAD TO SUSPENSION OF MASSEUSE LICENSE

BY JAREK RUTZ

A Sussex County masseuse has been charged with multiple counts of unlawful sexual contact after his clients complained and police continue to seek any other people who were affected.

Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock announced Wednesday his suspension order of Robert D. Leech of Sussex County. According to the order, the establishment was named Fusion Wellness and Spa and was located at a “detached structure behind a residence at 34361 Bookhammer Landing Road in Lewes.” From 2018 to 2021, Leech also was operating a massage parlor named Fusion Massage and Wellness at 34005 Westcoats Road in Lewes.

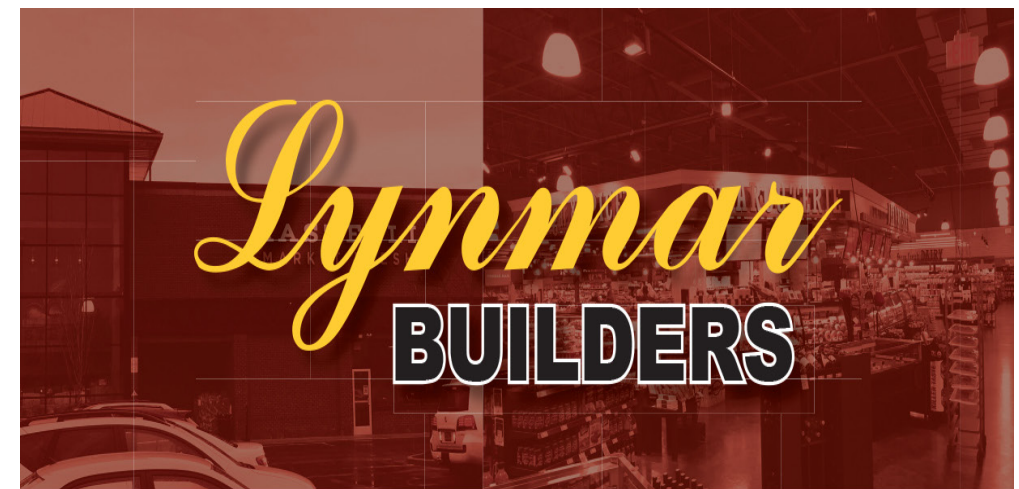
Leech has been charged with eight counts of unlawful sexual contact and one count of operating a massage establishment without a license. In suspending Leech, Bullock considered a complaint filed by the Delaware Department of Justice, that stated Leech used his position to impose unwelcome sexual acts upon numerous

clients. Four victims filed reports with the Delaware State Police following the incidents.

The order suspending Leech’s license was signed by Bullock Dec. 29, 2023, with the concurrence of the president of the Delaware Board of Massage and Bodywork.

Delaware Code enables a temporary suspension pending a hearing to be issued upon the written order of the secretary of state if the activity of the licensee presents a clear and immediate danger to public health, safety or welfare. Leech’s suspension will remain in effect for a period of 60 days, during which time disciplinary hearings will be held or the final disposition for this individual will take place.

As the result of a hearing, the Board of Massage and Bodywork has the authority to impose disciplinary sanctions up to and including revocation of a practitioner’s license.



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Education

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Goldey-Beacom College

DELAWARE FUTURES FEST ON JAN. 27 FOR STUDENT PATHWAYS

BY JAREK RUTZ

An all-day event for students to explore the various educational and career pathways and opportunities in Delaware is coming to a state college later this month.

From 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 27, Pike Creek’s **Goldey-Beacom College** is hosting “Delaware Futures Fest: Discover Your Pathway.”

The event is designed to inspire and inform attendees about the diverse high school pathways available to them, whether it be through traditional education, vocational training or other career-oriented options. It will provide students with a long-term look at how the choice they make regarding their high school or high school pathway will play out, said Britney Mumford, executive director of **DelawareCAN**, an education advocacy group that is one of the sponsors.

“Attending the Delaware Futures Fest offers students a unique opportunity to explore a myriad of education-

al and career pathways tailored to their interests and aspirations,” she said. “This is the first event to highlight the many different options Delaware students have. We know that students who are engaged in their field of study not only perform better but have a more positive experience.” By arming students with as much information as possible, Mumford said the hope is to foster more positive student outcomes.

The fair will feature representatives from high schools, colleges, community organizations and industries and businesses.

