



Weekly Review

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February 2, 2025 • Issue 5

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photo by Eileen Tercha



DELAWARE LIVE



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White Clay Creek State Park — find out more!





NAEP scores show increase in math, little change elsewhere

BY JAREK RUTZ

2024 data from what's referred to as the "Nation's Report Card" was released Wednesday, and while there's still critical underperformance, Delaware's making slight improvement in test scores and proficiency rates.

Delaware is nine points below the national average for scores in eighth-grade math and seven points below in eighth-grade reading.

Fourth-grade math scores were four points less than the national average, while that grade's reading scores were five points lower.

The National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP) report shows a national drop in reading, and a slight improvement in fourth-grade math nationally.

ABOUT NAEP TEST

The NAEP is a standardized test given to Americans in fourth, eighth, and 12th grade to measure academic achievement in subjects like math, reading, science, and writing.

It began in 1969, and through the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, it's now administered every other year.

HOW DELAWARE PERFORMED

Delaware saw a significant increase in fourth-grade math scores—and that's where the good news ends.

More Delaware fourth graders scored below basic proficiency than two years ago in reading, and eighth-grade reading scores went down.

According to the report, there was no significant change in any other grade/subject area.

"Delaware's latest NAEP results reinforce what we've known for some time—while we are making some progress, we still have a long way to go in addressing learning loss and improving student outcomes," said Britney Mumford, executive director of [DelawareKidsCAN](#). "Our 4th-grade reading and math scores show signs of recovery, demonstrating the impact of early literacy initiatives and targeted interventions."

However, Mumford said the continued struggles in 8th grade, particularly in math and reading, highlight that Delaware has not done enough to support older students who faced the most significant disruptions during the pandemic.

"The education administrators/bureaucrats are adding to Delaware's education woes by not focusing on ensuring focused quality time on classroom instruction," said Nancy Mercante, president and founder of [Citizens for Delaware Schools](#).

That precious time in the classroom, she said, is impacted by a small number of disruptive students who are kept in the classroom, too many government mandates, continued use of the failed Common Core program, and a slow pace in rolling out the science of reading.

Common Core is a set of academic expectations for English language arts (ELA) and math in grades K–12, and there's plenty of debate on whether they are effective.

The science of reading is a cognitive brain research that shows how students learn to read and has six essential components: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension and oral language.

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Permitting, healthcare costs drive State Chamber's Competitiveness Agenda

BY PETER OSBORNE

The business community is paying close attention to what the General Assembly will do in the current session. Still, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce President Michael Quaranta isn't wholly convinced that legislators are paying attention to what the business community needs.

"If you walked around Legislative Hall and asked the 41 members of the House if they could name the five largest employers in their districts and what they do and what their needs are, I would be shocked if even 10% could answer that question successfully," Quaranta said.

"We need more people to be more directly engaged with our employers and under the challenges that they have," he added. "And I think if we all do that and we do that successfully, we'll come up with really good policy, and we'll have more people succeed.

The State Chamber unveiled its 2025 Delaware Competitiveness Agenda earlier this month, which officials describe as a tool for the current session to guide their advocacy efforts. The 19 priorities are listed below.

It mirrors many of the items proposed by the [Delaware Business Roundtable](#) to strengthen Delaware's

long-term economic competitiveness. And that's not a coincidence, Quaranta says.

At or near the top of the list is a streamlining of Delaware's permitting process, an effort that had its birth in pre-pandemic times at a 2018 Chamber-sponsored Developing Delaware conference. That workshop led to the Roundtable's Ready in Six initiative, which included a number of economic development and builder and contractor organizations.

Both Quaranta and Delaware Business Roundtable Executive Director Bob Perkins remember business leaders hearing a site selector telling a group of business leaders that he and others were site "eliminators" rather than site "selectors," and that Delaware wasn't even in most discussions because it could take up to 24 months for site approvals while companies wanted it to be six months so they could be up and running more quickly.

"We're not suggesting anybody gets sloppy here or that we put public health or safety at risk," Quaranta said. "That's crazy. But other places have figured out how to move this much more efficiently and much quicker...They want to put a shovel in the ground and do their expansion in calendar 2025 and this time next year open the doors and have that new additional facility operational. If it's going to mid-2027, they're going to look elsewhere."

Perkins said, "These bills pull legislators in different directions. Moving forward requires top-down leadership and I'm hoping Gov. Meyer provides that leadership."

Perkins said he liked new Gov. Matt Meyer's fourth executive order to fast-track affordable housing permits, while Quaranta praised Meyer's decision to issue an early executive order on youth apprenticeships.

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Division of the Arts recognizes Individual Artist Fellows

BY PETER OSBORNE

Viet Dinh of Newark, an assistant professor of English at the University of Delaware, has been designated a Master Fellowship

through the Delaware Division of the Arts' Individual Artist Fellows program.

Dinh is joined by 20 other artists from across Delaware who received fellowships—11 in the Established category and nine in the Emerging category.

Dinh was born in Vietnam and grew up in Colorado. He attended Johns Hopkins University and the University of Houston. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Delaware Division of the Arts, and the O. Henry Prize. His debut novel, *After Disasters*, was released in 2016 and recounts the story of four aid workers who travel to India.

