

# MILFORD LIVE



MAJOR SNOWSTORM KICKS OFF 2022

DE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

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JANUARY 4, 2022

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PHOTO BY MARCIA REED

# HEADLINES

A photograph capturing a dense cluster of small birds, likely sparrows or finches, perched on the intricate network of bare tree branches. The branches are heavily laden with a thick layer of white snow, creating a stark contrast against the dark feathers of the birds. In the background, a portion of a house with a white exterior and a dark roof is visible, partially obscured by the snowy branches. The overall scene conveys a sense of a cold winter day.

PHOTO BY RUTH HOUSTON-BEHRENS



# MAJOR SNOWSTORM KICKS OFF 2022

BY TERRY ROGERS

The Milford area awoke on Monday to the first snowfall of the year with accumulations reaching over one foot in some areas. Winter Storm Frida tracked through the Appalachians before reaching the Mid-Atlantic, producing gusty winds and heavy snow.

"We had to close Customer Service due to a power outage and phone outage," Milford City Manager Mark Whitfield said. "We will reopen on Tuesday. If folks need to call regarding trash collection, power outages or snowplows, please call the Public Works office at 302-422-1110. We have also had considerable issues attempting to collect refuse on Monday. We were collecting last Friday's route, due to the New Year's Day holiday on Friday. We suspended collection for the remainder of the day and will collect anyone missed on Tuesday."

Whitfield explained that crews were in on Sunday preparing for the storm by hanging plows, loading salt and checking vehicles. The city has a dozen trucks upfitted and several hundred tons of salt on hand. Crews arrived around 6:30 Monday morning to begin salting roads and started plowing by 8 a.m. Monday morning.

"Our goal was to have at least one pass through neighborhoods during the brunt of the storm," Whitfield said. "We continue through the day until the snow stops, at which time we will start plowing the snow back further to open up the streets."

Driving conditions were very dangerous and the city recommended anyone who did not need to venture out to remain at home or at their place of work until crews had a chance to catch up with the falling snow.

"With the rate of snowfall, it may take a couple of hours between snowplow passes," Whitfield said. "With that rate of snowfall, four or more inches accumulated between passes. If you venture out, please plan accordingly. Additionally, we ask people to use off-street parking areas and do not park on city streets until the roads are cleared."

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# CULTURE



Photo BY TERRY ROGERS



BY BETSY PRICE

Firearm deer hunting starts in January, and the state is encouraging hunters to target does to help manage the size and quality of Delaware's deer population, the [Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control](#) announced Wednesday.

Deer hunting is allowed on all Sundays through January 2022, using only those hunting methods legal for the respective established deer hunting seasons, with additional information available at [www.de.gov/sundayhunt](http://www.de.gov/sundayhunt).

The state also is encouraging successful hunters who wish to donate venison to those in need to participate in Delaware's Sportsmen Against Hunger Program. Field-dressed deer may be donated at participating butchers or at self-serve, walk-in coolers maintained by the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife, with additional information and participating butcher and cooler locations found at [www.de.gov/sah](http://www.de.gov/sah).

## YO, BAMBI AND FRIENDS: FIREARM HUNTING SEASON OPENS IN JANUARY

All donated deer will be processed free of charge to the hunter, and the meat will be distributed to participating charitable organizations serving those in need. Last year, hunters donated 21,000 pounds of venison that provided over 84,000 meals to Delawareans in need.

Firearm hunting season dates opening in January:

- January handgun deer: Jan. 3–8, excluding Sunday, Jan. 2—when hunters may only use archery equipment, including crossbows, to hunt—south of the C&D Canal
- January general firearm deer (also known as the shotgun season): Jan. 15–23, including Sundays
- January muzzleloader deer: Jan. 24–30, including Sundays

Straight-walled pistol-caliber rifles are allowed during the January handgun and general firearm deer seasons south of the C&D Canal.

### **Continuing hunting seasons include:**

- Woodcock and common snipe: through Jan. 17
- Canada goose (migratory season): through Jan. 22
- Ducks, coots and mergansers: through Jan. 31

**See HUNTING on page 6**



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## HUNTING from page 5

- Sea ducks in the Special Sea Duck Area: through Jan. 31
- Brant: through Jan. 31
- Tundra swan (by special permit only): through Jan. 31
- Snow goose: through Jan. 31 and Feb. 5
- Mourning dove: through Jan. 31
- Archery and crossbow deer: through Jan. 31 including all Sundays
- Gray squirrel: through Feb. 5
- Ring-necked pheasant (male only): through Feb. 5
- Cottontail rabbit: through Feb. 28
- Coyote (hunt): through Feb. 28
- Red fox (hunt): through Feb. 28
- Raccoon and opossum (hunt): through Feb. 28\*\*\*
- Beaver (hunt): through March 19, private land only
- Crows: through March 26, June 23–25 and June 30 (Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only)
- Groundhog (hunt): through June 30

Special raccoon and opossum hunting hours during the January handgun, January general firearm and January muzzleloader deer seasons are 7 p.m. until midnight (reference the [2021/2022 Delaware Hunting & Trapping Guide](#) for these deer season dates).

