

MILFORD LIVE



NEW POLICE FACILITY



MISPILLION ART LEAGUE EXHIBIT



FEMALE DISTILLERY OWNERS IN MILFORD



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JANUARY 11, 2022
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HEADLINES



PHOTO BY MARCIA REED

NEW POLICE FACILITY PROJECT GOES OUT FOR BID



BY TERRY ROGERS

At their Monday, Jan 10 meeting, Milford City Council voted unanimously to allow Richard Y. Johnson, the construction management company for the new police facility, to send out bids for the new building. After the Police Facility Citizens' Oversight Committee agreed to send preliminary designs to council last week, council authorized the next step in the process.

“Through the meetings we discussed one of the most important understandings was what the look and feel of the building should be,” Brenden Frederick of Becker Morgan said. “We presented three slides to the committee who ultimately talked about texture and style. We like the architectural historical style and a Georgian colonial look that is most akin to your library, so that was kind of the pathway. The committee discussed the subtle differences in the stone, the type of portico which the front entry can be.”

Several items that were in the initial design phase, including a maintenance and evidence storage building,

will be included in the bid as alternate bids. City Finance Director Lou Vitola explained that the reductions were necessary to keep the cost of construction as close to \$14 million as possible in order to allow for site preparation and other costs that could add to the cost of the building. Because the city's bond issuance is only for \$20 million, construction must remain at or below that amount. Any overages would require an additional referendum.

“When we met a few months ago, we were talking primarily about hard construction costs,” Mike Svaby, director of Public Works, said. “The mayor made it clear that we aren't going to change course and have a project that was above and beyond what was put out to the constituency earlier. So, we went back and reviewed all the specifics of design. It's not out of the ordinary to have design costs in the early stages that are a little high. So, we progressed to the design costs earlier and got to the point where we made more particular design

See **POLICE** on page 4

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POLICE from page 3

decisions. RYJ stepped in and did their job. We are at about \$13,400,000 in hard construction costs.”

The Citizen Oversight Committee was provided with several drawings depicting what the station may look like when it is completed. One version had recessed bricks with porticos while two others removed the recessed brick and used other methods to offset the areas. The committee overwhelmingly agreed to submit the design with coining along the edges of the front of the building. Chief Kenneth Brown asked if it was possible to add a railing above the portico as well.

“I want to go on record as saying that the mobile storage, which is our evidence storage, while we can work out other ways of reducing that to eliminate it, I don’t think it is an option,” Chief Brown said. “We need to do something there. I think we are running in bare bones as it is. We didn’t account for a place to store our ammo inside this building because we were planning on putting it in the outside building. So, this building doesn’t have a lot of storage space in it. I think we were counting on a lot of things being outside.”

Svaby explained that it is possible the bids will come in lower than estimated or that the alternate costs may be low enough to include but moving those items to alternates made it less likely the cost would be higher than the city wanted for hard construction costs.

Committee member Gloria Markowitz asked if selling the current police building would result in funds that could cover the cost of the evidence building.

“It comes down to cash and what cash you have on hand,” Mark Whitfield, city manager, said. “Obviously,

we would not have that cash in hand to be able to pay for the maintenance building because we are still using the old police station. Now, again, what we can do if we sell the police station, we can offset the bond in the amount of money that we make and pay it back earlier with the proceeds of that sale.”

Council voted unanimously to send the construction of the new police station out for bid. All bids will be read publicly at the Public Works building and council will vote on the bid award at a future council meeting.



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CARNEY: UNIVERSAL INDOOR MASK MANDATE IN EFFECT 8 A.M. TUESDAY

BY BETSY PRICE

Gov. John Carney announced Monday he will institute a mask mandate that requires Delaware residents to wear them in all public indoor settings. In a new revision to the State of Emergency declaration, he also extended the school mask requirement and will deploy more members of the Delaware National Guard to help with non-clinical operations in Delaware Hospitals.

All of that takes effect Tuesday 8 a.m. and is in response to the skyrocketing number of hospitalizations—784 on Saturday—in the wake of so many people testing positive for COVID-19, likely because of the Omicron variant. State officials previously have said that Delaware hospitals had about 450 places for those with COVID-19.

Christiana Hospital announced Monday that it would implement its Crisis Standards of Care protocol. That allows it to operate differently than normal and can include things such as changing staff requirements and

expanding capability by doing things like suspending charting requirements or allowing nurses to take more patients than would normally be allowed. It does not automatically mean rationing of care, but that can be a downstream option, say others familiar with the process.

“Our hospital systems are facing a crisis-level situation with record numbers of Delawareans seeking emergency care. We need all Delawareans in the fight as we face this winter surge of COVID-19 to make sure our hospitals are not overrun,” Carney said in a press release.

