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SANTA ARRIVES IN MILFORD



BENVENUTO TO HOLD TOY DRIVE



WRESTLING SEASON COMING

NOV. 30, 2021 · VOL. XI · ISSUE 47

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HEADLINES



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SANTA ARRIVES IN DOWNTOWN MILFORD

BY TERRY ROGERS

Children lined up in front of the Santa House in downtown Milford on Saturday, Nov. 27, as Santa arrived in style. Forgoing the usual ride on a Carlisle Fire Company truck, Santa pulled up in front of his Milford home in a sidecar, waving at the children as he arrived.

COVID-19 safety protocols are in place at the Santa House this year. Children are able to walk up to the house and speak to Santa through a plexiglass partition. They can also leave letters for Santa at the house. Several elves are on hand to assist children as they visit with Santa. Families are welcome to take photos of their child standing next to Santa.

Santa will be in his house every Saturday from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. His last day taking wishes will be Dec. 18.



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ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY HELD IN MILFORD

BY TERRY ROGERS

The holiday season was officially kicked off in Milford on Saturday, Nov. 27, with the Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony in front of City Hall. The event was not held in 2020 due to the pandemic.



The ceremony began with the Milford Central Academy Chorus singing Christmas carols. Those who attended the ceremony were handed sheets to sing along as the choir led them through songs like “Frosty the Snowman,” “Jingle Bells” and more.

Around 5 p.m., Santa arrived in a sidecar, joining one of his elves who arrived earlier to entertain the crowd.

“Mayor Archie Campbell was unable to attend tonight as he is out of town,” Vice Mayor Jason James said. “We are very excited to celebrate this evening with this ceremony, which kicks off the holiday season in Milford.”

After Councilman James addressed the crowd, Santa and his elf flipped the switch in front of City Hall, lighting the trees and other decorations around the building.



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CULTURE



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DECEMBER MILFORD CONVERSATION WILL DISCUSS CIVILITY PROJECT

BY TERRY ROGERS

The next meeting of the Milford Conversations group will take place on Thursday, Dec. 2, from 8:30-9:30 a.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, located at 101 S. Walnut Street. Please enter through the back door on Pearl Street, come through the kitchen and take the second door on the right into the Fellowship Hall.

Our speaker will be Darel Le Prade, publisher of the *Delaware State News*. He will share information about the new Civility Project spearheaded by his organization. Quoting managing editor Andy West:

“Free speech with civility has been essential to our mission for years and we know how important it is to a

healthy Democracy. We will welcome advocates who will embrace our **Civility Checklist** and adopt our **pledge** and encourage others to do the same.”

Milford Conversation offers an opportunity for businesses and organizations to discuss issues and to work together to form solutions in an effort to create a better Milford. For more information or to become a presenter at a future Milford Conversation, contact Pastor Dianne Demming at her office at 302-422-5701 or her cell at 302-381-6620.



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READY FOR SOME HOLIDAY LIGHTS? TRY THESE.

BY KEN MAMMARELLA

Christmas lights this year promise a bright future, after so much was dimmed by the pandemic. Here are some crowd-pleasing places to enjoy holiday lights in Delaware.

The Brower family has a [Facebook](#) page and a #BrowerFamilyLights hashtag for their display. “Tune to 97.9FM to hear our music from the warmth of your car!” they suggest. 2115 Exton Drive, Brandywine Hundred, off Grubb Road.

A drive-through light display returns Dec. 11 for an open house at Glasgow Regional Park, off U.S. Route 40, according to a representative from New Castle County. Patrons may also park and walk through the light.

New Castle County also will present Winter Nights at Rockwood Park & Museum with holiday lights surrounded the mansion there. Guests may stroll through the lights before seeing the mansion on Dec. 10, 11, 17 and 18 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. All free.

[Lewes Lights](#) for the second year is highlighting individual displays throughout Delaware’s oldest municipality. Maps can be downloaded online and houses are marked with numbers. It officially opens Dec. 3. One of our elves reports that the waterfront displays are spectacular.

Lights for a Cure, a display at 37 Pine Valley Road, Middletown, has for several years supported charitable work and is timed to music, according to its [Facebook](#) page.

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So, I spent some time at a Food Bank today, and spoke to the people getting food. Here are some things I learned from those in need:

1. Everyone donates Kraft Mac and Cheese in the box. They can rarely use it because it needs milk and butter which is hard to get from regular food banks.
2. Boxed milk is a treasure, as kids need it for cereal which they also get a lot of.
3. Everyone donates pasta sauce and spaghetti noodles.
4. They cannot eat all the awesome canned veggies and soup unless you put a can opener in too or buy pop tops.
5. Oil is a luxury but needed for Rice a-Roni which they also get a lot of.
6. Spices or salt and pepper would be a real Christmas gift.
7. Tea bags and coffee make them feel like you care.
8. Sugar and flour are treats.
9. They fawn over fresh produce donated by farmers and grocery stores.
10. Seeds are cool in Spring and Summer because growing can be easy for some.
11. They rarely get fresh meat.
12. Tuna and crackers make a good lunch.
13. Hamburger Helper goes nowhere without ground beef.
14. They get lots of peanut butter and jelly but usually not sandwich bread.
15. Butter or margarine is nice too.
16. Eggs are a real commodity.
17. Cake mix and frosting makes it possible to make a child's birthday cake.
18. Dishwashing detergent is very expensive and is always appreciated.
19. Feminine hygiene products are a luxury and women will cry over that.
20. Everyone loves Stove Top Stuffing.