“While affirmation is always appreciated, especially for an artist, for me, as a writer who is constantly in my own head, it’s a grateful acknowledgment that my work can have an impact on the worlds that exist outside my own brain—that art has an impact on others and can help shape people’s lives as much as it has shaped my own,” Dinh told Delaware LIVE.

The Division received 191 applications from Delaware

choreographers, composers, musicians, writers, and folk, media, and visual artists. Out-of-state arts professionals reviewed the work samples.

Awards are given in three categories: \$12,000 for the Masters Award, \$8,000 for the Established Professional Award, and \$5,000 for the Emerging Professional Award. Fellows are required to offer at least one exhibit or performance during the upcoming year, providing an opportunity for the public to experience their work.

The Masters Fellowship is open to rotating artistic disciplines each year. For 2025, Masters Fellowship applications were accepted in Literary Arts and Media Arts from artists who had previously received an Established Professional Fellowship. In addition to exemplifying high artistic quality, Masters Fellowship applicants must demonstrate their involvement and commitment to the arts in Delaware and beyond.

“Individual Artist Fellowship grants recognize Delaware artists for their outstanding work and commitment to artistic excellence. Our commitment to Delaware’s individual artists is at the heart of our work, and this year we’re thrilled to expand our support by increasing the funding pool for the Individual Artist Fellowships by 15%,” says Jessica Ball, director of the Delaware Division of the Arts.



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Peggy Griffith and Jamar Lahming win national top librarian honors

BY PETER OSBORNE

Two Delawareans have been chosen from 1,300 nominations nationwide for the I Love My Librarian Award from the American Library Association.

Ferris School Administrative Librarian Peggy Griffith and Wilmington Institute Free Library Executive Director Jamar Rahming were selected for the award, which celebrates librarians who have made a meaningful impact in their communities through exceptional service.

PEGGY GRIFFITH

Griffith is being recognized for her outstanding dedication and commitment to fostering a love of learning and for her outstanding contributions, which include cataloging library materials, updating resources, repurposing old furniture to create a more inviting library space, and developing a library curriculum for Ferris School.

She leads library services for the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF), where she says she focused on transforming lives through access to education, literacy, and personal growth. My work primarily supports youth in secure facilities and the staff who serve them, bridging the gap between opportunity and empowerment.

“I believe libraries are not just repositories of books; they are catalysts for change,” she says in her LinkedIn profile. “They build bridges to opportunity, empathy, and community, and I am passionate about harnessing their power to address systemic barriers and create lasting impact.”

“We are fortunate to have Peggy on our team,” said Steve Yeatman, secretary of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. “Her commitment to ensuring youth have access to books benefits the youth we serve and highlights the important role librarians have in shaping futures.”

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Leaders look ahead at the challenges facing Delaware in 2025

BY PETER OSBORNE

Delaware Live asked 40 Delaware community leaders across political and business spectrums to look ahead at 2025. We got some great answers but were frankly disappointed by the number of responses. Perhaps next year.

In the meantime, please feel free to post your thoughts in the Comments. You can also see what Milford's Jo Schmeiser and Mark Whitfield had to say on this topic [HERE](#).

BRANDON BRICE, Co-Founder of 100 Black Men of Delaware and State Secretary of the Delaware GOP.

Which existing community strength could be better leveraged to improve life in Delaware? Education town halls up and down the State.

What specific development or trend should Delaware residents pay close attention to in 2025? The number of businesses leaving Delaware.

What gives you the most hope for Delaware's future?

More minority conservatives are running for office, and an emphasis on fixing our broken education system.

Which area of Delaware life (e.g., infrastructure, education, business, healthcare, culture) needs the most attention in 2025? Education and small business.

What's one bold prediction you have for Delaware in 2025? My prediction is that you will know by April what kind of Governor we have, and that 2028 will produce a Republican Governor.

KATIE DODGE GILLIS, Executive Officer, Home Builders Association of Delaware

Which area of Delaware life needs the most attention in 2025? Housing. Specifically, the production of housing. The National Association of Home Builders makes the point that regulations account for nearly a quarter of the cost of a home. The ever-growing list of regulatory hurdles slow projects down and cost a considerable amount

of money. But some of this could be offset by increasing density allowances and spreading those costs across multiple units, effectively stabilizing or lowering prices. Density also promotes efficient land use, which helps to reduce urban sprawl and infrastructure costs. It's important to recognize that our state is about 20,000 units short of meeting demand for the most affordable units, but a good portion of Delaware is zoned for single-family housing only. We need to meet the challenge on the demand side by removing barriers to increase production of all types of housing.

NANCY MERCANTE, Founder and President of Citizens for Delaware Schools

Specific trends Delaware residents should pay close attention to in 2025:

Alternative education models that work: Alternative education models in use with inner city urban youth and an analysis of keys to their success. Nativity Prep and Urban Promise are two Christian-based private schools that offer urban, low-income kids the chance to secure a high-quality education and promising future. These schools offer important lessons for public schools that want to achieve better academic outcomes by changing their school climate, increasing direct parental involvement and using volunteers to create a constant presence of a supporting community.

Urban Promise: Wilmington equips urban children and young adults with a Christ-centered education focused on academic achievement, life management, personal growth and servant leadership. Their heart-warming stories of lives changed by a consistent presence of a supporting community of teachers, parents, volunteers and older kids serving as mentors.

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Gov. Meyer signs executive offer to streamline affordable housing

BY JAREK RUTZ

In one of his first days as Delaware’s new governor, **Matt Meyer** signed an executive order Thursday night to fast-track affordable housing permits.