“I know we’re all exhausted by this pandemic. But at the level of hospitalizations we’re seeing, Delawareans who need emergency care might not be able to get it,” he said. “That’s just a fact. It’s time for everyone to pitch in and do what works. Wear your mask indoors. Avoid gatherings or expect to get and spread COVID. Get your vaccine and, if eligible, get boosted. That’s how we’ll get through this surge without endangering more lives.”

Carney’s new mask mandate will include convenience stores, grocery stores, gyms, restaurants, bars, hair salons, malls and casinos, among other things. Churches and other houses of worship are exempted from the mask requirement.

Both the public and school mask requirements apply to anyone kindergarten age and older. Children aged 2 to 5 are strongly encouraged to wear masks in public indoor settings, including schools and child care facilities. Children under two-years-old should not wear

masks due to the risk of suffocation.

Masks are not required outdoors or while eating or drinking in restaurants and bars, but otherwise should be worn.

Businesses responsible for indoor settings open to the public are encouraged to provide disposable masks to customers who don’t have them—and to post signage about the indoor mask requirement.

Monday’s revision also eases state regulations to allow and incentivize recently-retired educators to return to the classroom as substitute teachers in an effort to keep children in school.

Also on Monday, Carney deployed 70 additional members of the Delaware National Guard to assist with non-clinical operations inside Delaware hospitals statewide, beginning Tuesday. In total, more than 300 members of the Delaware National Guard are assisting with COVID-19 response efforts—including support at vaccination and testing locations, help with PPE distribution, and hospital assistance.

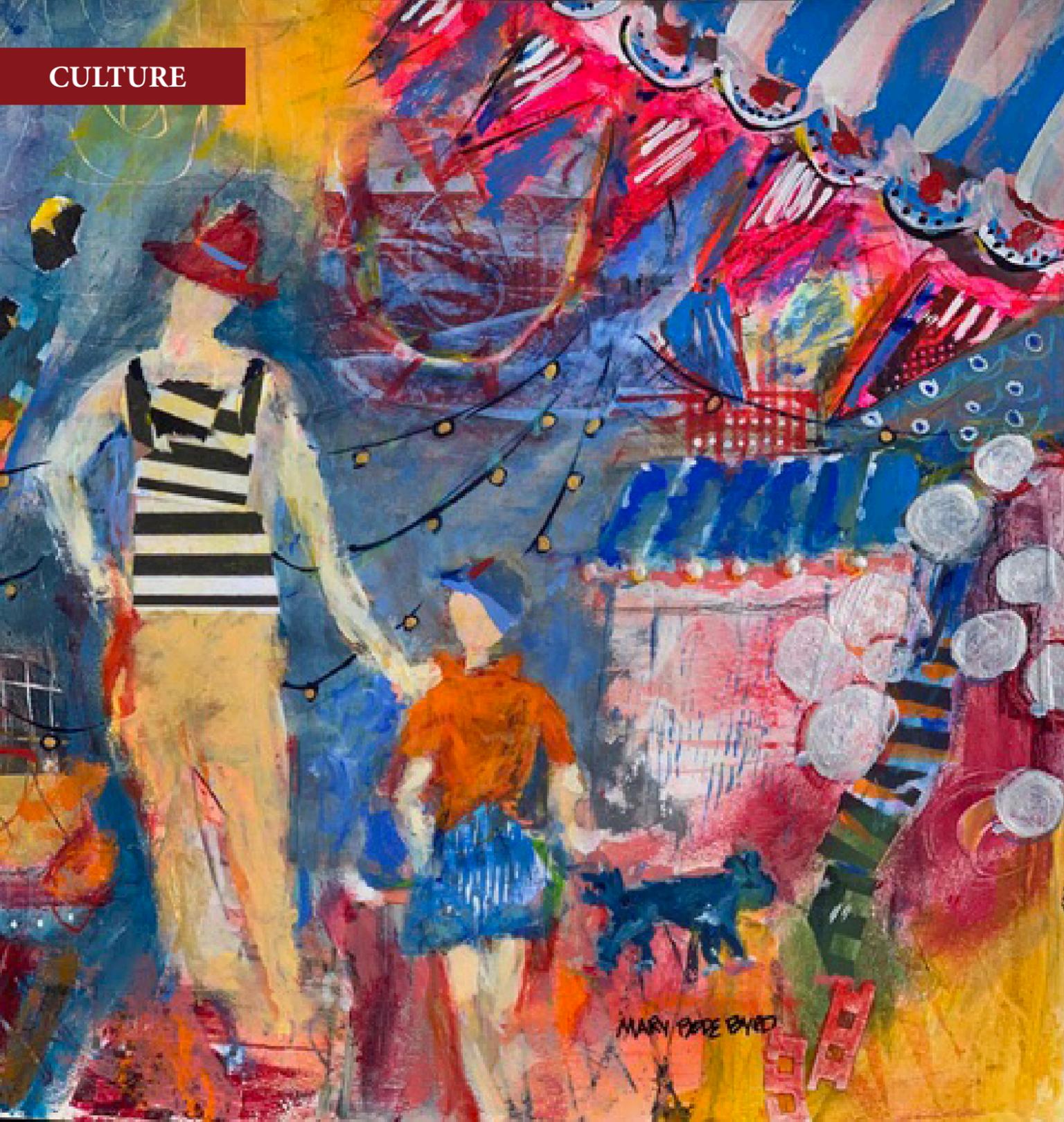
Roughly 110 members of the Guard—separate from the 70 members deployed on Monday—are training to serve as certified nursing assistants in health care settings statewide to take pressure off hospital systems.