In all the years I have donated food at the Holidays, I bought what I thought they wanted, but have never asked. I am glad I did. If you are helping a Family this Christmas, maybe this can help you tailor it more. It does for me!

BY BETSY PRICE

A post that's been appearing regularly on social media admonishing people to change the way they donate to food banks has valid points, but may apply mostly to small food pantries rather than large food banks.

The post, which appears under many different names but is often dated Nov. 19, offers 20 tips it says were gathered from food bank customers the writer personally talked to. Among them:

- Don't donate Kraft macaroni and cheese because it requires milk and butter, which is hard to get from "regular food banks."

IT'S VALID: FACT CHECKING THAT SOCIAL MEDIA FOOD BANK POST

- Oil and spices are rarely donated and would be appreciated.
- People picking up food can't use canned goods unless someone also donates a can opener.
- Feminine hygiene products and dishwashing detergents are items that people want and need.

"The list is valid," said Kim Turner, spokeswoman for the Food Bank of Delaware. "We do try to fill in some of the gaps but I think a very small food pantry that might not have the buying power that a food bank has."

The Food Bank relies on cash donations as well as food from individuals, corporations, food industry companies and the federal government.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, for example, started providing boxes of fresh produce as the COVID-19 pandemic began and that still continues. The Food Bank also buys additional fresh produce boxes because they are so popular.

The cash that's donated allows the Food Bank to bulk purchase items at discounts, she said.

The Food Bank provides so much milk and butter that one person who attends their monthly drive-thru pantries sent a note saying they didn't need as much butter.

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THANK YOU!

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ADOPTIONS REMAIN HIGH AT DELAWARE'S ANIMAL SHELTERS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

During pandemic-era shutdowns, many Delawareans sought to assuage their cabin fever-induced loneliness with a furry friend.

Pet adoptions reached an all-time high across many of the state's animal welfare agencies, yet a dark cloud loomed over the inarguably good times for pet adoptions.

Many experts predicted that when life returned to normal, folks who altruistically adopted pets would have an “oh darn moment,” realizing that the demands of reacclimating into a human-centric society would mean that their four-legged companions may not get the attention to which they were once privy.

But according to two of the state's most prominent pounds, that prediction has failed to manifest.

“We haven't seen any increase in returns,” said Linda Torelli, chief marketing officer at Brandywine Valley SPCA. “One thing we have been doing throughout adoptions—and it's really something we do all the time, but we've emphasized it a little bit more for folks who are working from home and planning to go back—is really preparing for that transition time.”

Strawberry's lifelong companion passed away earlier this year. She now awaits adoption at BVSPCA's Georgetown location.

Torelli said the staff at Brandywine Valley SPCA have been talking with adopters about issues like separation anxiety, specifically for dogs who may have grown accustomed to constant companionship.

“They're not going to be used to that routine when you go back into the office,” she said. “So we spend time talking with people about crate training, getting them used to the routine before you're going back to work, and also doing small things like getting the pet used to you leaving the house by jingling the keys or going out for a short period of time and making sure they're okay.”

Torelli believes that pre-adoption emphasis on preparation has paid off, hence the low return numbers.

The staff at the Delaware SPCA were keenly aware of the predictions relating to adoption returns, but director of philanthropy Kate Callihan said that fortunately, the opposite has panned out.

“Obviously none of us have ever lived through a period like this before,” Callihan said. “So it's something that we in animal welfare have been interested in—in kind of finding out whether those predictions of people returning their animals when they went back to work would be correct.”

In fact, Callihan said, adoption numbers remain “way up” even as adopters return to work.

The Delaware SPCA has adopted out more animals this year than in many previous years, she said, and the organization isn't seeing any increase in animal surrenders.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BUSINESS



PHOTO CREDIT: ANN LEBENGOOD

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BENVENUTO TO HOLD MPD TOY DRIVE

BY TERRY ROGERS

For 15 years, Poncho and Lisa Johnson, owners of Benvenuto Restaurant, have held a toy drive in partnership with Milford Police Department. The event began when their son, Colby, was only five years old.

“We had people bring a wrapped gift to our house,” Mrs. Johnson said. “We would then take wagon rides, escorted by the police, to the police station to deliver the gifts. Everyone would come back here where people had donated pizza for everyone to enjoy. It grew so big, we ended up getting school buses to carry people to the police station. We had more than 100 people here. Santa would show up, we would have hot chocolate and roast marshmallows.”

Mrs. Johnson explained that, over the years, Colby and his friends outgrew the wagon rides. The Johnsons began to realize they were getting just as many gifts, but fewer people were showing up for the wagon rides. Four years ago, they decided to hold a brunch at their home in conjunction with the toy drive and turned over the management of the drive to Take My Hand Ministries.

“Even before we were open, we held the brunch at the restaurant,” Mrs. Johnson said. “We didn’t even have booths installed yet. The Bridge radio station set up tables for us as the night before and we held a blessing of the restaurant party. Take My Hand Ministries paid for the food for the event.”

Last year, the Johnsons realized that, due to the pandemic, they would not be able to do a brunch as people

were still not comfortable coming out to eat. After discussing the problem with their chef and Chief Kenneth Brown of the Milford Police Department, they decided to offer a \$25 gift card to the restaurant for anyone who drops off a wrapped and tagged gift worth \$25. They would also accept a Walmart gift card for \$25 or more.