## Continuing trapping seasons include:

- Muskrat, mink, otter, raccoon, opossum and nutria in New Castle County: through March 10 and March 20 on embanked meadows; and in Kent and Sussex counties through March 15
- Red fox and coyote: through March 10
- Beaver: through March 20, private land only
- Groundhog: through June 30

See HUNTING on page 7

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## HUNTING from page 6

The DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife offers many hunting opportunities on state wildlife areas, with details available at [www.de.gov/wamaps](http://www.de.gov/wamaps). Information specific to Sunday deer hunting on state wildlife areas is available at [www.de.gov/sundayhunt](http://www.de.gov/sundayhunt).

A Delaware hunting license or License Exempt Number (LEN) is required to hunt, and most waterfowl hunters are required to purchase a Delaware waterfowl (duck) stamp and a Federal Duck Stamp.

Migratory bird hunters, except crow hunters, also need a Federal Harvest Information Program (HIP) number, which can be obtained through the [DNREC ePermitting](#) system or by calling toll free 1-855-DEL-HUNT (1-855-335-4868). If using the DNREC ePermitting system, hunters can either create a profile or use the “Quick Hunting Registration” option.

Registered motor vehicles used to access designated wildlife areas owned or managed by the Division of Fish and Wildlife are required to display a Conservation Access Pass (CAP). Hunters can opt to receive one free annual CAP with the purchase of any Delaware hunting license. To obtain a CAP, hunters will need the registration card for the vehicle to which the pass will be assigned.

Delaware hunting licenses, Delaware waterfowl stamps and Conservation Access Passes can be purchased online at [www.de.gov/huntinglicense](http://www.de.gov/huntinglicense) or from hunting license agents statewide. Hunters obtaining a LEN are reminded that they should create a profile using the DNREC ePermitting system portal or obtain a LEN at a hunting license agent if they have not already done so. Federal Duck Stamps are available for purchase at U.S.

Post Offices, Bombay Hook and Prime Hook national wildlife refuges and online at [2021/2022 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp](#).

Additional information on hunting seasons and state wildlife areas is available in the 2021/2022 Delaware Hunting & Trapping Guide or by calling the Wildlife Section at 302-739-9912. Information on hunting licenses, the state waterfowl stamp and the Conservation Access Pass is available at [de.gov/huntinglicense](http://de.gov/huntinglicense) or by calling the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife Recreational Licensing office at 302-739-9918.

A photograph of a family of seven—two adults and five children—standing in a field in front of two large white silos. The family is dressed in casual attire, with the adults wearing jackets and the children in various colors like blue, yellow, and orange. The background shows a clear sky and some trees. In the bottom right corner of the photo, there is a small logo for "Mountaire Fresh Young Chicken".

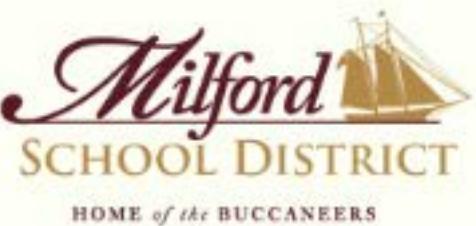
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SITE.