MILFORD
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CULTURE



Photo BY TERRY ROGERS



Going to the Fair by Mary Byrd. Best in Show at 18th Annual Judged Show, 2021

MISPILLION ART LEAGUE'S 19TH ANNUAL JUDGED SHOW

BY TERRY ROGERS

Join the Mispillion Art League (MAL) for the opening of the first exhibit of 2022, the *19th Annual Judged Show*, at the gallery in Milford. The exhibit runs Jan. 18 through March 19 and the opening is Friday, Jan. 21 from 5–6:30 pm. The talented artists of Delaware offer up their finest creations for your viewing and buying pleasure. A judged show also gives our artist a chance to win kudos for Best in Show as well as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place ribbons in six different categories. [Joshua Nobiling](#), artist and teacher, will be the exhibit judge.

During your visit, make sure to check out the January–June classes for ages five and up, beginner to advanced. Class details and registration can be found on the website www.mispillionarts.org. MAL also posts on Facebook and Instagram (@Mispillion-Arts) and on www.delawarescene.com.

On offer for January–June is the ever-popular Kid's Creativity Club, pottery, painting (oil, acrylic, watercolor, pastel), stained glass, jewelry, fiber, drawing, and a few outliers as well. Something for everyone to enjoy. If you love to sketch, we have a very special class coming in March with British urban sketcher [Pat Southern-Pearce](#). Her class was a big success in 2020 and is filling up fast for 2022. Be sure to sign up soon to get a seat!

Located at 5 North Walnut Street in Milford, MAL is open Tuesday–Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. We are following CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting and masks are required in all classes.

The Mispillion Art League is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This organization is supported in part by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The Division promotes Delaware arts events on www.DelawareScene.com.

For further information contact Sonja Frey, Operations Manager, mispillionarts@gmail.com, 302-430-7646



MUSIC ABOUNDS IN THE MILFORD AREA



BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent Milford Conversation, the Music School of Delaware led a discussion about the wide variety of musical performing arts in the Milford area. Representatives of the music school, Milford Public Library, Milford Community Band, First State Harmonizers and the Mispillion Performance Series along with Ruth and Ken Behrens who are with the area Ministerial Association discussed the many musical talents in the city.

“I just enjoy having music here and live music is so much different and better,” John Huntzinger, leader of the Second Friday events at the First Presbyterian Church, said. “I enjoy seeing people perform and my

first run in with a good concert, was a trip to Prague. The wife and I sat so close, I just closed my eyes and imagined I was the king. We had a cellist in the sanctuary upstairs and as soon as I heard it, I knew what that room was designed for.”

Dianne Demming, a pastor at the First Presbyterian Church, explained that the church had to come up with new ways to present worship and to include music in worship as they were not allowing congregational singing or choir for over a year and a half.

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MUSIC from page 8

“We brought in soloists and small groups and at first everything was pre-recorded,” Demming said. “We piped it out on YouTube and then later, we had in-person worship and we continued with small groups. Musicians were starving to play to somebody, even if it is 20 people. This gave them the opportunity to fully perform. We don’t call it that in worship, but that’s what it is.”

Ken Behrens stated that there were 52 churches within a three-mile radius of Milford and that among them, they have some outstanding musical capabilities. He explained there is an organ program, many churches offer musicals, but the information rarely gets out to the public. The Ministerial Association offers multi-cultural musical options, including Haitian, African American, Hispanic, folk, classical and more.

“We are planning to hold the Martin Luther King celebration here in our fellowship hall,” Demming said. “Normally, we hold it at a school, but they are not allowing outside groups yet. This is an ecumenical and interfaith group that puts on this program. We would not exclude anyone from attending, but just know you are going to hear about Jesus.”

Jody Stein provided information on a new concert series she was developing in Sussex County. Stein, who moved to Milford from Northern Virginia four years ago where she ran a performing arts series, felt she could use her experience to start a series in this area. She got involved with the Coastal Concert series which she says is an excellent program but may be priced too high for some who live in the area.

See MUSIC on page 10



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MUSIC from page 9

“My mission and goal is to bring in amazing artists from September to December with the musicians receiving an honorarium of \$500 to \$700 per person,” Stein said. “The concerts would be free to attend. Many of these musicians command a lot more than that, but they often have their own outreach missions.” Acts that have performed in the series include a nationally recognized saxophone quartet and a piano concerto.