“The gift cards worked out very well last year,” Mrs. Johnson said. “People could use them for themselves or give them as gifts. We decided to continue that this year. People are still afraid of buffets due to COVID, so we felt like continuing the gift cards this year was the best way to do it.”

Take My Hand Ministries pays for half the gift cards and Benvenuto Restaurant donates the other half. Over the years, people have donated bicycles, hoverboards, scooters, and other really nice gifts. Because many of the donated gifts are for younger children, the gift cards are used to take parents shopping for children who are 12 and older.

Gifts can be delivered to the restaurant from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 3, or from 12 noon to 9 p.m. on



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TOY from page 11

Saturday, Dec. 4. Once the gifts have been collected, they will be turned over to the Milford Police Department for distribution.

“The aim of the project is to give gifts to those who may not be able to get them from other sources,” Mrs. Johnson said. “We want to help those who may not be able to afford gifts for their children who may not get help from other toy donation services.”

Anyone with questions can call Benvenuto at 302-265-2652.



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ATLANTIC SELF STORAGE LOT LINES CORRECTED

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent council meeting, Atlantic Self Storage corrected a lot line issue with the approval of city council. The correction was required to come before council as it did not meet the requirements for administrative approval.

“The applicant is the owner of Lot 2 and Lot 4 within the West Milford Industrial Park,” Rob Pierce, city planner, said. “That’s the industrial park where Masten Circle is located behind McDonald’s and the shopping center. Lot 2 was developed for self-storage in the late 1980s. There appears to be an expansion of the self-storage use on Lot 4 sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s. The properties were never consolidated into one property when the expansion occurred, so it created nonconformity with parts of the one mini storage building extending across the property line. The applicant is proposing to adjust the boundaries for the two properties in order to entirely encompass the self-storage building on Lot 2.”

According to Pierce, the boundary line adjustment would allow the owners to keep the self storage as one property and either find another use for the second lot or sell it to someone else.

“A little more background for the request,” Wayne Hodge, office manager, Atlantic Self Storage, said. “We’re never going to expand the storage facility there. So, we want to be able to sell that lot. And, unfortunately, when we bought it, the people who owned it previously,



they built that storage building across the property and it was never put as one property. Unfortunately, the storage buildings are made of metal and can’t be altered, so there’s no way to cut part of that off. We’d like to extend that onto our property because we already have it 80 percent rented as it is. That way we can sell the other lot and somebody can build whatever they want to build there.”

Council voted 7 to 0 to approve the measure. There were no comments from the public during the public hearing.