“By engaging with industry professionals, participating in hands-on activities, and accessing valuable resources, students can gain invaluable insights and make informed decisions about their future,” Mumford said.

There will also be entertainment, snacks and a school supply giveaway.

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TAYLOR SWIFT ECONOMICS WORKSHOPS LAUNCHED AT UD

BY JAREK RUTZ

The Swiftie lore has reached the **University of Delaware**. The largest university in the First State has recently introduced a Taylor Swift-themed data visualization course for undergraduate students.

“Data Enchanted: Transforming Numbers Into Knowledge” is taught by **Kathryn Bender**, an assistant professor of economics who wasn’t a huge Taylor Swift fan herself until doing research for the class.

“So I am a similar age to Taylor Swift, I grew up riding horses in a barn,” she said, “I’ve always liked her music, but I’ve never been like ‘Oh my gosh Taylor Swift!’ until I started researching things for this project and then I completely became a Swiftie over the past few months.”

Bender said the course is structured like a workshop series, to which students can earn a certificate and a

special **LinkedIn badge**, which is a digital representation of skills and expertise that can be added to a résumé, social media profiles and online portfolio.

There was a gap in UD’s economic curriculum, Bender said. “I taught this class in the spring called ‘Introduction to Econometrics’ and that’s where students first start learning about how economists do data analytics,” she said. “And I noticed in that class that a lot of students were really confused just about handling or working with data, just in the most basic ways.”

This includes understanding necessary data structures, different variables, programs besides Excel that can be used to handle large amounts of data efficiently and more.

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POLICE ACTIVELY INVESTIGATING THREATS AT NEWARK HIGH

BY JAREK RUTZ

This story has been updated with new information at 10 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 5.

An active investigation is happening at **Christina School District's Newark High School**. The **Newark Police Department** announced the investigation Thursday, as it is looking into threats made to the school and school staff.

"There is not believed to be a threat to the public and this is believed to be a 'swatting' type incident," the department's statement said.

Immediate attempts to reach the school and district for comment or additional details were unsuccessful.

At approximately 1:10 p.m. on Thursday, the Newark Police Department Communications Center received a phone call from a subject claiming that they were outside of Newark High School and were planning to enter the school and shoot students and staff members.

Newark Police school resource officers along with Christina School District constables, who were already at the school, immediately responded to the threatening phone call.

Additional Newark Police patrol officers also responded to the scene and officers quickly determined that no shooting or acts of violence were taking place in or around the school.

Early investigative efforts led officers to determine that this incident was a hoax or what has commonly been referred to as a "swatting" incident and there was no threat to the student body, staff or school.

Detectives from the Criminal Investigations Unit responded to the scene to assume the investigation while Newark Police officers remained at the school to ensure the safe and peaceful dismissal of the students at the end of the school day.

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Sports

photo credit: Nick Halliday

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WILLIAM PENN WINS FLIGHT-A OPENER OVER APPO HIGH

BY GLENN FRAZER

William Penn fell behind early, but closed the first quarter on a 16-5 run to lead Appoquinimink 21-10 Thursday night in boys basketball action. The Colonials actually found themselves down 1-0 before the game clock started. A William Penn player dunked the ball during pregame warmups, resulting in a technical foul. Jaguar junior guard Riley Busby converted one of two free throws to give Appo the lead before the game clock started. Buzby nailed a long-range shot at the “top of the circle” giving the Jags an 8-5 lead before the Colonials went on their big run to end the quarter.

Appo trailed 28-10 early in the second quarter as Emmanuel Vonhm poured in nine points, scoring in the paint and from beyond the arc to pace William Penn. Head coach Tom Purse (in his seventh year at Appo) called a timeout, settled his team and watched them go

on a run of their own (14-2) as they went into the half down by six points at 30-24.

The two teams played an even second half, both scoring 22 points in the third quarter, and 20 points each in the final frame as the Colonials secured a “hard fought” 72-66 win. Vonhm scored a game-high 30 points including three from long range. Asked about Vonhm’s ability to step out and shoot the three, head coach Gary Lumpkin told us after the game, “E-man is not going to Steph Curry it, but I was pleased with his shot selection tonight as he has the ability to knock it down.” Colonial teammate Jaylin Horsey added 15 points and several excellent assists. William Penn held Appo’s leading scorer Kaleb Ra’lfa to just two points in the opening half, disrupting his offensive looks at the basket. Coach Lumpkin was asked about his team’s overall effort. “My ex-