“Housing is a human right, and no Delawarean should be left out in the cold,” Meyer said in a social media post regarding his decision. “With this Executive Order, we take the first step in overhauling and streamlining the permitting process for building workforce and affordable housing across Delaware.”

The order authorizes the creation of a working group to review, provide recommendations, and develop a plan to develop a “one-stop shop” for projects in all three counties to make the process of permits and licenses in state and local governments easier.

This is meant to enhance collaboration, predictability,

public awareness, and efficiency for projects that will increase the stock of affordable housing.

“The initiative has several promising aspects, mainly its focus on reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, improving predictability for developers, and fostering greater collaboration between state and local agencies,” said Charles Copeland, director of the Center for Economic & Fiscal Policy at the Caesar Rodney Institute. “By simplifying the process and enhancing transparency, the order has the potential to encourage investment, accelerate housing development, and ultimately help address the growing demand for affordable housing.”

However, some concerns should be considered, he said. One is that there is no standard definition of “affordable housing.”

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SCAN TO LAUNCH

Discover *arts events* throughout Delaware

Delaware Division of the **Arts**



Jewish Family Services (JFS) program expands mental health access

CONTRIBUTOR

“When you call asking for mental health assistance, the last thing you want to hear is that you can’t be seen right now,” says Wendell Covell, deputy director of programs at Jewish Family Services Delaware.

A shortage of providers has created a national “mental health crisis,” according to a 2023 report by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration. Nationwide, the report found that nearly six in 10 psychologists in private practice do not accept new patients.

Even in private mental health practices that are accepting new patients, Covell says the wait can be 12 weeks or longer.

DETAILS ON MENTAL HEALTH FELLOWS PROGRAM

The JFS Mental Health Fellows program, funded by a \$3.5 million Congressional grant in 2022, has helped

reduce waiting times by putting 20 new mental health professionals into the field while accelerating their track to certification as licensed clinical social workers. The licensing allows therapists to make diagnoses and provide therapy without supervision.

By the time funding ran out in September, nine of the 20 fellows had received their licensure, and the group had provided therapy to more than 1,300 individuals, according to Becca McAdams, JFS Delaware’s clinical supervisor for community-based programs.

Much of that therapy was directed toward individuals in high-need groups through 30 community partnerships and provided at no cost to the clients.

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DIAA partners with Mile Split for HS track and field and cross country

CONTRIBUTOR

The Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) has partnered with MileSplit, a division of FloSports, where MileSplit will serve as the exclusive provider of online registration and live results for all DIAA events.

As part of this partnership, DIAA will use MileSplit's powerful meet management tools to standardize the registration process and provide real-time results for all championship events. Additionally, MileSplit's comprehensive ranking system will play a pivotal role in determining state qualifiers, ensuring a fair and transparent pathway to the postseason. To maintain consistency and accuracy, all official meet results must be submitted to MileSplit, further strengthening the integrity of Delaware's track and field and cross-country competitions. **DL+**



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Survey says: The Good, the Bad, and the Party Conversation

BY PETER OSBORNE



My inbox is regularly filled with the “results of surveys” that rank states against each other. It’s fair to say that less than 5% of

these deserve a story on their own...and none deserve the constant follow-ups. Add to that, many of them have absolutely NOTHING to do with the state of Delaware. None of us care about a ranking of something in New Mexico or Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Nevertheless, I thought it would be fun to dump 25 of these into one post and see how we’re doing and give you something to discuss at parties. This is for “entertainment” purposes only; I can’t confirm how accurate this data is and whether it’s being provided by someone with a business or political agenda.

THE GOOD

Safest State for Valentine’s Day Travel: 1st Personal injury experts at John Foy & Associates analyzed data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System over five years from 2018 to 2022 and found that on the seven days surrounding Feb. 14, we had ZERO crashes resulting in fatalities.

Quickest EMS Response Times: 5th Personal injury lawyers at Omega Law Group collected EMS response

times data for accidents resulting in at least one death across every state from 2018 to 2022 (which seems a bit of a strange filter) and found that Delaware has the fastest average response time of 7.26 minutes.

Mental Health Care Growth: 23rd A study by Mission Connection analyzed five years of County Health Rankings **data** to see which states and counties have seen the most significant growth or reduction in the number of mental health care providers, shedding light on regions where access has improved or worsened. At a state level, Delaware has been one of the top-performing states. Over five years, the number of mental health-care providers increased from 2,536 to 3,301—a 30% increase.

Mobile Banking Engagement: 8th A software development company I’ve never heard of analyzed nationwide Google search volume over the past 12 months for various mobile banking-related keywords. Delaware finished 8th with an average of 5,344 per 100,000 residents. Florida finished first with 7,983 searches per 10,000.

Pothole Problems: 47th Philadelphia-based personal injury law firm KaplunMarx analyzed Google Trends data from the past five years, examining the search interest for terms like “pothole repair” and “pothole damage.” For the record, Washington State ranks first.

Access to Healthcare Professionals: 5th Provider credentialing site Assured studied Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in each state and compared them to the local population. The number of HPSAs was calculated per 100,000 residents and the states were ranked from the lowest shortages to the highest. Delaware and Pennsylvania tied for fifth with 1.01 HPSAs per 100,000 residents (10 for us).