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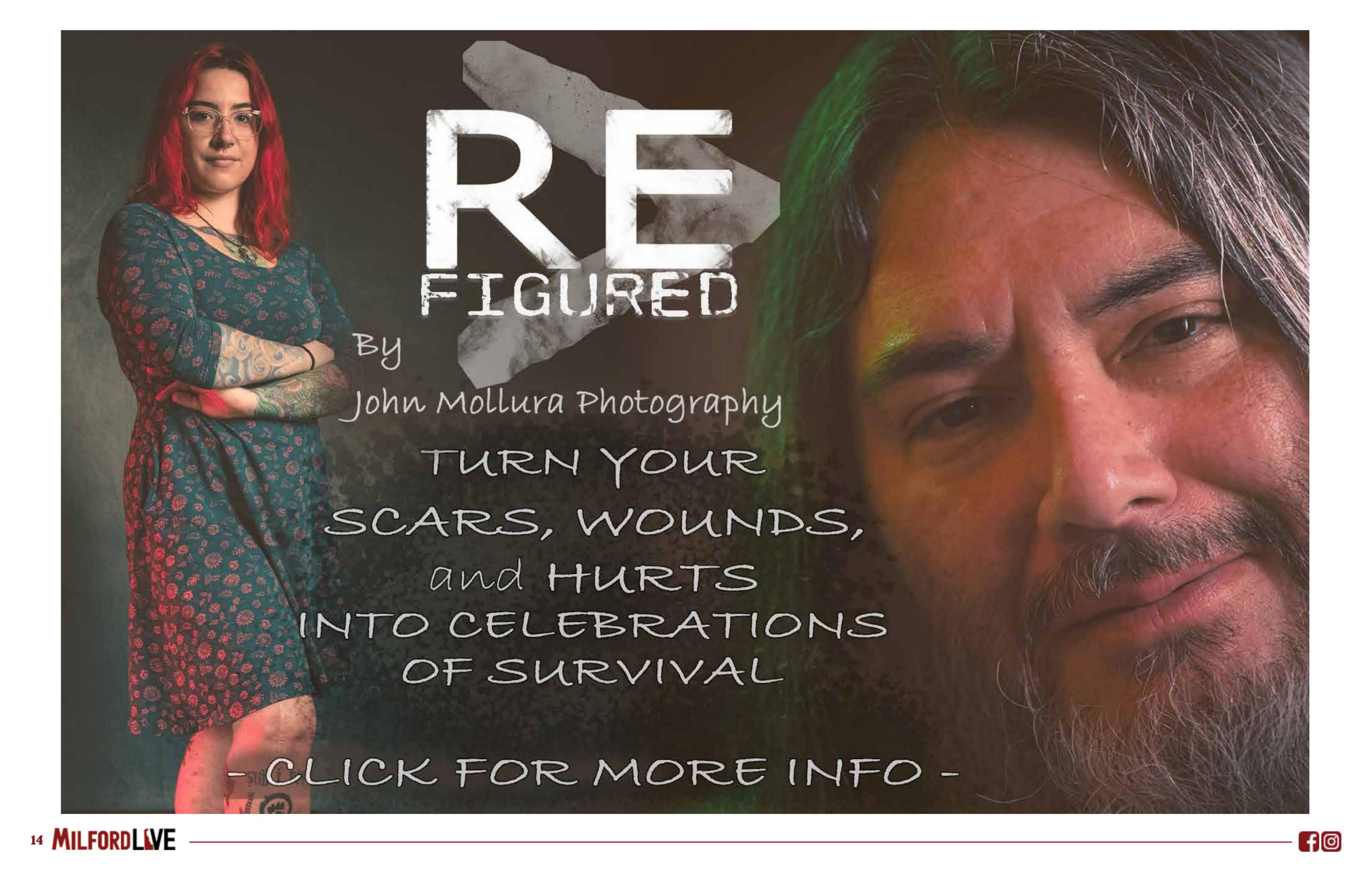
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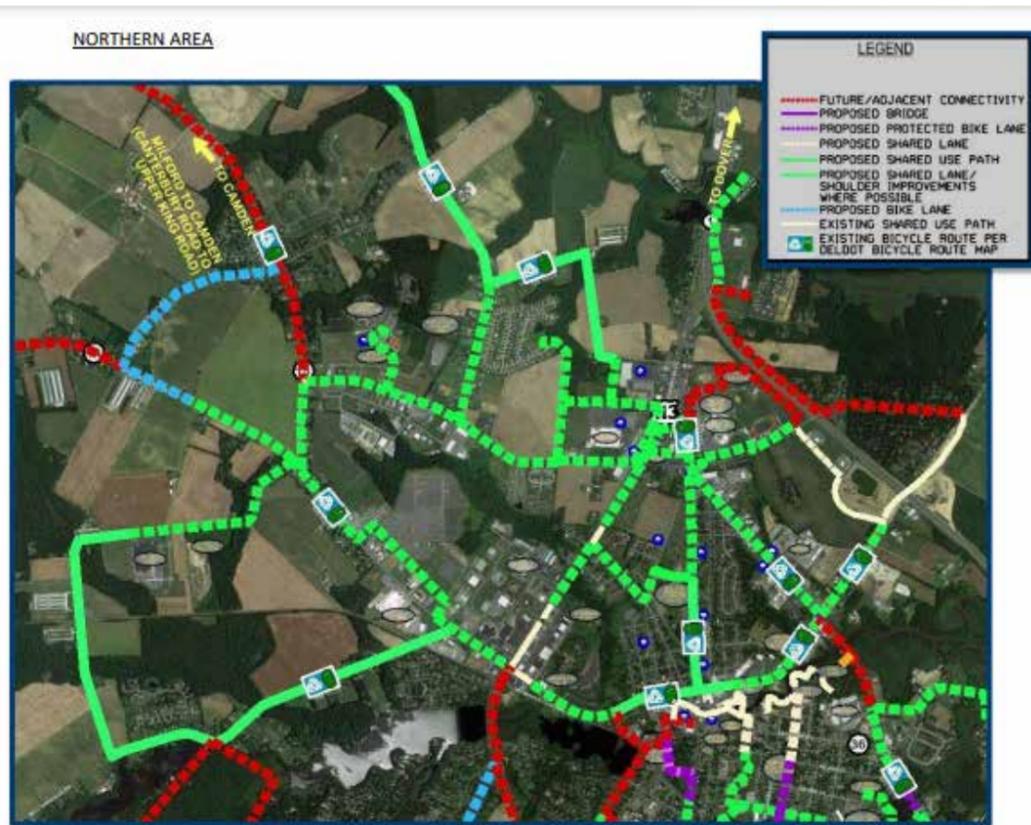
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BICYCLE MASTER PLAN APPROVED BY COUNCIL



BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford City Council recently adopted a Bicycle Master Plan presented by Sonia Marichic-Goudy, associate vice president of Century Engineering. The was created with input from DelDOT, the Bicycle Advisory Committee and members of the Milford community, including Lifecycle.

“The city of Milford was awarded the Bicycle Master Plan Grant to provide a citywide Bicycle Master Plan,” Marichic-Goudy said. “It builds on the previous studies, in particular the 2011 Bicycle Plan. It’s consistent with the city’s comprehensive plan and it seeks to improve the bicycle level of stress that is generally defined by

DelDOT for cyclists within the city. It looks to reduce the gaps in current infrastructure and ultimately provides recommendations and prioritization of those recommendations to collectively create a comprehensive bicycle network.”

Marichic-Goudy explained that the goal of the plan is to provide the citizens of Milford with a dynamic, active transportation system with trails, roads and paths that are inclusive, safe and functional for all levels of recreation as well as for commuters. The plan includes a comprehensive list of improvement options designed to address gaps in the existing network and create an overall bicycle network within the city. The plan also includes future plan projects as well as projects that are on the books but have not yet been completed.

“The city of Milford is unique in that it lies in both Kent and Sussex County,” Marichic-Goudy said. “So, we wanted to leverage this and make sure we are able to get funding from multiple sources, hopefully at the same time when the project’s going to design. So, we broke down the ultimate master plan into three sub-regions. The Northern Loop, the Southwest Loop and the Southeast Loop. Each of these are connected with each other so you could have standalone projects that ultimately will help connect the entire city.”