Caroline Tabor spoke to the group about the library’s Music in the Park which occur every Wednesday in July in the amphitheater. Mrs. Behrens suggested that the city needed a hangout place where young musicians could gather and share their talents. Mr. Behrens felt that if there were more of these types of locations, young people would remain in the area after they finished their education.

“We have about 12 to 14 of us that get together every Monday night over at the Avenue Methodist Church,” Harry Humes, who represented the First State Harmonizers, said. “We used to be all male but now we have some women involved. We have a woman director who is a former elementary school teacher, so she knows her music. We are strictly acapella, and anyone is free to join the group.”

A charter member of the Milford Community Band, Tony Perone explained the background of the band which began with the late Joe Lear over 30 years ago. Lear passed away about 18 months ago and Perrone commented that he was still playing music just before he died at the age of 94.

“We’re located in the old Kiwanis Club building at 3315 Claude Street,” Perone said. “The band is very

diverse and made up of mostly retirees, but there are still some members working. Some are former music educators, but we are mostly adults who are 60 plus. We encourage students to join, but we have not had many.”

The Milford Community Band has several satellite groups, including a Dixieland Band, Christmas carol band, a saxophone quartet, a swing band and a concert band. The bands play a wide range of music, including Broadway tunes, movie themes and marches. Rehearsals number about 35 members, but membership is between 60 to 65.

“You have to be able to read music,” Perone said. “This is not music you can play by ear. Everyone has a piece of music in front of them. If you don’t have your own instrument, we do have some available to loan. You do not have to audition and there are no dues. We do ask that you help with setting up or taking down.”

Mary Jane Vanvestraut, the Milford branch director of the Music School of Delaware, thanked everyone for their input into the discussion. She stated that in order for the Music School to achieve its goals, it is important to know what is happening in the area musically.

“The core of this comes down to learning music, performing and how young people can grow into performing artists,” Vanvestraut said. “That is what we hope to do. We provide our youngest classes with students starting at 18 months old. We also provide classes, not just private lessons. We have a musicianship class which has emerged from theory and a wide range of ensembles. We have a wonderful chorus here that has performed all over the state.”

Vanvestraut explained that the music school is offering one week when anyone can take a free 30-minute lesson on the instrument of their choice. From January 24 through 29, anyone can come in and get a free 30-minute lesson. This is for those who may have played in high school and want to get back in it or someone who wants to pick up a new skill but wants to try before they begin paying for lessons.

“The music school really wants to be here to serve the community,” Vanvestraut said. “We are present at all the downtown events, like the holiday stroll and things like that. We offer free concerts so that you don’t have to pay to get into them. We also have ensembles available for the community.”

Anyone who wants more information about the Music School of Delaware can contact them at 302-422-2043 or visit www.musicschoolofdelaware.org.



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BY TERRY ROGERS

Currently, there are six distillery licenses in the state of Delaware and two of those licenses are held in the Milford area. In addition to one-third of the distillery licenses in the state being located in Milford, both of those in the town are owned by women, EasySpeak and Feebs Distilling.

“Before getting into distilling, I was in sales,” Stacey Fibelkorn, part-owner of Feebs Distilling, said. “Until recently, I was still working in sales, selling pest control products for Ehrlich. I sold real estate, worked for

MILFORD HOME TO TWO FEMALE DISTILLERY OWNERS

Comcast and, except for when I was in real estate, always had a quota to meet.”

When Fibelkorn met her now husband, Eric, he was distilling illegally in his backyard. She joked that one of their early dates involved her learning about the still he had on the patio around his pool. Her family was from Virginia, so she had learned about moonshine while she was growing up, but had no idea how scientific the process was until she started helping Eric. In 2017, Fibelkorn was diagnosed with cancer and underwent chemotherapy as well as radiation treatments.

“I told him that something had to change after that,” Fibelkorn said. “I did not look good in orange, so it was time to figure out how we can do this legally. We talked to an attorney who told us it would cost \$25,000 to do the whole process. I went to the federal website and read through it, many, many times. I went to Eric and told him that I could do this.”

Marissa King, who co-owns EasySpeak with her husband, Zack, has a different history with distilling. Before partnering in the brewpub and distillery, King worked in the medical field before leaving that to open a store in Florida. When Zack decided to open EasySpeak, that was the start of her involvement in the distilling business.

See DISTILLERY on page 13

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DISTILLERY from page 12

“I honestly have to give all the credit to my husband,” King said. “This was something he did before me that I just sort of stepped into with him.”

Fibelkorn stated that she and her husband were told they could not make money creating their products the way they wanted, but she says that business is doing very well.