Business Starts: 2nd Delaware had the second-highest number of business applications per 100,000 people, at 5,489, which is 224% higher than the U.S. average, according to Skyline Social. We had a total of 56,639 business applications between in the state from October 2023 to September 2024, trailing only Wyoming. September reported the most, with 5,060 business applications, while April was the least popular month, with 4,391 business applications.

Small Business Growth Rate: 2nd OnDeck says we had the second highest small business growth rate in the United States, with a 5.55 percentage increase according to Census data from 2020-2021. Dover had the third highest small business growth rate among small metro rates at 9.06 percent, and Kent County performed best in Delaware at that same 9.06 percent rate.

That said...

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Wilmington Charter to rep 1st State in Samsung STEM competition

BY JAREK RUTZ

WILMINGTON — The **Charter School of Wilmington** will represent the First State as one of 50 schools in the country to compete in the 15th annual **Samsung Solve for Tomorrow** national STEM competition.

With this achievement, the charter, located on North Dupont Road, earns a \$12,000 Samsung technology prize package, including a Samsung Video Kit to showcase their proposed STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) solution.

The Wilmington charter is developing a solution to alleviate the state's medical crisis where there's a shortage of physicians.

The team is working to develop a hydrogel bandage to aid overworked doctors and nurses to help tackle a variety of injuries, which will save resources. Samsung Solve for Tomorrow is a national competition designed to empower students in grades six through 12 to unleash the power of STEM to create innovative solutions addressing critical issues in their local communities.

The competition puts students in active, hands-on learning that can be applied to real-world problems, making STEM more tangible and showcasing its value both in and outside of the classroom.

Multiple attempts to reach the school for comment Tuesday and Wednesday were unsuccessful.

PRAISE FOR CHARTER SCHOOL OF WILMINGTON

"We are thrilled and incredibly proud, though not surprised, that a team of exceptional students from the Charter School of Wilmington has been selected to represent Delaware in the prestigious Samsung Solve for Tomorrow STEM Competition," said Kendall Massett, executive director of the Delaware Charter Schools Network.

This achievement, she said, showcases what charter schools are all about—fostering individualized learning based on students' passions and interests.

[READ MORE](#)



An aerial map of Newark Charter School grounds is shown on the left, with a green area indicating the proposed fields. To the right is a photograph of a sign for Folk Memorial Park, which also features the Newark Delaware Parks and Recreation logo.

Newark council foregoes talk of Newark Charter's ask to build fields in city park

BY JAREK RUTZ

A potential partnership between **Newark Charter School** and **Folk Memorial Park** was taken off Monday night's Newark City Council meeting agenda.

Newark Mayor Jerry Clifton decided to pull the discussion "in response to the valuable input from the community," which includes concerns among several residents.

Concerns include PA systems, lighting installments, and clearing more than five acres of trees, according to Tom Coleman, city manager of Newark.

NEWARK CHARTER'S PROPOSAL

Newark Charter School asked the city this past November to construct a baseball and softball field in a city park to address the lack of suitable land near its campus for expanding their athletic programs.

The charter initially proposed the fields be constructed at Iron Glen Park, but that was determined to be unsuitable.

Folk Memorial Park was identified as a viable alternative to the fields.

The school wants a long-term agreement, similar to the arrangement between **Salesianum School** and the City of Wilmington for Abessinio Stadium.

"I know there's been some concerns that charter schools get special treatment, and I'll just push back on that and say that if Newark High School (Christina School District) reached out to us, we would have followed the same path, so it's not special for the charter school, it's just how we handle how we do things," Coleman said.

In the proposal, Newark Charter would fund all construction costs, estimated at \$3 million or more, which includes a small storage facility and the two ballfields, each of which will have seating (100-150 per field), dugouts, scoreboards, a public announcement system, fencing, and protective netting.

The fields would be built on a wooded area next to Folk Memorial Park on Welsh Tract Road, and the city does not recommend the school include lights in its final plans.

Newark Charter would be responsible for the maintenance of the fields and the city would be tasked with upkeeping the surrounding parkland, as it is now.

The school would pay to construct an extension of the existing walking trail around the newly expanded park perimeter, and it will also pay for and construct an expansion of the existing parking lot.

Coleman pointed out that the agendas are posted a week ahead of time publicly with the intent being to get engagement.

"No one was trying to sneak anything through, but that's not how the narrative was picked up," he said.

Clifton said he appreciates the community feedback.

"After hearing from our neighbors, both in favor and against the project, the council recognizes the importance of further understanding the issues and ensuring that all points of view are considered before any decisions are made," he said. "This approach will lead to a more informed recommendation."

The city would have access to the park and other Newark Charter facilities for public activities for 30 hours every month if the proposal passes.

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BRYSON LANE
25 POINTS / 5 3's
PREMIER PT
PLAYER OF THE WEEK



Howard's Bryson Lane wins Player of the Week

BY NICK HALLIDAY

The Premier PT Player of the Week is Howard's Bryson Lane, who scored 25 Points with five three's in a win over A.I. duPont.

Nominees for this week's award were Gabriel Park (Newark Charter), Sincere Miller (Brandywine), Latrell Wright (Salesianum), Aizyon Matthews (Seaford), Eva Walker (Conrad), Tatiyanna Davis (Caesar Rodney), Kai Burnette (Smyrna), Ha'Lena Griffin (Howard), and Malachi Stratton (Sussex Central).