Marichic-Goudy provided council with slides that indicated bicycle routes that had been prioritized by DelDOT’s prioritization tool as well as the city of

See BIKE on page 17



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Milford. Green on the maps indicated routes with the highest priority while red were future connections. The planners also looked at intersections on each route, determining which would need configuration to make them safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The plan also included routes that would connect the city to outlying areas in order to bring economic vitality.

“The last part of our study looked at cost because in order for these projects and these routes to move forward into design and construction, we needed costs,” Marichic-Goudy said. “These were very large as this is a very large-scale plan. So how do you associate cost? What we did is we looked at industry standards, recent bicycle routes that were constructed through DelDOT and we develop a cost per foot. So, for example, a shared use path would be approximately \$350 per foot.” Based on this estimate, costs for the routes in the plan ranged from \$1 to \$5 million.”

After the presentation, Mayor Archie Campbell asked how far out in the road a bike path would be, referencing a temporary path on Marshall Street.

“It depends on the facility type,” City Planner Rob Pierce said. “If it’s a shared path, there’s going to be some sort of separation between the travel lane and the actual bike path. That’s the most ideal situation giving some separation from the rider and actual vehicle traffic. So, it really depends on the location. Where we’re asking for shared use paths, we’re likely going to end up having a grass strip similar to what you have here at Chick-Fil-A or what you have around the Sussex Health

See BIKE on page 18

Gift Giving Drive



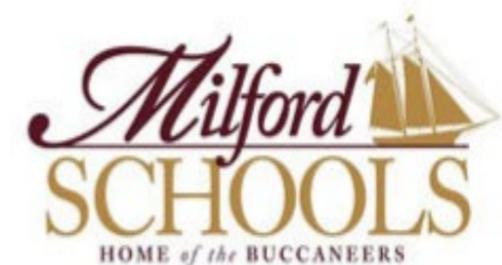
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BIKE from page 17

Campus. Those are bike paths that are along the front-ages of those sites. They're not adjacent to the road. In areas where we ran out of real estate, we may have to do things like improve shoulders where you're riding in the shoulder adjacent to traffic but that would be in low-speed situations."

Pierce explained that the Marshall Street project was unique because it was a Pop-Up Project with the University of Delaware designed to lay out a potential scenario. Because they had limited resources, the city chose to put the bike lane on one side of the road, but there were recommendations to place a bike lane on both sides of Marshall Street. James Puddicombe, city engineer, stated that DelDOT was already working on some of the sections outlined in the plan, pointing out that the state agency was currently working in the Silicato area.

"Just remember that when the TOP project heading out the east side of Milford is done, that is going to be a big chunk of downtown," Pierce said. "The police station is going to construct a portion of the shared use path. DelDOT already has in their project list similar to what James was saying from Rehoboth Boulevard out to the overpass. So, a lot of this is in the works. Some of the site plans we have had in recent years, on Walnut Street as you get down to Simpson Crossing and Milford Ponds, their developments are constructing a shared use path from Milford Ponds all the way up to McCoy Street. So, there's large sections already being constructed."

Later in the meeting, council voted to approve the Bicycle Master Plan unanimously.



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CITY EMPLOYEES COULD SEE PAY INCREASES AFTER WAGE STUDY

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent City Council meeting, Angele Yazbec, senior human resources consultant for Evergreen Solutions, presented the results of a job classification and rate study the company conducted for the city. According to Yazbec, the company used interviews and focus groups with city employees to determine how employee salaries were progressing through pay ranges.

“We reviewed the city’s compensation philosophy to see how they were currently compensating employees and how they want to continue compensating employees moving forward,” Yazbec said. “We also conducted an internal equity analysis by surveying the market to determine what would be market competitive salary ranges. Based on these findings, we revised the pay plan to be competitive with the market, individually assigned the classifications or job titles to a pay grade or a range and we have developed an optional method for implementing the revised pay plan and ranges.”

Yazbec explained that when they talked with employees overall, employees stated that they enjoyed the positive work atmosphere in the city and that they find serving the local community rewarding. However, there was some concern about the impression between more tenured employees and new hires as well as a feeling that some job titles needed to be updated to better reflect the duties and responsibilities of those positions.

“We conducted an overview analysis of the type of

plan that the city administers, which is a step plan with 17 grades and 31 steps with a 1.5 percent step increase. So, each step has a 1.5 percent increase and a range of 56 percent. Now, this 56 percent is referring to what is the difference between the maximum and minimum, or step one to the maximum. We reviewed the distribution of salaries within the plan’s ranges. So, we saw overall that we have some employees below the midpoint and some above the midpoint, but overall, that’s a fairly good distribution. The reason we focus on the midpoint is that it’s typically considered the market plan. Employees at this point should be performing their job proficiently and satisfactorily. However, with this distribution in mind, we still need to go to the market to ensure that the rates are competitive.”

Because the city wishes to be competitive in the market, Yazbec explained that they collected salary information from 19 public sector peers, some which included actual salary data. This portion of the study found that the city did offer fairly competitive salaries, but since they are in a competitive market, it was recommended that they adjust the grade and step plans which would then lead to salaries that would closer match those of other public sector jobs in the area.

“Our recommendation is to move to a 16-grade, 18-step plan with a three percent progression,” Yazbec said.

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Cancer isn't waiting for COVID-19 to be over.