# THE GODWIN-BAKER HOUSE



BY TERRY ROGERS

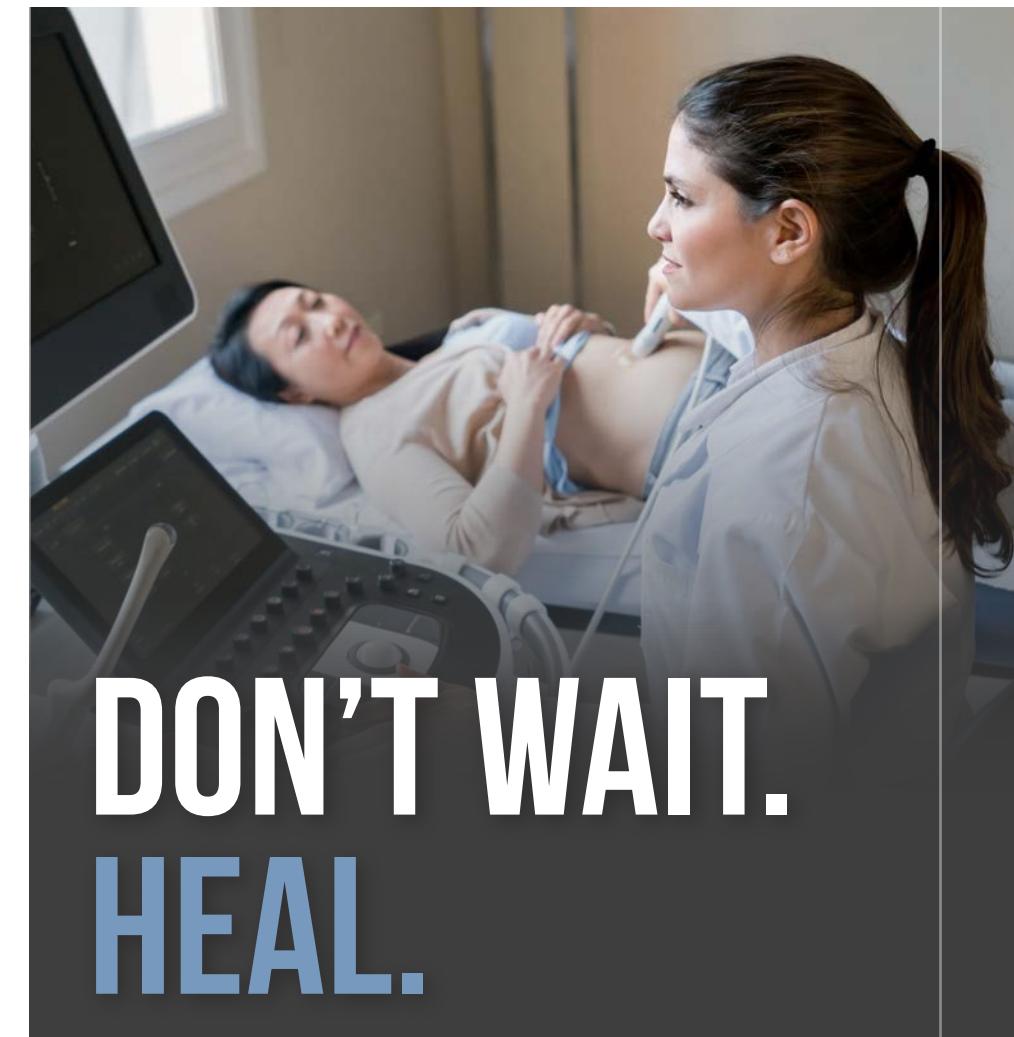
Many long-time Milfordians remember this as the home and office of Dr. John Baker, a pediatrician who also served as the head of pediatrics at Milford Memorial Hospital. However, the home has a much longer history that existed long before Dr. Baker opened his practice there.

Around 1830, a one-story frame dwelling occupied the land where the Godwin-Baker house now stands. It was the residence of William Sammons but was sold to Peter F. Causey in 1846. The land was then sold to Daniel C. Godwin, a prominent businessman, around 1850. Godwin owned a hotel, was a builder and operated the

stage route from Wilmington to Seaford. He also built what is now known as the Pikus Building on the corner of Walnut and Front Streets where he operated a store.

After purchasing the land at what is now 206 North Walnut Street, Godwin built the stately three-story Greek Revival-style home that exists today. He also changed the sloping hill to the terrace look that still makes up the front of the yard. Godwin sold the home to Dr. Robert Frame prior to moving to Baltimore where he later died. Dr. Frame then sold the property to Dr. Robert H. Clark, a paymaster in the United States Navy.

See HOUSE on page 9



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 DELAWARE TECH

## HOUSE from page 8

Dr. Clark beautified the home and added a stunning boxwood garden. A brick bath house once existed in the bank of the terrace. Wooden tubs were placed inside, creating a steam room when the tubs were filled with water.

It is not clear when Dr. Baker purchased the home, but he arrived in Milford in 1932, the first in the town to specialize in pediatrics. Dr. Baker graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and interned at Misericordia Hospital in Philadelphia. During his 53-year career in Milford, not only did Dr. Baker serve as head of pediatrics, he assisted in the design and construction of Milford Memorial Hospital's main building. He was also a president of the Delaware Academy of Pediatrics.

A long-time member of Christ Episcopal Church, the parish house at the church was renamed the Dr. John B. Baker Parish House in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Baker and his wife, Edith Subers Baker. Mrs. Baker passed away in 1990 and Dr. Baker died in 1998 at the age of 93.