“We had no investors, we are not an LLC, it is just us,” Fibelkorn said. “We have no one to answer to. We do things when we can afford them, and it is working for us. Eric does the majority of the distilling, but I have learned so much watching him. There is a true science to this, special temperatures, the mash, so much you need to know to do this right.”

King explained that she doesn’t have much input in the distilling business now.

“We have an amazing head distiller, Stephen,” King said. “He and Zack really just keep it handled back there. I focus on our other businesses and front of house at EasySpeak. I used to taste test a little, but now that’s out for me as well. But just because I am not involved back there anymore does not mean I never was. I used to spend more time in the distillery and still help them watch the stills from time to time.”

Both Fibelkorn and King advise other women who want to start a business, whether distilling or anything else, to just jump in and do it.

“Go into it with a good partner,” King said. “I couldn’t be more grateful to my husband and our work relationship. We are able to balance each other out very well,

which is a necessity for growth. Also, make sure to keep it fun. If you hate what you do, your life will be miserable.”

Fibelkorn echoes King’s sentiments. “Do it,” she said. “Eric has been telling me to leave my job for a long time and work for Feebs. And I was recently able to do that. My expertise is in sales and I am successful because I have a never met a stranger personality. Starting your own business will be the most exhilarating, exciting, frustrating and tiring thing you will ever do in your life.”



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PRE-FILED BILLS OFFER GLIMPSE INTO LEGISLATURE'S PLANS

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

A list of pre-filed House bills released Thursday offers a glimpse into some of the issues the General Assembly plans to tackle when it reconvenes next week. Proposals included on the list range from a measure to make gun ownership legal for medical marijuana users to a bill to hold schools legally accountable if a student is abused by an employee.

Many of the bills are bipartisan, including one to allow the continued sale of alcoholic to-go beverages and one to exempt unemployment benefits from 2021 state taxes.

Pre-filed bills are measures submitted by legislators for introduction before the legislative session begins.

All of the bills have been assigned to committees for review. Until they are voted on there, none can move to the Senate or House floor for debate and vote. No bill is guaranteed to receive a final vote in the House or Senate simply because it's filed.

The legislature will hold its first committee meetings of the new year beginning Tuesday, Jan. 11. House and Senate leaders announced Friday that all committee meetings will be held virtually throughout the month of January in the wake of the COVID-19 Omicron variant. Legislators will convene in person on Thursdays to consider legislation.

See **PLANS** on page 17



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Allowing medical marijuana users to own guns

Under federal law, Delawareans who are prescribed medical marijuana are currently prohibited from owning firearms. **House Bill 276**, sponsored by Rep. Andria Bennett, D-Dover, would make clear that registered qualifying patients under the Delaware Medical Marijuana Act are not disqualified under Delaware law from possessing firearms.

“At least 36 states allow for the medical use of marijuana,” the synopsis reads. “However, federal firearm laws have not kept pace and currently prohibit an individual who is ‘an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance’ from possessing or purchasing a firearm. It is still unlawful under federal law to use or possess marijuana.”

Under the law, a registered qualifying patient’s purchase of a firearm through a federal firearms licensee would still be prohibited under federal law. The bill has been assigned to the House Public Safety & Homeland Security Committee for review.

Allowing continued sale of to-go alcohol

House Bill 290, a bipartisan proposal sponsored by Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth, would allow food and drink establishments to continue to sell alcoholic beverages for take-out, curbside or drive-through service and to use outdoor seating for serving of food and drinks so long as the licensee satisfies certain conditions.

The practice had been prohibited until the spring 2020 COVID lockdown prohibited dining in restaurants. Rules were changed to allow restaurants to include al-

See PLANS on page 18



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PLANS from page 17

cohol in sales, and therefore make more money. The rule last year was extended through March of this year.

Under the law, beverages would be required to be sold in containers that are securely closed and would not be permitted to exceed three 750 milliliter bottles of wine, one case of beer or one liter of spirits per customer per day.

The law would also permanently provide the Delaware Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner the authority to temporarily suspend a license if she has reasonable grounds to believe that the public's safety is at risk and there has been a violation of the law. It also provides that the commissioner may hold any hearings related to the suspension of a license remotely.

The bill has been assigned to the House Administration Committee for review.

Holding schools to higher sex abuse standards

House Bill 277, sponsored by Rep. Sean Lynn, D-Dover, establishes that if a child is abused while the perpetrator is doing his or her job, the employer should be responsible.

The bill “recognizes that in cases of childhood sexual abuse by an employee of a school, organization, or business that serves or cares for children, the perpetrator often has authority and power over the child victim, which can be enabled by the perpetrator’s position in that institution.”

The act also changes the standard of culpability from “gross negligence” to “negligence” for public schools in civil claims based on childhood sexual abuse.