One in three Delawareans will get cancer. Unfortunately, many have put off their cancer screenings in the past year. Screenings detect cancer early, when it's most treatable. If you've skipped or canceled a screening due to the pandemic — for breast, cervical, colon, lung, or prostate cancer — don't wait one more day. **Call your health care provider to schedule your cancer screenings today.**

If you don't have a provider, we can help. If you are uninsured or underinsured, you may be eligible for free screenings. To learn more about eligibility requirements and recommended cancer screenings, and other information, please visit HealthyDelaware.org/Cancer.

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COUNCIL HEARS MPO PRESENTATION

BY TERRY ROGERS

Recently, Milford City Council heard a presentation by Helen Wiles, public outreach manager for Dover Kent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO.) Wiles explained what an MPO is and how it can benefit the city of Milford.

“Because we live in a really strange state where DelDOT owns 95 percent of all the roads,” Wiles said. “That means that we work with our DOT on a much higher level than a lot of other MPOs are required or have to do. So, because of that, it’s never a problem if we do a project or a study that involves Milford. DelDOT will

usually just work with us. Sussex County right now does not have an MPO as they aren’t an urbanized area and DelDOT handles all of their transportation issues.”

According to Wiles, transportation planning includes all modes of transportation that get people from one location to another. This includes walking, biking, trains, airports and more. Dover Kent MPO works with DelDOT, DART, municipalities, the general public and others who have interests in transportation. They also make sure that federal mandates are addressed in every

See MPO on page 21



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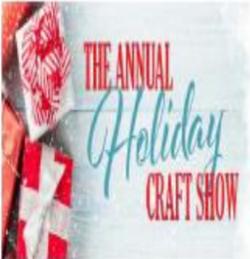
November 18th Ceramic Night
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For info call: 302-519-1807



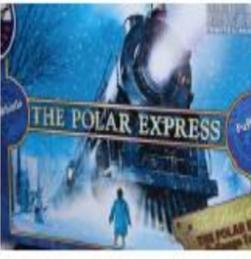


<https://www.qopaintceramics.com/product/carlisle-fire-company-fun-raiser/1701>

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\$1.00 admission
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Parking will begin at 5 p.m.
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transportation project.

“The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MPT) is the starting point,” Wiles said. “You guys do comprehensive plans and it must have a transportation chapter. If you have a project that you want done in that transportation chapter, it has to get into the MTP before anything else, especially if you need or want federal funding. The MTP is then used to create a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for goals and priorities for the next immediate four years. DelDOT then uses that to create what is called the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and their Capital Transportation Plan (CTP).”

The DelDOT plan must match the MTP created by Dover Kent MPO. Because they work closely with DelDOT, the agency can come to them and point out that a certain project is important to many people in the state and ask that it be included in the Dover Kent MTP.

“What you will find in those four years is that the MTP is in existence, it gets amended sometimes and that is from talking to different shareholders, particularly DelDOT and them asking for us to include stuff in our MTP,” Wiles said. “We also do a public participation plan. This is how we get everybody’s voice heard. It is a comprehensive plan that talks about nothing else except how to get the public involved.”

Dover Kent MPO operated behind the scenes for many years, Wiles explained, but were now moving into the forefront by taking on smaller projects for smaller municipalities on their own as well as some in-house projects.

“One of these in-house projects is called MAPITT,” Wiles said. “It is an app you can get on your phone, Apple

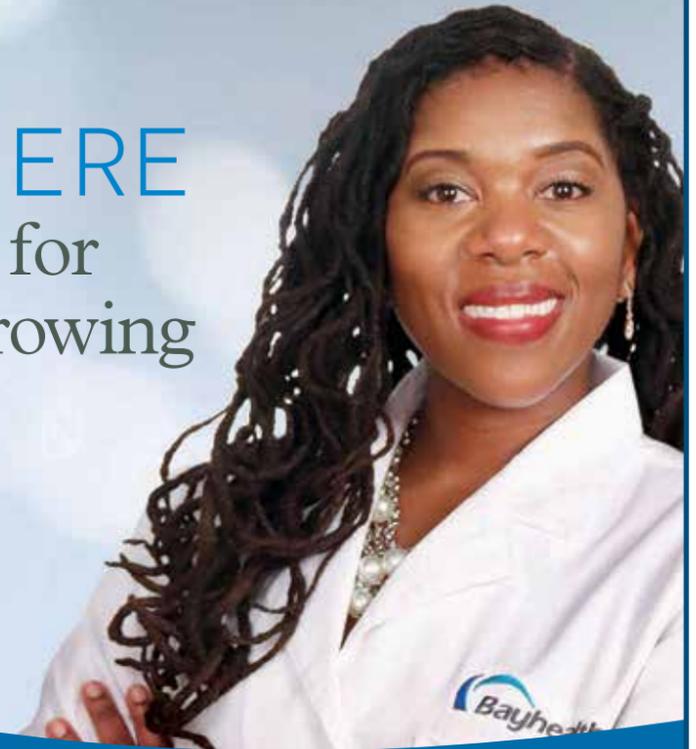
or Google, go to your Play Store, look up MAPITT and find MAPITT Dover Kent MPO. If you come across any transportation issue, anything like there’s brush growing over the road in an intersection and you can’t see around it or there’s a sign down or there’s a pothole or there’s a traffic light that needs to be retimed. If there’s an issue with a bus route or a bike lane or you think a sidewalk needs repair. Whatever. You just stop, open this app, it takes about 90 seconds, going through a series of pull-down menus and establishing what is going on. The GPS in your phone will give your exact location. You can even upload a picture in this app which sends it to us and we send it to whatever public works department should get it.”