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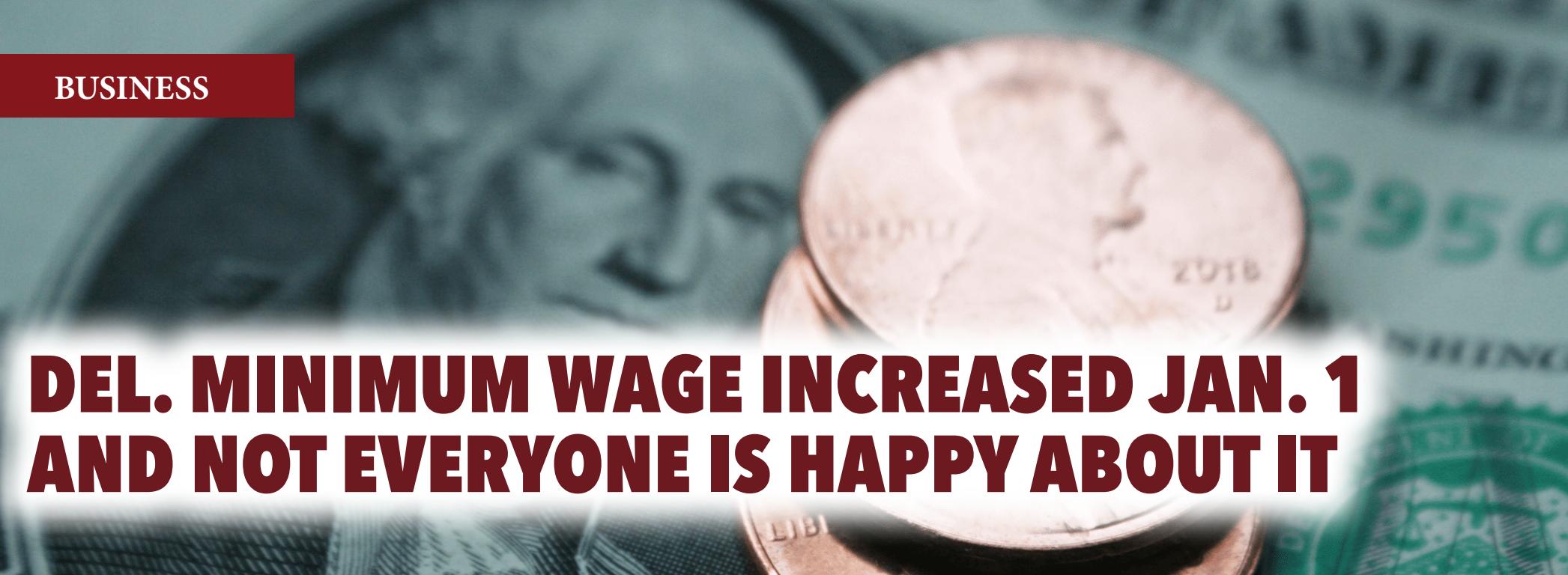
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# BUSINESS



PHOTO BY ANN LEBENGOOD



## DEL. MINIMUM WAGE INCREASED JAN. 1 AND NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY ABOUT IT

BY CHARLES MEGGINSON

With Delaware's minimum wage was set to increase from \$9.25 per hour to \$10.50 per hour beginning Jan. 1, some are still sounding the alarm bell for the impacts such a move will have on small businesses—and consumers, too. The adjustment is the first of four gradual increases slated to occur by 2025. The wage will go to \$11.75 per hour in 2023, \$13.25 per hour in 2024 and \$15.00 per hour in 2025. Gov. John Carney signed the gradual wage hike into law in July.

Senate Bill 15, sponsored by Sen. Jack Walsh, D-White Clay, and Rep. Gerald Brady, D-Greenville, passed along party lines in both the House and the Senate. The bill saw support from some businesses and union leaders but was met with opposition from small-business owners and local chambers of commerce.

Before signing the bill, Carney said that increasing the minimum wage would "lift up those lower-wage workers so that they can provide the same opportunities

for their children that the rest of us can."

Not everybody was as enthusiastic about the bill's signing. Some argued that the increase was too drastic and came at the wrong time.

"I don't think anyone disagrees that a person should be paid an honest wage for an honest day's work, but when you are a business owner you have to put everything in perspective," said Judy Diogo, president of the Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce.

"If you have a 30-year-old who is applying for a position or you have a 16-year-old who is applying for a position, and you need to pay that person \$12 or \$13 an hour—who do you think you're going to hire," Diogo asked at the time of the bill's signing. "Probably the person who has more experience and a better skill set."

But Walsh said Senate Bill 15 was the most important legislation of his career, arguing that it boils down to

**See WAGES on page 12**

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## **WAGES from page 11**

one core principle: that “someone who puts in a hard day’s work deserves to earn enough to keep a roof over their head and food on their table.” Walsh said that his decision to sponsor SB 15 was easy, citing the principles he says the United States was founded on: “equality, fairness, and taking care of each other.”

Regarding the criticism that minimum wage increases could hurt small businesses and cost Delawareans their jobs, Walsh said that’s “simply not true—not true at all.”

“If you look at almost every instance in which we’ve raised the minimum wage, you see the unemployment rate in Delaware fall or remain flat—you see the labor force participation rate increase or remain flat—and you see Delaware’s GDP grow or remain flat,” Walsh said. “The reason is simple. Putting more money in people’s pockets means more bills getting paid, and more money going into cash registers, which results in a better economy for all of us.”

Walsh said that he drafted SB 15 in close consultation with local business leaders and trade groups. “The bill is not a question of pro-business or anti-business,” Walsh said during the signing. “It’s a simple question of whether you believe in lifting people out of poverty or not.”

Diogo disagreed with the notion that small businesses wouldn’t be hurt by the increase. She said at the time that increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour will negatively impact small businesses that currently pay their more experienced workers that rate.

“Minimum wage is an escalator,” Diogo said. “So if you have somebody making \$15 per hour now and

**See WAGES on page 13**



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## WAGES from page 12

you're bringing in new people and paying them \$10 or \$11 per hour—that person making \$15 who's been with you for five years is going to expect an increase."