“

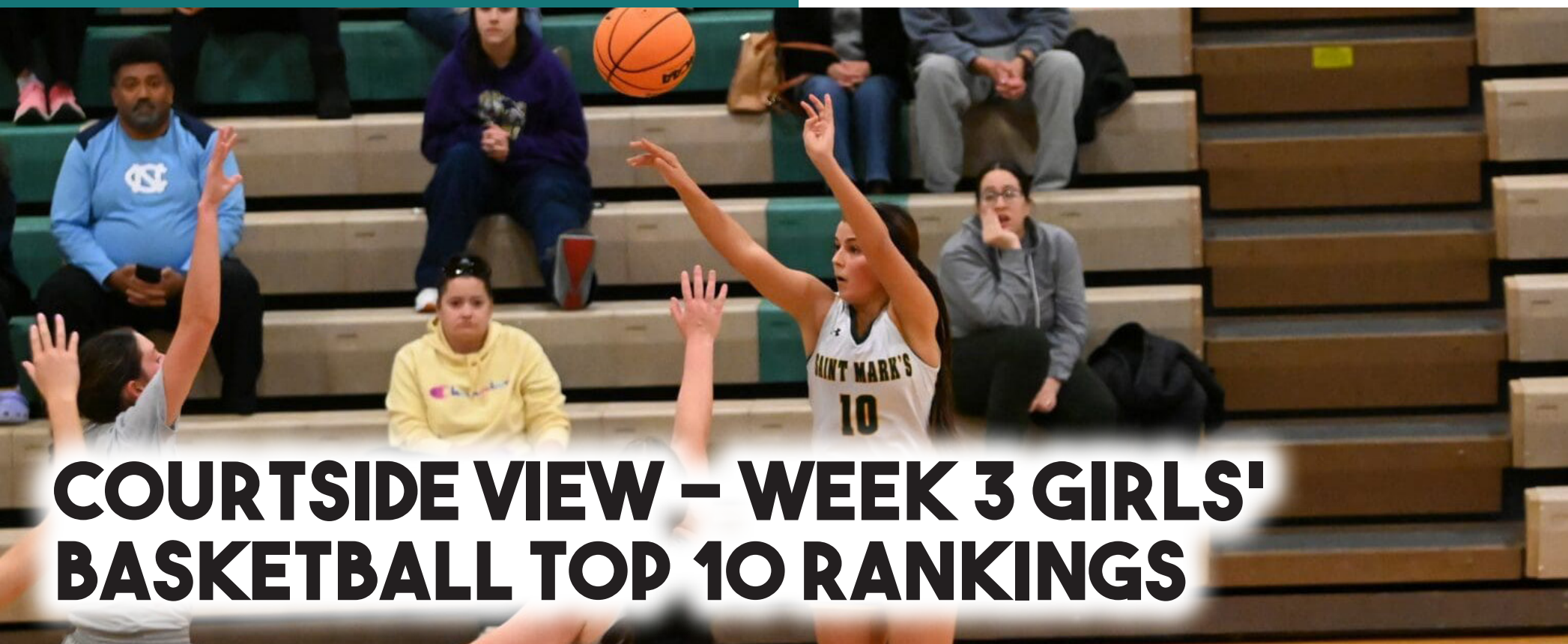
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- URSULINE ACADEMY

pectations for this team are high...we have a way to go for where we plan to be.” His team made a late charge last season, advancing all the way to the state championship game at the Bob Carpenter Center, losing to Salesianum.

The Colonials took a double-digit lead late in the game, but Coach Purse’s Appo Jags played tough to the final buzzer and closed the gap to make it close. Although he scored only two points in the opening half, Ra’lfa nailed three shots beyond the arc and finished with 20 points for the game to lead the Jags. Daniel Harvey chipped in with 13, while Buzby and Dillon Griffith added 10 points each.

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COURTSIDE VIEW – WEEK 3 GIRLS' BASKETBALL TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

The girls' basketball season entered the final week before the Christmas holiday and the holiday tournaments start next week. I am looking forward to seeing how these teams fare in their conference in January.

Ursuline freshmen Jezelle Banks scored a career-high 29 points in their 79-67 win over Bonita Vista High (CA) over the weekend. Banks had a great season last year as an eighth grader and continues to shine in the Raiders first six games this season.

The Conrad Red Wolves are off to a 4-0 start after a pair of wins last week. Junior Eva Walker is averaging 14 points a game to start the season. They faced their toughest test this year when they traveled to Saint Mark's on Dec. 19.