Another project Dover Kent MPO is working on is the Parklet Pilot Project. Dover Kent MPO received a State Transportation Innovative Council (STIC) grant and used the funds to create a parklet.

“A parklet is where you take a parking space and turn it into an open space made for people instead of a car,” Wiles said. “It can be temporary, or it can be permanent. Ours is obviously temporary and very mobile. We decided to create this pilot program to introduce the parklet concept to municipalities, both their leadership and their residents, to create a more communal, healthy enjoyable public space and encourage people within our county to see these places as some beautiful public space instead of just a place to park your car.”

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DUPLEX APPROVED FOR NORTH WASHINGTON STREET



BY TERRY ROGERS

KD Properties recently received approval from City Council to construct a duplex on a vacant lot located on the west side of North Washington Street between Northeast Sixth and Northeast Seventh Street.

“As you can see, the majority of the area is zoned R2 as well with similar lot sizes,” Rob Pierce, city planner, said. “The applicant has provided a survey showing the proposed layout for the duplex with one little revision. The applicant does intend on subdividing the lot through the administrative minor subdivision process with the department which would make these two fee

simple lots. This allows more flexibility to sell off or retain both. There would be no variances needed to subdivide the property based on the layout.

Councilman Dan Marabello asked if this would be two buildings to which Pierce replied it would be one semi-detached dwelling but a duplex.

“So it’s two dwellings,” Councilman Marabello said. “I have a question on parking. It says two and a half parking spaces per

unit meaning there’s going to be five parking spaces between the two buildings?” Pierce confirmed that there would be five parking spaces and that there was a garage proposed for each side of the duplex.

Councilman Marabello asked if anyone in the neighborhood responded with objections to a duplex considering most of the homes in the area were single-family.

“At the Planning Commission public hearing, there was no public,” Pierce said. “Well, there was nobody present or on Zoom to make public comments for this application. And we did not receive any comments into the department related to this.”

David Miller of KD Properties and the Opportunities Zone Fund spoke about the project.

“We’re actually doing another project in the city here,” Miller said. “So, part of my objective and goal is to create additional housing because we know we’re extremely short with housing right now. So, that is why I’m doing this.” Miller stated that each duplex would have two bedrooms and two baths. The building would be single story.

There was no public comment about the project and the measure passed with a vote of 7 to 0.



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EDUCATION



STUDENT MASK MANDATE EXTENDED; TESTING PROGRAMS SET FOR DECEMBER

BY BETSY PRICE

Students and student athletes who play indoor sports will need to continue to mask up through February 2022, according to the state Division of Public Health.

The Delaware Interscholastic Athletics Association said in notes from its November meeting that Public Health had cited rising numbers of adult and pediatric COVID-19 cases for the extension of the rule.

Two weeks ago, the rate of COVID-19 cases increased by 16%, with the highest rates among children ages 5 to 17, DPH said in a press release. Officials there blamed Halloween parties.

Public Health hopes an increase in the vaccination rate among 5- to 11-year-old and 12- to 17-year-old youth will help lower the daily number of cases again.

Masking is meant to help make sure students can stay in school and to avoid having to switch to virtual classes again.

Some schools in Delaware have been operationally closed due to COVID-19 cases that originated close contact exposures, the DIAA newsletter said.

Public Health will launch a new program, Test To Stay, in December that's designed to keep kids in school.

The program limits absenteeism by allowing students who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 while in school, to remain in school as they continue to test negative daily.

Opportunities to expand testing so that students may also remain in weekend athletic and extracurricular activities is being discussed, the DIAA newsletter said.

Schools and districts can enroll and learn more about the program by visiting www.dhsscovidsschooltest.com.



HEALTH



PHOTO BY ROBERT J. NEARY PHOTOGRAPHY

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PUBLIC HEALTH, DELDOT WARN OF COVID VAX TEXT MESSAGE SCAM



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

State agencies are warning Delawareans to be on alert for scams requesting that recipients verify their COVID-19 vaccination status. DelDOT and the Department of Motor Vehicles have received reports from individuals who say they received text messages from the agencies with a link to a vaccination status verification page. The message reportedly contains a link that, if clicked, could contaminate the recipient's device with malware or seek to steal personal identification information.

"This is NOT a communication from the Division of Motor Vehicles and should be ignored and deleted," the notice says. "The Delaware Department of Motor Vehicles does not send vaccination status verification notices via text message, nor is your personal informa-

tion (such as driver license number, Social Security number, or payment information) requested in this manner."

In a Division of Public Health social media post, the agency says that it does not ever request private information such as an individual's social security number or driver's license number by text message.

If you receive a text message from a state agency asking you to verify your vaccination status, you should report it to the Delaware Department of Justice Fraud and Consumer Protection Unit at 302-577-8600.