Premier (PT) Physical Therapy is the official weekly sponsor of our Player of the Week award for the 2024-25 sports season. Please reach out to Premier for any of your physical therapy needs and support them as they support high school athletics. **DL+**



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Sanford beats Howard in OT

BY NICK HALLIDAY

WILMINGTON — Howard honored its late coach Joe Hussey, who passed away earlier this month, bringing in the 1985 state championship team he coached.

An inspired No. 5 Wildcats team held an early lead over top-ranked Sanford, but couldn't hold on after halftime, falling 62-54 in overtime.

The Wildcats took a 32-26 lead into the half, where we caught up with Howard alum Stan Waterman, who coached Sanford for 29 years and now leads the Delaware State University program.

"There is so much going on today as they recognize and acknowledge coach Hussey and his legacy and what he has meant to Howard High School and this basketball program," said Waterman, who played at Howard under Coach Hussey. "It's exciting to be here to watch my alma mater where I played and to have them playing against the team I coached. So I am going to win anyway."

The Wildcats took their largest lead in the third quarter at 15, going up 41-26 with 3:30 left in the quarter, but the Warriors pulled to within 10 points by the end of the third quarter before completing a 36-13 run then led to a tie game at the end of regulation and forced overtime.

Sanford Center Jayden Taylor started the fourth quarter run, saying "I just knew I had to be the aggressive player that I am. I just knew once I got to the basket and finished around the rim, we were gonna win this game."

Sanford guard Khareem Hart said after the game, "We got steals and we got what we wanted on the offense and made buckets and we came away with the win."

Taylor led the Warriors 22 points, while Hart added 15 points in the victory. Howard was led by Nicholas Baysah, who scored 21 points in the loss.

Sanford (12-2) will play Salesianum at 8 p.m. Saturday night at the Chase Fieldhouse before hitting the road Tuesday and Thursday against St. Andrew and Middletown. Howard (11-3) will continue its five-game homestand next week with a Tuesday game against Salesianum followed by games against McKean on Thursday and William Penn on Saturday. **DL+**



Ryan Wiegand leads Lady Quakers to easy win

BY NICK HALLIDAY

WILMINGTON — Team defense and hot shooting from Ryan Wiegand sparked the visiting Wilmington Friends Lady Quakers over Saint Mark's 46-34.

After the game, Wiegand said team defense was a point of emphasis in the practices leading up to the game.

"We have been bringing in groups of senior boys and we play against them, so it's been really helpful," she said.

Saint Mark's scored 17 points in the first quarter, but the Quakers held them to 17 in the next three quarters combined, allowing three points in the second quarter, nine in the third quarter, and five in the fourth.

Anytime the Lady Quakers needed a score, they looked to Weigand, who led all scorers with 20 points. She was 5-for-8 from the free-throw line and connected on three 3-pointers. Her teammate Gianna Cottone also scored in double figures, putting up nine of her 15 points from the free throw line. The two combined for 35 of the 46 points scored by Friends in the game. **DL+**

MILFORD LIVE



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Check out Mispillion Art League's Judged Show through March 29

BY JAREK RUTZ

MILFORD – The **Mispillion Art League's** 22nd Annual Judged Show is now open through Saturday, March 29 at 5 North Walnut Street.

The display features artwork in various materials and styles by league members, and patrons can check out the show for free.

“While the goal in hosting our shows is to welcome artists of all skill levels to exhibit, our annual Judged Show is particularly intriguing because of the awards given,” said Molly Honey King, a marketing chair for the art league.

She said that the incentive of awards attracts talent from across the region, many of whom create their most impressive pieces for a shot at a ribbon.

This year, Michael Fleishman earned the Best in Show award with his mixed media piece, “Many are Cold but Few are Frozen.”

He uniquely works with cardboard as his primary medium, which has led him to the recycling bins to create some of his best pieces.

Household recycling like egg crates, moving containers, cereal boxes, and pizza rounds are the basis of Fleishman's latest work, as he layers plenty of small geometric pieces of cardboard as a canvas on which to draw and paint.

His winning piece is topped with an intricate sprawl of miniature images like quirky characters, wonky architectural elements, and zany mechanical illustrations.

“The Best in Show winner, Michael Fleishman, exhibits this in many of his art pieces utilizing recycled materials and his uninhibited creativity,” said Eric Wahl, president of the Mispillion Art League.

He said the public should visit to see this masterpiece, as well as the group members' acrylics, oils, pottery, basketry, collage, and more.

More awards have been given and categorized by medium.

see page 21



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from page 20

DEB HANSEN JUDGED THE EXHIBIT

Exhibit Judge Deb Hansen retired in 2020 as an Education Associate for Visual & Performing Arts and Gifted Programs at the [Delaware Department of Education](#).

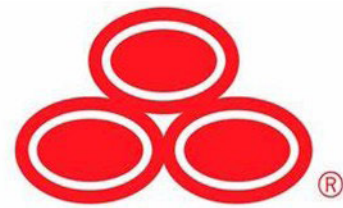
A graduate of the [University of Delaware](#) with a bachelor of fine arts in printmaking, Hansen taught visual arts for 12 years before moving into administration in 2000.

In 2008, Hansen became president of the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education and in 2020, Deb was honored to receive the Peggy Amsterdam Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts by the [Delaware State Arts Council](#).