Here is the new top 10 for this week, voted by our DelawareLive Crew.

No. 1 Ursuline (7-1) (LW No. 1) The Raiders, the highest-scoring girls team in the state, went 2-0 at the Diamond State Classic over the holiday. They do not play until Sunday, when they meet Archbishop Carroll (D.C.) in a showcase event in the nation's capital.

No. 2 Caravel (6-1) (LW No. 2) The Bucs picked up two convincing wins at the Diamond State Classic last week. They'll host Tatnall on Thursday evening.

No. 3 Sanford (3-4) (LW No. 3) A visit to the Governor's Challenge resulted in a split for the Warriors. Just one of their first seven games has come against a Delaware foe. That changes this week when undefeated and fifth-ranked Dover travels to Hockessin Saturday.

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COURTSIDE VIEW – WEEK 3 BOYS' BASKETBALL TOP 10 RANKINGS

BY JASON WINCHELL

The boys' basketball season heads into the 2024 portion of its schedule this week as teams start getting into their heavy part of the schedule. Lots of big games on tap the next few weeks of the season.

The Blue Hen Fight A conference opener for both William Penn and Appoquinimink kicks off Thursday night at Appoquinimink. That's a tough opener for both teams as last year they split with each winning on their home court.

St. Elizabeth and Caesar Rodney both won titles at the Viking Invitational last week as Caesar Rodney defeated MOT Charter in the boys two pairing while the Vikings beat Appoquinimink to win the boys' three group.

Sallies and St. Elizabeth meet on Sunday afternoon in a battle of the top two teams in the state. The game will be livestreamed by Delaware Live, but if you are thinking of being in the building I would get your tickets in a hurry as they will sell out fast. I would love to see more Sunday games moving forward.

Here are the new top 10 for this week, voted by our DelawareLive Crew.

No. 1 Sallies (3-4)(LW No. 1) The Sals went 1-2 in the holiday tournaments including a tough 67-60 loss to nationally ranked Dematha (MD). They have two tough road games in a 16-hour span against Malvern Prep (PA) Saturday and No. 2 St. Elizabeth on Sunday.

No. 2 St. Elizabeth (5-0)(LW No. 3) The Vikings won

the Viking boys three bracket over the break. They hosted FSMA on Thursday and host No. 1 Sallies on Sunday afternoon.

No. 3 Dover (4-1)(LW No. 4) The Senators went 2-1 during the holiday week. They hosted Poytech on Thursday and traveled to Sanford on Saturday.

No. 4 Middletown (2-3)(LW No. 2) The Cavs went 0-2 losing to two great teams from Pennsylvania. They were at St. Georges Tech on Friday.

No. 5 Appoquinimink (3-2)(LW No. 8) The Jags lost to No. 1 Sallies and No. 2 St. Elizabeth this season. They hosted William Penn on Thursday on Delaware Live and Concord on Saturday.

No. 6 Sanford (4-2)(LW No. 6) The Warriors went 1-1 during the break last week. They hosted No. 3 Dover on Saturday.

No. 7 William Penn (2-2)(LW No. 5) William Penn went 1-1 in Maryland last week. They traveled to Appoquinimink on Thursday and hosted Tower Hill on Saturday.

No. 8 Howard (5-1)(LW No. 7) The Wildcats went 2-1 in South Carolina over the break. They traveled to Glasgow on Thursday.

No. 9 Odessa (7-0)(LW No. 9) The Ducks enjoyed a nice break over the holidays, but returned to action on Thursday. They travel to Newark for their first conference game.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

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Without these collaborators, this outlet would not be possible:

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Betsy Price, Editor

Sonja M. Frey, Publisher

John Mollura Photography

Design your 2023 through Intentional Business and Marketing Planning

As a locally-owned company, Delaware LIVE News takes pride in working alongside regional businesses to develop digital marketing campaigns, through our daily news platforms.

From large corporations like Christiana Care, Delaware Tech Community College, and Delaware Department of Health to small shops like Fur Baby Pet Resort, Dolce Coffee Shop, and Benvenuto Tuscan Restaurant, we customize each plan to optimize the needs of each of our marketing partners.

I would love the opportunity to meet with you for 10-15 minutes to see how we can help. You can click the link to set up a meeting with me in our virtual office: <https://meetings.hubspot.com/shupe1>

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