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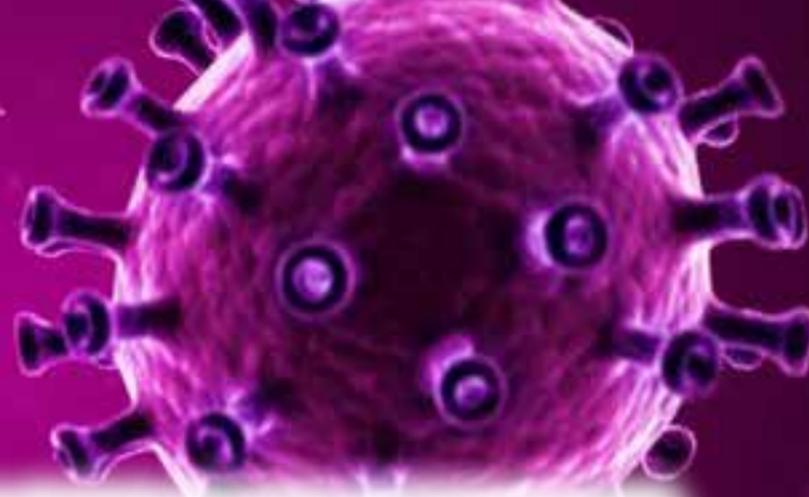
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ANOTHER WINTER SURGE? DELAWARE COVID CASES, DEATHS RISE

BY BETSY PRICE

The number of new COVID-19 cases and deaths in Delaware continued to rise in the last week, but hospitalizations dropped by a few. The Delaware Division of Public Health said the average daily number of new cases was 380.6 in the week ending Thursday, Nov. 25. That's up from 329.6 the previous week and 271.9 the week before.

Public Health has said the most new cases have been occurring in the 5- to 17-year age range and suggested last week that Halloween parties might have been a root cause. The cases occurring in younger people threatens a spread in schools and the return of virtual classes.

As of Friday, Delaware has seen 152,165 cases. In the last week, the average of total positive tests had dropped to 7.1%, down from 7.4% the week before, but still well above the 5.4% of the previous week.

As of Thursday, 159 people were hospitalized with 18 in critical condition. That's down three hospitalizations from the previous week and well below the 179 of the week before.

The total number of COVID-19 deaths in Delaware is 2,173, with 19 added in the last week. Eight of those came from a review of vital statistics.

The number of breakthrough cases occurring in those fully vaccinated is 7,122 or 1.3% of fully vaccinated people. Of those 125 have been hospitalized, and 92 have died.

At the same time, the percentage of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated is 60.9%. The percentage of Delawareans ages 5 and up who have received at least one dose is 75.6%; the percentage of those 12 and up have received at least one dose is 82.1% the percentage of Delawareans 18 and older who have received at least one dose is 84%.

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PHOTO BY KEVIN EICKMAN

WRESTLING LOOKING FORWARD TO FULL SEASON

BY KEVIN EICKMAN

Last year's COVID pandemic took its toll on wrestling throughout the entire state of Delaware. While for the most part, the just completed fall seasons give cause for optimism, there is still a bit of a hangover lingering from last season. In a wrestling room that is almost packed, when interviewing Milford coach Don Parsley this Monday, it was clear to see that the number of wrestlers is still down this season when it comes to participation. "We usually have a great many more wrestlers here at this point in the year. But there are a lot of factors involved with what we have in terms of numbers and experience. The middle school did not have a season

last year, so the number of new people coming into the program has decreased a bit, along with some people we hoped we might get to join or come back to the team," Parsley said.

While the numbers may be down for Milford, there is quality in the room as well. Leading the way for the Buccaneers will be senior Jack Thode, the reigning state champion at 126 pounds. With two state titles under his belt, Thode will most assuredly have his eyes set on a third. However, there is a lot more to Jack Thode than his individual accomplishments. "Jack is the type of wres-

See **WRESTLING** on page 31



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WRESTLING from page 30

tlar who leads by example. He is the type of wrestler that the team can look up to and learn from. It's not easy to be a leader, but Jack does a great job of embracing it," Parsley said.

Milford will be bringing back a few wrestlers who fared well in the state tournament as well last season. Among them will be junior Averi Copes who finished third in the tournament. "Averi improved as the season went on last year, I believe that growth will continue," Parsley said. Senior Tim O'Hara, who finished sixth in the state last year, is another returning finalist along with senior Aaron Briscoe who finished fifth. "It's not like the cupboard is bare, we have some quality wrestlers returning, we just don't have the depth we are used to. We have a lot of question marks, especially in the upper weights, but those things have a way of sorting themselves out," Parsley said.

Another returning wrestler is junior Emily Thode, who made history last season as she became the first female wrestler to win a state tournament match. Thode, who wrestles at 106 pounds received high praise from Parsley. "Without a doubt, she is the toughest wrestler on this team. It's not about her being a girl, it's about her having a no quit attitude. She competes in arguably the toughest conference in Delaware, the Henlopen North. There is no way to keep her off the mat, she is tough as nails and refuses to believe she can't win, no matter what the math says," Parsley said.

It will all start this weekend when Milford will kick off its season at the Polytech Invitational, which will be followed the next weekend by the Milford Invitational.



With a challenging season ahead, Parsley is sticking to the game plan that has repeatedly kept Milford one of the more competitive teams in Delaware. It will all start this weekend when Milford will kick-off their season at the Polytech Invitational, which will be followed the next weekend by the Milford Invitational. Parsley believes in building his team up as the season goes along, and seeing what some of the younger wrestlers show in this early season tournaments is one of the way to see what kind of talent he has on his squad "We can wrestle each other all day long, but until we get

out there and wrestle against other programs, there are a lot of questions that need answering. Our goal is always to make it to the State Tournament and the way we do that is by getting better as the season goes on. I think making the tournament would really say a lot about the heart of this team, I'm really looking forward to watching how the year unfolds." Parsley concluded.

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PHOTO BY HILLEL BRANDES

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