Republicans in the General Assembly introduced **eight amendments** aimed at easing the minimum wage hike's burden on small businesses and nonprofits and tracking its economic impact. All eight amendments failed.

Bob Older, president and CEO of the Delaware Small Business Chamber of Commerce, said a proposal to increase the wage should have waited at least a year after the pandemic ends and the increase should have totaled no more than 50 cents a year.

"It has already passed and there's not much we can do about it, but no one is going to see an increase in their pocket," Older said. "Costs at the registers because of wage and product cost increases will take care of that."

He argued that consumers are already seeing increases in grocery bills and other expenses, in part because most employers have already had to inflate wages to address the ongoing labor shortage. Those wage increases and the effects they've had on prices offer a grim look into what consumers can expect as wages are increased even higher, he said.

"The labor problem has only gotten worse, and because of it, almost everybody is already paying more than minimum wage—a lot of people are already paying \$12, \$14, \$15 per hour and it's still not helping anybody," Older said. "At this point, it's actually gotten worse for the people this is supposed to benefit, not better."



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# GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



PHOTO BY ANN LEBENGOOD

# DNREC TO CLOSE FACILITIES, REDUCE HOURS DUE TOOMICRON VARIANT



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Citing a surge in coronavirus cases driven by the highly contagious omicron variant, DNREC has announced that it will close or reduce hours for several public activities and facilities.

While state parks, nature and wildlife areas continue to be open, the following closures and reductions in hours will be in effect through the end of January due to current or anticipated staffing shortages:

- The Brandywine Zoo will reduce its open hours to Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in January.
- Public restroom facilities in state parks and reserves will close starting next week. Portable toilets will be available for visitors in place of the public restrooms. Campground facilities will remain open.

- State park offices will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Nature centers, interpretive centers and museums, and the St. Jones Reserve visitor center closed starting Monday, Jan. 3.
- The Ommelanden Hunter Education Training Center will continue to operate with reduced days and hours by appointment only. Details are available at [www.de.gov/ommelanden](http://www.de.gov/ommelanden).
- Indoor programs will either be held virtually or canceled. Outdoor programming and volunteering will continue. Restrictions may apply to outdoor programs. For questions regarding specific programs, contact the office at the park or location where the program is scheduled.

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- First Day Hikes will still occur on Saturday and will have a self-check-in option at each park.

- Mandatory in-person hunter education field days in January will continue, but with fewer students in smaller groups.

In a press release, DNREC encouraged the public to take advantage of online resources, including applications for permits and licenses and virtual educational content. Public hearings and meetings are also virtual with updated information available on the DNREC online calendar at this [link](#).

MILFORD  
**LIVE**

# STATE WILL REFER DADS BEHIND IN CHILD SUPPORT TO REMANNED PROJECT

BY BETSY PRICE

The Delaware Division of Child Support will begin referring men behind in child support to the [Remanned Project Inc.](#), a Wilmington nonprofit devoted to helping men who feel hopeless find their footing.

The ultimate goal is to help the men who want to participate improve their lives and the lives of their children while they work to meet their obligations under court-ordered child support.

The move, announced Tuesday, is through the DCSS Delaware Fatherhood Program. It assists parents in finding resources and tools leading to career employment with the goal of increasing parents' self-sufficiency, while encouraging improved emotional, parental, and financial involvement in the lives of their children.

The state has signed a memorandum of understanding with The ReManned Project, a coaching and consulting

group specializing in personal and leadership development, that will allow it to see specific child support case information and next-step child support services, said Theodore Mermigos, the director of the Division of Child Support Services.

Men who are behind in their payments often don't feel like they have a way to find information that will help them navigate the child support system and deal with child support obligations, Mermigos said. The state hopes Remanned will help bridge that communication gap by building trust in the child support program, he said. "This is done by providing positive reinforcement and resources to navigate challenges faced because of incarceration, violence or poverty," Mermigos said.

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# ØRSTED'S SKIPJACK 2 OFFSHORE WIND PROJECT GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

The Maryland Public Service Commission has selected Danish multinational power company Ørsted's Skipjack Wind 2 for a 20-year Offshore Renewable Energy Credit.

Skipjack Wind 2 is an 846-megawatt offshore turbine project that aims to power approximately 250,000 homes in the Delmarva region with clean energy. Though the energy produced will mostly go to other states, Delaware alone has nearly twice the amount of homes that Skipjack Wind 2 will power.

Skipjack Wind 2 is Ørsted's second offshore wind energy project off the Delaware and Maryland coast. It will be located adjacent to the company's 120-megawatt Skipjack Wind 1 project. The 853-foot-tall GE Wind Energy Haliade-X 12 MW turbines will sit approximately 19.5 miles off the coast of the Delmarva Peninsula, spanning from the waters east of the Rehoboth Beach, Delaware to the waters east of Ocean City, Maryland.