She is a member of the boards of the [Delaware Arts Alliance](#) and the [Biggs Museum of American Art](#), and she lives in Lewes, where she is reviving her printmaking and textile studio.

Visit the exhibit on Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“It’s a fun bit of competition that gives a spotlight to a group of local artists,” Honey King said. **DL+**



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ASPIRA Academy: First Spanish immersion school to open in Sussex County in Fall '26

BY JAREK RUTZ

GEORGETOWN — Sussex County will have its very first Spanish immersion school as Las Américas ASPIRA Academy will open its third location in September 2026.

“It’s definitely an honor to be able to create the school in Sussex,” said Margie López Waite, co-founder and CEO of the charter school. “The community approached us with this opportunity and have expressed to us and all of our interactions with the public and with the community as a whole indicated this is something that they’ve wanted for a long time.”

Las Américas ASPIRA Academy opened its doors in August 2011 with just over 300 students in grades K-5, and it now serves over 1,400 students in grades K-12 across two campuses in Newark, about 15 minutes apart.

In ASPIRA’s immersion model, students learn in English or Spanish for the entire day, depending if it’s an “A Day” or “B Day.” Another popular immersion model is splitting a single day into two languages.

About 75% of ASPIRA’s students are Hispanic or Latino, according to Delaware State Report Card data. 35% of students are English learners.

“The community is very excited about having their children not only continue to get assimilate to their life here in the United States, but they like the idea that their children will be able to maintain their first language as they’re acquiring English, and also be able to continue to maintain their traditions and their culture,” López Waite said.

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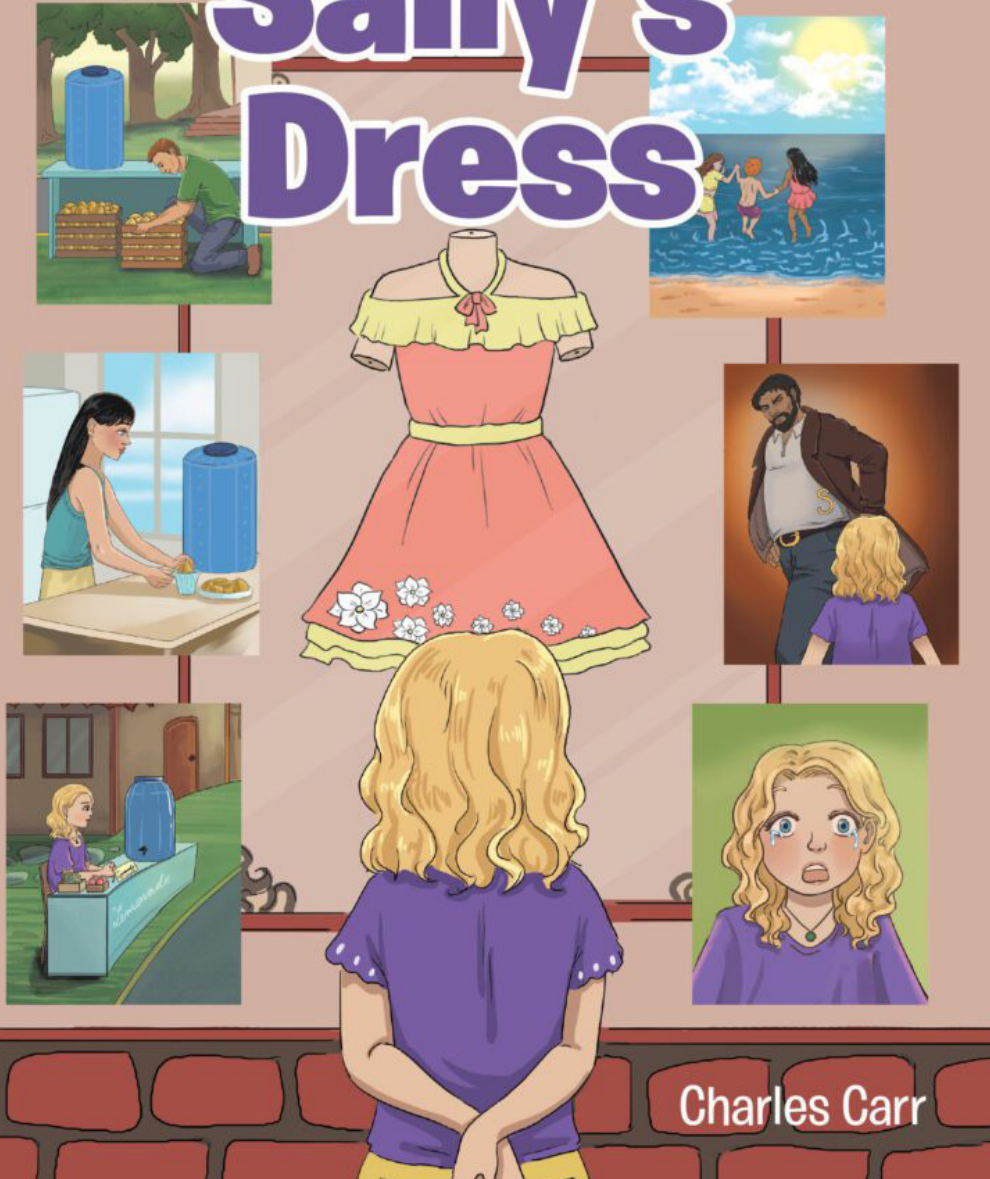
Volunteer and PT-Paid opportunities to serve with the Community English as a Second Language (ESL) Program are available immediately.