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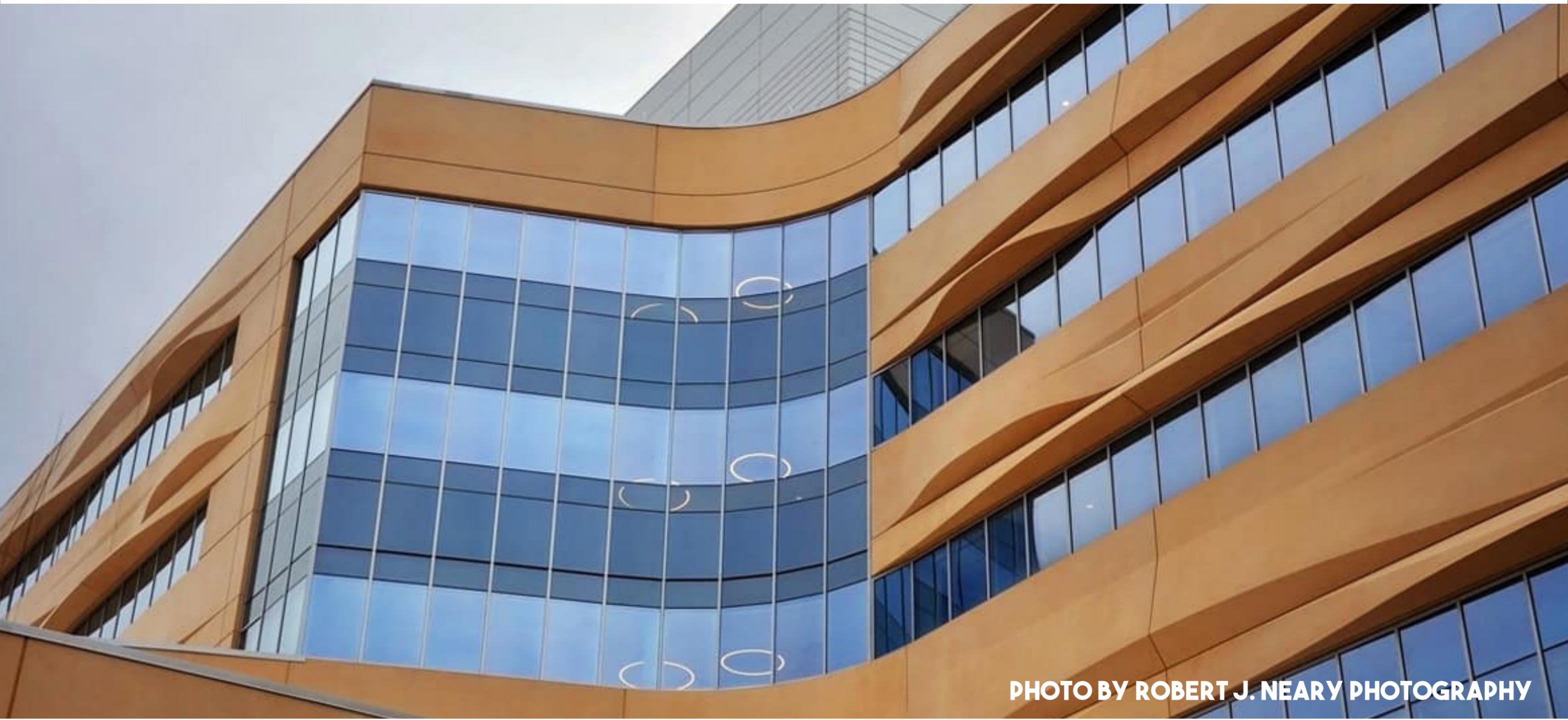


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DBCC HOSTS 24TH ANNUAL BREAST CANCER UPDATE

BY TERRY ROGERS

Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition (DBCC) will hold its 24th Annual Breast Cancer Update “BREAKING THE CODE: Advances in Vaccines and Treatments for Breast Cancer” in a virtual setting on Wednesday, Feb. 23 from 7:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. The conference is free to anyone who wishes to attend.

“The DBCC Annual Breast Cancer Update began as a small, scientific meeting to update physicians about the latest trends in breast cancer diagnosis and treatment,” Marilyn Hyte, board president and Breast Cancer Update Chair, said. “Prior to COVID, we held the event in the Dover Downs ballroom with over 450 people in attendance and last year, when we held the event virtually, there were still hundreds signed up to hear from the presenters.”

Leading medical breast cancer experts and informational resources are provided during the update, designed to help breast cancer survivors, their families, physicians, nurses, students, and other healthcare professionals. The program empowers communities to fight against breast cancer by bringing in nationally renowned speakers in the field who provide details on innovative research, treatment and programs available in Delaware.

“Our keynote speaker, Keith Knutson, Ph.D., will discuss vaccines that are currently in development that

may help treat and prevent breast cancer,” Hyte said. “Known as the Artemis Project, this is an ongoing clinical trial that could prevent the metastasis of breast cancer using mRNA technology.”