Ørsted will build Skipjack Wind 1 and 2 as one project, with operations expected to begin in 2026.

The company is already developing Maryland's first offshore wind operations and maintenance facility in West Ocean City and in October established Maryland's first offshore wind steel fabrication center at Crystal Steel Fabricators in Federalsburg.

When Trump was president, additional environmental reviews were added for existing projects, delaying development of wind farms authorized during the Obama presidency. Trump's 2020 executive order to ban offshore oil drilling in several states also halted the issuance of new offshore wind leases.

But during Biden's first week in office, he issued an executive order to fast track the approval process for offshore wind leases and environmental impact studies with the goal of deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind power by 2030.

Administration officials estimate that would create 77,000 jobs, power 10 million homes and cut 78 million

**See WIND on page 19**

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In July 2019, Ørsted entered into a non-binding memorandum of understanding with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to construct the Skipjack Wind Farm's interconnection facility on a portion of a site within Fenwick Island State Park. The connection site would have connected directly to the offshore project, delivering power generated by the wind farm to the grid. In exchange, Ørsted would have funded up to \$18 million in improvement projects, including a parking garage, pedestrian bridge, amphitheater, new bathhouses, and a visitor center.

After the agreement was made public, citizens reacted overwhelmingly with outrage that DNREC didn't seek public input first. In July 2020, Ørsted said it would no longer pursue its plans to develop the connection facility at Fenwick Island State Park. It said then it would search for a new site, but a year and a half later, no site has been announced.

Delaware's predominant offshore wind opposition group, 'Save Our Beach View,' is a project of the conservative think-tank Caesar Rodney Institute. "Our precious beach is about to be changed forever if immediate action is not taken," the group says on its website.

The group says Ørsted's 853-foot tall wind turbines will be visible from shore during the day and at night because of the flashing of airplane and ship warning lights. The group believes that will create an "industrial landscape" that will cause coastal tourism to suffer.

In an earlier interview with Delaware/Town Square LIVE News, Dr. Jeremy Firestone, professor and director of the Center for Research in Wind at the University of Delaware, said that on some days, depending on weather conditions, the turbines will be visible from shore.

"On other days, no," he said. "I've toured a couple of wind projects and on those days I haven't really been able to see them until I was three, four miles away."

But Firestone argues that the health- and climate-related consequences of continued reliance on non-renewable energy sources far outweigh objections to the development of wind farms. "Climate impacts of inaction are grave no matter where you live, certainly along the sea," he said. "Coastal residents live in one of the areas that are particularly at risk from a changing climate."

Firestone also warned that continued reliance on resources like coal and natural gas come with public health concerns, specifically within disenfranchised communities. "People who are in more marginalized communities tend to be the ones that are closest to fossil fuel burning power plants and if those produce less of our energy that will be good for them," Firestone said.

While the Maryland Public Service Commission has issued the energy credit, Ørsted has yet to make a final decision as to its level of investment. More details about the impacts of Skipjack 2 will be available after that decision is announced.



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# EDUCATION



# DISTRICT APPROVES MODULAR CLASSROOM REPLACEMENTS

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford School District Board of Education recently approved replacement of four mobile units located on the high school campus. The new unit, which will allow for eight classrooms, will increase the number of classrooms by two while also providing additional security for students and staff.

"This addition allows for better security as all eight classrooms will be under one building, compared to the four we currently have on site," Mike Sharp, supervisor of Buildings and Grounds, said. "This will allow for better control of who has access to the building as a safety measure for students and staff."

The new classroom would also require an upgraded HVAC system. A second proposal was included in the board packet, but Sharp explained staff was not comfortable with the placement of that unit on the Milford Central Academy campus, so they were not ready to obtain approval for that unit at this time. Funding for the new modular classroom would come from Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relieve Funds (ESSER). Dr. Kevin Dickerson, superintendent, explained that the modular classrooms were included as part of the ESSER plan. Board Member Kris Thompson asked if the district was replacing current units that they already owned.

"Yeah, right outside the wrestling room and 618," Sharp said. "We're going to take and remove those as they are past their lifespan. They served us very well. I was out there earlier tonight, and one says 1990, the

other says 1996, another 2000 or somewhere in that area. So, they've done us well, but this gives us an opportunity to upgrade for our students and just get a better security posture for out there because, right now, we have 12 doors in and out of those classrooms and this would give two exterior doors so we could better fit comfortably. So, it gives us positive control of that environment."

Sharp confirmed that the district owned the current units and Thompson questioned what would happen to the older units.

"We could offer them to other districts," Sharp said. "I'm not sure their stability, where they'd be able to be repurposed within our district. The plan could be where we just have to remove and trash. So, we're not sure. We have to have a contractor look at it and make sure they're physically able to get on the road to move to somewhere else, because typically what will happen is somebody in my capacity from another district will offer up a building, and then it's on that person to get that district or entity to come and get them."

Thompson then asked if the cost of removal was factored into the \$836,120 cost presented to the board.