Classes in Rehoboth, Lewes, Milford, Seaford

If interested, please send your resume or letter of interest to

esl@lcosrehoboth.org

Sally's Dress



Millsboro author writes children's book on threats of socialism

BY JAREK RUTZ

MILLSBORO — Author Charles Carr believes his new book is possibly the most important book a pre-teen could read.

“Sally’s Dress,” released last year, is a heartfelt and educational story that explores the challenges of fairness and personal responsibility.

Carr, a Millsboro resident, wrote the book to create a child-friendly method for parents to steer their young ones away from socialism.

“Over the years, I started seeing more and more of these kids coming out of college, they’re walking around with banners, red banners, the Soviet Union color, and praising democratic socialism and wanting to do down with capitalism,” he said.

In the book, after many hours of hard work selling lemonade, eight-year-old Sally finally has enough money to buy a new dress for her first day at school, but “the evil, socialist mayor confiscates half of her money to redistribute as he sees fit.”

“These kids all come out of college thinking capitalism is evil and it sucks and it’s unfair, and they think socialism is great,” Carr said.

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Hearing board denies B&B

BY RICH SCHWARTZMAN

The Chadds Ford Township Zoning Hearing Board Tuesday denied a request for a variance from the requirement that the owner of a bed and breakfast live on the property. The vote to deny was 3-0.

At issue was the 40-plus acre property at 1465 Smithbridge Road owned by Smithbridge Partners, L.P. with William D. Gardner as principal. Opposing the request were Kirsten Werner and Jared Leonard who live across the street at 1460 Smithbridge, about 576 feet away from 1465, according to testimony during the hearing in December.

“We are so grateful to the Chadds Ford Township Zoning Hearing Board for their service and for this unanimous decision,” said Leonard in an email after the decision.

He added that he and Werner have spent almost every weekend for two years listening to parties at the property, which he characterizes as an Airbnb.

Paul Padien, the attorney representing the applicant, disagreed with that characterization. He was specifically asked after the hearing concluded if the home had been operated as an Airbnb.

“There is no Airbnb statute used in the township,” Padien said. “So, essentially what they’re doing is they own these 490 acres [approximately] and they’re spending a fortune to protect and preserve it and they restored this 179-year-old property that was collapsing upon itself. They restored it to its glory, and we think this is an appropriate use for it. The neighbors disagree.”



He said the Gardeners use this as a short-term rental property unaware that the township had a provision that would have required permitting.

The property would not be owner-occupied, but with a property management team monitoring the site.

“It’s not an inn. It was rented to a single-renter unit, like a family. It’s a single-family dwelling and they were renting out to single users.”

However, in a letter to ZHB solicitor Don Petrosa, Padien said Smithbridge Partners, L.P. has demonstrated “a robust property management system...which includes cameras and sound recording capability. That system, he said, has an alarm set at a decibel level lower than the maximum level established in the township code, and members of the management team are on call 24/7 to monitor and tend to the property. He also said in the letter that his client has not received a single complaint from the Leonards or anyone else since July 21, 2023.

The house is not being used currently, according to an email from Padien.

Jared Leonard testified in December that he and his wife had complained several times during the spring of 2023.

Padien added that he didn’t yet know if the client would appeal the decision since his client was not present when the decision was announced.

During testimony in the December session, there was talk about parking spaces, the number of bedrooms, and a loading area, but the decision to approve or deny the variance came down to one thing, whether the applicant proved there would be a hardship if the variance was not granted. According to ZHB Chairman Bob Rardon, the applicant failed in that.

[READ MORE](#)



BY RICH SCHWARTZMAN

In “Game of Thrones,” viewers became aware of the phrase “Winter is coming.” In Kennett Square, though, people know Winterfest is coming. And this year teetotalers can attend with a smaller admission cost.

The 2025 Winterfest, put on by Kennett Collective, is now in its 13th year and is set for 12:30-4 p.m. on Feb. 22 at 600 S. Broad Street in Kennett Square.

New for this year is a two-tier admission. Those who want unlimited tastings from more than 60 breweries will pay a \$60 admission while those who go non-alcohol have a \$20 admission. The “mocktails” will be provided

by Chatham Financial, the designated driver sponsor, a press release said.

Also on tap for the event will be a broad range of craft beers from the tri-state region with local Kennett breweries such as Braeloch Brewing and Victory Brewing Company.

In addition, there will be live music with performances by All the Living and the Dead, and It’s About the People, plus about nine food vendors.

Event coordinator Mary Lou Baily said, “Winterfest is about creating memories, welcoming everyone, and

having fun together.”

According to Alex Rush of Kennett Collective, there’s no make-up date if the weather is bad.

“The event is rain, or shine. We do have a heated tent/coverings for unfavorable weather conditions,” he said in a brief email exchange.

He added that the ticket sales fund numerous events in the borough including the farmers market, Memorial Day Parade, Summerfest, the Mushroom Festival, and more. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <https://www.kennettbrewfest.com>. **DL+**



Photo of the Week: Rock Gobbler

BY RICH SCHWARTZMAN

A giant mouth, a fossil, from the long-extinct Rock Gobbler species, is found along the banks of the Brandywine.