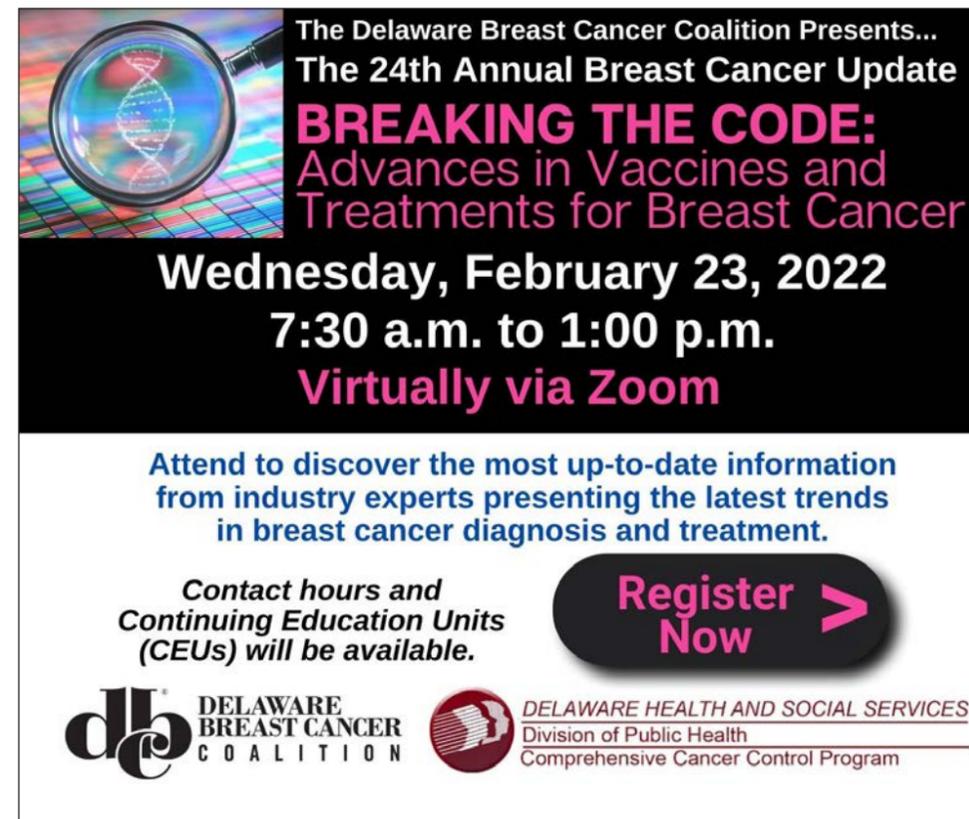
Other speakers at the event include Ramya Varadarajan, MD, Stephanie L. Goff, MD, FACS, FSSO and Jennifer Sims-Mourtada, Ph.D. who will discuss current approaches in oncology. Renee L. Quarterman, MD, FACS, Nathalie Johnson, MD, FACS and Tony Lee, MD, FACRO will discuss current surgical approaches in breast cancer treatment.

“The objective of the update is to identify current trends and advances, not only in breast cancer treatment, but also in diagnosis and clinical trials,” Hyte said. “The program will compare current surgical options for de-escalation of breast surgery and in the axilla while also discuss current approaches and advances in chemotherapeutic treatment options. Discussion will also include current research initiatives on blood diagnostics.”

More information about the update can be found at <https://debreastcancer.org/breastcancerupdate/>.

Registration is available online at <https://dbcc.ejoinme.org/BCU2022>.

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HOSPITALIZATIONS SKYROCKET TO 692 AS COVID-19 SURGE CONTINUES

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware continued to set COVID-19 records last week in hospitalizations, with 692 people admitted. The state has been routinely beating the daily hospitalizations record since late December when numbers started rising above the Jan. 12, 2021, record of 474. On Dec. 31, the state hit a record number of 3,554 positive cases per day.

The surge of cases is expected to peak in mid- to late-January as Omicron essentially spreads through the state.

With daily cases hitting the mid-2,000s to 3,000s, the state has been asking people to stay home if they feel sick, wear a well-fitting mask around other outside of your household and only go to emergency rooms if you have a true emergency, not simply to be tested for COVID-19.

Because testing sites are overwhelmed, the state is urging people to only be tested if they have symptoms, it's been five days after they were exposed, or you are

unvaccinated. The state is still recommending that anyone who is unvaccinated be tested once per week.

Gov. John Carney will have a virtual press conference about COVID-19 Jan. 11 at 1:45 p.m. that will be streamed on his [Facebook](#) page, [YouTube](#), and <https://governor.delaware.gov/live/>.

In its weekly COVID-19 roundup, the Delaware Division of Public Health said:

- Delaware has seen 198,507 COVID-19 cases since March 2020.
- The 7-day average of new positive cases is 2,505.4, up from 1,622 last week.
- The 7-day average for the percentage of total positive tests: 27.7%, up from 19.1% last week.
- Of the hospitalizations, up 207 from two weeks ago, 63 are critically ill, up 8 from three weeks ago.