"No, it is not," Sharp said. "That is something I should have hit on. There will be additional costs for the removal of the modular classrooms, site prep, electrical technology and permitting. The contract's also contingent on the permitting process with the city and the fire marshal, which they'll have to get. They'll get the building plans

through the engineer and Willscot Company."

Board member Scott Fitzgerald asked how the new middle school would affect the need for the modular classrooms.

"I think at the end of the day, there will be some impact here," Dr. Dickerson said. "Obviously, at some point in time, hopefully we're in a situation where when a new middle school is built or constructed, that we will have some space over here we can utilize differently. Now, if we do have some modulars that are utilized for MCA, they also may help out the high school or, depending on our growth, over here. So, if it was right now at the grade level, we should have some space. We may not need those modulars to the same effect here."

Dr. Dickerson stated that as the opening of the refurbished middle school gets closer, the district will need to take a look at growth, but that he anticipated continued growth that would require the additional modular classrooms. He also stated that the board needed to move quickly to be sure the classrooms were in place and ready for students before the 2022-23 school year.

The board approved the request for the new modular unanimously.

MILFORD  
LIVE



# MILFORD FACES SIGNIFICANT BUS DRIVER SHORTAGE

Viramontes, who has a valid bus driver's license, to pick up routes from time to time.

"But we do have concerns as we go through the winter months," Dr. Dickerson said. "If we do go down some drivers, we are going to have to do some problem solving. It may mean that we have a bus or two that may have to go back and do pickups later on. But when we run into situations, we will communicate as early as we can with families, and we have here recently with a message to just have other plans in place just in case."

The bus driver shortage is not unique to Milford. Districts across the state are struggling to run bus routes due to a lack of bus drivers. Although this shortage is not new as contractors have been reporting a lack of drivers for over a decade, the recent pandemic and a labor shortage overall have made the situation much more serious.

There are several factors that are feeding into the shortage of drivers. Current drivers are ageing, and younger people are not stepping up to take their place. Currently, the state uses a formula to pay contractors and districts which is meant to cover equipment, maintenance and driver pay. The districts cover 10 percent of the cost while the state covers 90 percent. For many years, bus contractors have been claiming that the contract does not cover actual costs and needs to be overhauled.

According to the Department of Education, bus drivers

in Delaware earn between \$13 and \$19 per hour while bus drivers for the city of Wilmington earn between \$19 and \$22 per hour. DOE has requested additional funding for 2023 which would increase driver pay to \$20 per hour.

Dr. Dickerson stated at the Dec. 20 board meeting that the district had been able to run all bus routes, something that was a tribute to their contractors and drivers as well as Jon Lobiondo, Transportation supervisor.

"We just appreciate all of the work they've done here to continue our routes, but we are concerned here with the winter months," Dr. Dickerson said. "We are just making sure we keep ourselves staffed with bus drivers and aides appropriately on the bus."

MILFORD  
LIVE



BY TERRY ROGERS

On Sunday, Jan. 2, Milford School District notified parents that Milford High School students would operate on a remote learning schedule on Jan. 3, 2022. The virtual learning requirement was due to a significant bus driver shortage. Although a snowstorm closed schools completely on Monday, the shortage of bus drivers in the state has grown to unmanageable levels.

"One thing I have to say, our contractors, our bus drivers really work together to make sure we run all our routes this year," Dr. Kevin Dickerson told the Board of Education at their regular meeting in December. "We've had to collapse some routes at times and make routes where we've had employers help some of our bus drivers be able to maybe get off work a little bit earlier so they can drive a school bus."

Dr. Dickerson explained that they have called in the district's transportation administrative assistant, Rose

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# HEALTH



PHOTO BY ROBERT J. NEARY PHOTOGRAPHY



# STATE HIT 3,381 NEW COVID-19 CASES ON DEC. 29

BY BETSY PRICE

Delaware saw 3,381 new positive cases Dec. 29 after all the reports were in, the Delaware Division of Public Health said Dec. 31. That broke the record for a daily total, which already had broken the most-new-cases record when only part of the testing was in and the state said it was 1,991.

On Dec. 31, Delaware said there were 2,162 new cases—but not all of the records were in yet. With many people clamoring for tests and saying they can't find open slots, Delaware also said that 485 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 as of Dec. 30. The previous high was 474 on Jan. 12, 2021. The numbers are expected to continue rising as a result of holiday activities.

The Public Health announcement encouraged people to not to get together Friday night, New Year's Eve, with anyone outside of their household. "Infected individuals can release particles and droplets of respiratory fluids that contain the SARS CoV-2 virus into the air when they exhale," the announcement said. "When people

gather indoors—where they share the same air—the very fine droplets and particles will continue to spread and can accumulate, and infection is likely.

The weekly report said that because of the large volume of COVID-19 lab results being received during the week, and the time needed to process the results into the database, some data is not available this week.

That includes the weekly tally of unvaccinated/partially vaccinated case, hospitalizations and deaths, as well as the tally of which variant is causing the most cases (in recent months, it's been Delta and no Omicron) and breakthrough case data.