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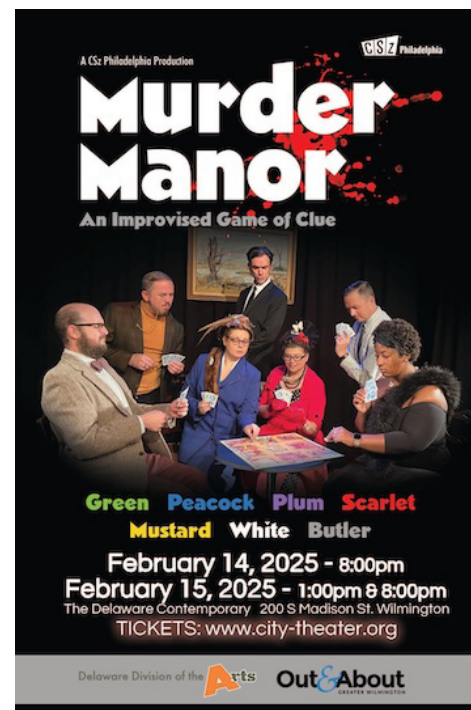
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Around Town Jan. 30

BY CHADDS FORD LIVE

• Chenoa Manor, an animal sanctuary in Avondale, is holding a fundraiser in Kennett Square from 6-8:30 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 8 at Lieu Antiques + Interiors. The event includes a musical performance by operatic “standout soloist” Gina Perregrino. All donations and proceeds from this event go towards supporting our sanctuary and learning center. As a 100 percent volunteer non-profit, Chenoa relies on community support to continue caring for more than 250 animals with nowhere else to turn, as well as providing education and empowerment opportunities to youth in need. Tickets are \$150 and are available [HERE](#).

• An improvised murder mystery, Murder Manor, is coming to City Theater Company in Wilmington on Feb. 14 and 15 with two 8 p.m. shows and a 1 p.m. matinee



on that Saturday. The show is inspired by the game Clue. A cast of suspects and victims brought to life in a completely improvised, hilarious show by performers from CSz Philadelphia, home of ComedySportz—Philly’s longest-running comedy sensation. Get tickets [HERE](#).

• The Brandywine Museum of Art has two new exhibits coming up next month. As previously mentioned, the photo exhibit Robert Frank and Todd Webb: Across America, 1955 opens on Feb. 9 but another exhibit, Tell Me a Story Where the Bad Girl Wins: The Life & Art of Barbara Shermund opens on Feb. 15. The exhibit spotlights the career of cartoonist Barbara Shermund, who is referred to as a master of gag cartooning and one of the first women cartoonists to work for *The New Yorker* magazine. The exhibit runs through June 1.

• The annual Chads Ford Elementary School Art Show and Sale is returning for the 76th time. The date for the one-day event is Saturday, March 15, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. More than 60 artists are expected to have their works on display.

• The Rachel Kohl Library will be hosting two children’s programs For the Love of Birds on Friday, Feb. 14.

Boost Your Business: Are you visible?

BY MARIA NOVAK DUGAN

When was the last time you searched for your business online and analyzed what you found?

Conducting an online visibility audit for your business is the first step in developing a strategy to help prospects find you. Search for your business as if you were a potential client looking to buy a product or service. Then experience the first impression others get when they click on one of your links.

Since first impressions matter both online and offline, having this important information can help shape your digital marketing strategy. Otherwise, if you don't know how others see your business in the search results, you are marketing your business blindfolded.

All businesses should develop an extensive digital footprint as part of their online marketing activities. The bigger the footprint, the more likely your business can be found when someone is searching. If your business isn't visible in the search engine results, you lose a potential sales opportunity.

WHAT IS A VISIBILITY AUDIT?

A visibility audit is an exercise that helps you determine how your business is viewed when someone searches for your products and services. It answers questions such as:

- Can your business be found when someone searches?
- Is your brand consistent across all your online properties?
- How does your business compare to your competition?

- What is your reputation among your customers?
- Is your content resonating with your target audience?
- Is it easy to find and contact you?

This evaluation will help you pinpoint areas that need attention. You will be able to develop a better marketing plan that focuses on the right things to attract your ideal customer.

- A visibility audit should include these 7 items:
- Keyword analysis and research
- Website search engine visibility
- Website structure and performance analysis
- Content review, organization and optimization
- Social media analysis
- Reputation management
- Competitive understanding

Step 1: Keyword Analysis and Research

For your top keyword phrases, where do you rank if at all?

It is important to know what keyword phrases people use to find your business. Keyword research sets the stage for your content, your social media profiles, your directory listings and all your marketing activities.

One place to start is Google Search Console. Google Search Console is a free service offered by Google that helps you monitor and maintain your site's presence in Google search results.

Partner with us to create your successful 2025 Marketing Plan!

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.

We would love the opportunity to meet with you for 10-15 minutes to see how we can help.

Please reach out to George Rotsch at 302-354-5730 or george@delawarelive.com.

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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 Bayhealth, ChristianaCare, and Discover Bank to organizations like the Delaware Division of Small Business, Hagley Museum and Library, and Goldey-Beacom College, we customize each plan to optimize the needs of our marketing partners.

We would love the opportunity to meet with you for 10-15 minutes to see how we can help.

Please reach out to George Rotsch at 302-354-5730 or george@delawarelive.com.