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THANK YOU!

THE MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT WOULD LIKE TO SINCERELY THANK OUR DISTRICT-COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE REFERENDUM VOTE. WE ARE VERY EXCITED AND APPRECIATIVE FOR OUR DISTRICT-COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME. THIS PROJECT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY BENEFIT OUR STUDENTS, FIRST AND FOREMOST, AND ENTIRE DISTRICT-COMMUNITY. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT STEPS LEADING TO THE RENOVATION OF THE SCHOOL AND REVITALIZATION OF THE SITE.

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- 44 COVID-19 cases were reported in the last two weeks.
- The total of COVID-19 deaths in Delaware now stands at 2,330.
- Breakthrough cases are rising, with 9,858 or 1.7% of fully vaccinated individuals.
- Of those, 166 have been hospitalized and 138 have died.

The Division also released a look at the vaccinated/not vaccinated status of hospitalizations and deaths. COVID-9 vaccinations continue to creep up, according to the Centers for Disease Control:

- The percentage of Delawareans five+ who have received at least one dose is 82%
- The percentage of Delawareans 12+ who have received at least one dose is 87.4%
- The percentage of Delawareans 18+ who received at least one dose is 89.5%
- The percent of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated is 64.6%

The state also told vaccine providers last week that they could begin giving Pfizer booster shots to individuals ages 12 to 15 as soon as five months after they finish their original two Pfizer shots. The FDA and CDC also said that people who got Pfizer or Moderna vaccines could shorten the time for their booster shot from six months to five.

The booster interval recommendation for people who received the J&J vaccine remains at two months.

Individuals younger than 18 are only able to receive the Pfizer vaccine and are not able to mix and match vaccine brands like those older can.

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Flu continues to spread

Public Health said another 80 laboratory-confirmed cases reported the week of Dec. 26–Jan. 1.

As of Jan. 1, 2022, the most recent date for which flu statistics are available, there have been 550 laboratory-confirmed cases for the current season. The cases involved 388 individuals from New Castle County, 67 from Kent County and 95 from Sussex County.

There are likely hundreds to thousands more flu cases, because few are confirmed by a laboratory tests. Many facilities use a rapid test. The state continues to urge people to get a flu vaccine shot.



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STATE OKS VACCINE BOOSTERS FOR AGES 12 TO 15

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Division of Public Health on Jan. 6 said that those aged 12 to 15 may be given booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, as long as their original shots were with Pfizer and were at least five months ago.

The state's move follows the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control's approval last week to expand the emergency use authorization of Pfizer boosters for the age group.

The CDC also shortened the booster interval from six months to five months for people who received Pfizer vaccine. The booster interval recommendation for those who received the J&J vaccine (two months) or the Moderna vaccine (six months), has not changed.

Individuals younger than 18 are only able to receive the Pfizer vaccine, and are not able to mix and match vaccine brands for their booster as older people can.

The FDA and CDC relied on Israeli data that showed there were no safety concerns for 12- to 18-year-olds.

The move comes as the state is grappling with record-setting daily numbers of new cases and record-setting numbers of hospitalizations.

"This is welcome news," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of Public Health. "Vaccines and booster doses offer the best protection against infection, hospitalization and death. I urge all Delawareans who are eligible to receive a booster dose to get one now. If you or your children have not received an initial round of the COVID-19 vaccine series, now is the time to protect yourself, your children and those you love. The more Delawareans who are vaccinated and protected against this virus, the better protected we all will be."

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are seven and 11 times higher, respectively, in unvaccinated adolescents, compared to vaccinated adolescents, the state press release said.

See **BOOSTER** on page 26



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BOOSTER from page 25

The FDA and CDC also moved to allow for moderately or severely immunocompromised 5–11-year-olds to receive an additional primary dose of vaccine 28 days after their second shot. At this time, only the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is authorized for them.

Children in this age group who have undergone solid organ transplantation, or who have been diagnosed with conditions that are considered to have an equivalent level of immunocompromise, may not respond adequately to the two-dose primary vaccination series, and benefit from a third dose, the press release said.

The FDA previously authorized a third primary series dose for use as part of the primary immunization series in individuals 12 years and older.

Delawareans who are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine or booster shot are recommended to seek vaccines at existing vaccine sites, including pharmacies, health care providers, federally qualified health centers, DPH clinics and the following standing DPH vaccine sites:

- Blue Hen Corporate Center: 655 S. Bay Road, Dover, DE 19901
- Georgetown Plaza: 19 Georgetown Plaza, Georgetown, DE 19947
- Canby Park: 1920 Maryland Ave., Wilmington, DE 19805
- University Plaza, 256 Chapman Road, Suite 100, Newark, DE 19702



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