The state said:

- 180,366 Delaware residents have been reported since March 11, 2020.
- The seven-day average of new positive cases was 1,503.1, a huge jump from last week's 850.6 per day.
- The seven-day average for the percentage of total positive tests 18.4%, up from 12% last week

- The 485 who are hospitalized are up 84 from last week.
- 55 are critically ill, up three from last week
- 2,286 have died from COVID-19.
- In the last week, 15 more people have died.

Vaccinations continue to creep up. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- The total number of doses administered in Delaware is 1,556,217
- The percentage of Delawareans 5+ who have received at least one dose is 81.2%
- The percentage of Delawareans 12+ who have received at least one dose is 86.7%
- The percentage of Delawareans 18+ who received at least one dose is 88.7%
- The percent of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated: 64.2%

To find a vaccine, go to [www.de.gov/getmyvaccine](http://www.de.gov/getmyvaccine) and [www.de.gov/boosters](http://www.de.gov/boosters). Delaware's latest COVID-19 vaccination statistics can be found under the Vaccine Tracker dashboard at [www.de.gov/healthycommunity](http://www.de.gov/healthycommunity).

## Shorter isolations, quarantines

The state told employers and schools they could begin using the short isolation and quarantine periods now advocated by the Centers for Disease Control allow people who test negative after five days to leave isolation as long as they continue to mask for five days to minimize the risk of infecting others.

Using the new guidance can reduce the impact of illness on a business or school's workforce, the state said.

See COVID on page 26

**COVID from page 25**

## Flu Update

Influenza cases are continuing to rise in Delaware, with 126 laboratory-confirmed cases reported the week of Dec. 12–18, bringing the state total to 352.

Only a small fraction of cases are lab tested, though, so hundreds to thousands more are likely to have occurred. Many cases are tested in doctor's offices with a kit and not reported to the state.

The known flu cases involved 249 individuals from New Castle County, 40 from Kent County and 63 from Sussex County.



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# MILFORD LIVE SPORTS

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PHOTO BY KEVIN EICKMAN



**BY KEVIN EICKMAN**

Milford wrestling coach Don Parsley is more than a fixture for the Buccaneers, he is possibly an institution. Having been the head coach of wrestling for over 32 years, he has always produced competitive teams, garnering state team titles as well as numerous individual state title winners during his time at Milford. All the while, it has never been about him, it has been the about the athletes he has coached and the people they have become. If you do something long enough and well enough however, eventually you accomplish something tangible.

That was just the case in the final dual-meet of 2021 as Milford defeated Lake Forest 54-19, back on Dec. 21. Normally, we would take you through the meet mechanics—the wins, the losses, the pins. However, this was more about Parsley as he recorded the 300th dual-meet win of his career. That is rarefied air, while

## PARSLEY GETS 300TH

there have been other wrestling coaches in Delaware who have achieved the milestone, there aren't that many. Speaking with Parsley recently, he took time to share his thoughts on the accomplishment. "I can tell you this much, it's not a goal you set for yourself. You just set out hoping that you can do a decent job, the furthest thing from your mind is getting to a number of wins that high," Parsley said. "My only thought was to get our first win and then move on from there. I have always maintained the same philosophy, just get better every practice, every match and the wins will take care of themselves."

Parsley has two children, his son Nate and daughter Nikki, who are both NCAA coaches. When asked about how he felt about that, Parsley took a bit of a moment to catch himself and shared what he thought about their choice of vocation. "I think it's great that they have gotten into coaching and are doing well at it. They were both great athletes growing up, but I think that when they saw what a difference coaching could make, I think that is when they made that commitment to serve as athletic coaches," Parsley continued. "It was really an environment they were immersed in and brought them to where they are today. Not to brag, but I have World and Olympic Champions at my dinner table, as well as just any other wrestler without the fame. My children came to understand that everyone needs a mentor, but not just for athletics, but more as an educator."

**See PARSLEY on page 29**



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## PARSLEY from page 28

As is obvious by now, Parsley is a huge family man and the person who has stood beside his life the entire time is his wife, Bonnie. "I can honestly say I don't know where I would be without her. She has been my strength and my source of inspiration. I could not even begin to recount the sacrifices she has made, so that our family could pursue our dreams. She is truly the love of my life, and this accomplishment is as much a reflection on her as myself," Parsley said.

On the night he achieved his milestone, Parsley was stunned to see the generations of alumni that turned out to recognize him. "It has been a privilege to have coached as long as I have and to see the wonderful people of this community come out and offer congratulations to me. It was honestly something I didn't expect, it was very humbling for me," Parsley concluded.

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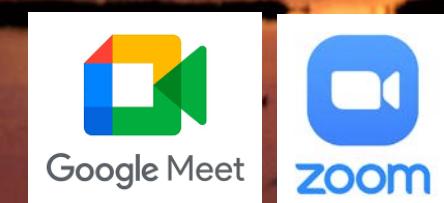
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