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MIKE BOYLE DEFEATS CHALLENGER



DELAWARE'S HOUSING CRISI



CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL
HEALTH OPENS



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PHOTO BY MARCIA REED

HEADLINES



PHOTO BY SCOTT EVERS

INCUMBENT MIKE BOYLE DEFEATS CHALLENGER, OTHERS WIN UNOPPOSED

BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Incumbent Milford City Councilman Michael Boyle has won re-election.

Boyle triumphed over challenger Linda Bretzer in the Ward 1 election Saturday, winning 99 of the 119 votes.



Five of the nine council seats were up for election, but incumbents Andrew Fulton, Brian Baer, Katrina Wilson and Mayor Arthur Campbell were uncontested.

They and Boyle will serve two-year terms.

The election was the city's first using the Department of Elections voter rolls rather than the city's own.

That was expected to increase turnout by expanding the number of eligible voters. It didn't.



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CULTURE



PHOTO BY MARCIA REED

CITY OF MILFORD, DOWNTOWN MILFORD, INC. TO UNVEIL PHOTO STOP



PRESS RELEASE

The city of Milford and Downtown Milford, Inc. (DMI) will unveil a new #photostop in the heart of Downtown Milford—the Mispillion River, which splits the city into two counties, Kent and Sussex—on Saturday, May 21 at 11 a.m. The public is invited to witness the unveiling.

The new photo opportunity will be designated by two 60-inch plaques mounted to the brick flower planters in front of the Santa House/North Pole Creamery (1 S. Walnut St.). In time, the new Walnut St. bridge deck design will also incorporate a county line designation.

“Milford is unique in its geography, claiming both Kent and Sussex counties as home, and it’s time we

finally capture the opportunity to be in two places at once,” said Sara Bluhm, city of Milford’s Economic Development & Community Engagement Administrator. “The city is thankful to DMI and its Design Committee for bringing this project to life!”

“This is another great project that highlights the beautiful Mispillion River,” said Janne Collins, executive director of Downtown Milford, Inc., “and the plaques give people a goal to reach in the downtown that will lead them to explore more of the charming town of Milford, DE!”

Funding for the signs was provided to DMI by WSFS Bank.



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BUSINESS



Q2 PHOTO BY MARCIA REED



BY CHARLIE MEGGINSON

Evidence continues to pile up that Delaware is struggling to provide affordable housing:

- **Data** released April 21 by Housing Alliance Delaware says the state faces a shortage of more than 18,000 affordable and available rental homes for extremely low-income renters.
- Also on April 21, Delaware State Housing Authority **announced** that eligible Delaware renters can now receive up to 18 months of rental and utility assistance instead of 15—through its Delaware Housing Assistance Program, commonly known as DEHAP.
- An annual household income of \$46,846 would be required to reasonably afford a two-bedroom rental home in Delaware according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition.
- The fair market rate for that home would be \$1,071 per month, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- There are currently only 27 rental properties on Zillow in the entire state of Delaware for \$1,071 per month or less.

DELAWARE'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS AFFECTS MIDDLE CLASS, TOO

- In 2019, 38% of Delaware households struggled to make ends meet, according to the United Way of Delaware.

While many programs are aimed at Delaware's lowest-income earners, people in all segments of the economy are affected. Steve Lenhoff, a marketing professional for a large Wilmington bank, has lived with three roommates in a four-bedroom apartment in Bear for the past couple of years. Recently, the four roommates decided it was time to go their separate ways. Lenhoff quickly learned that finding a rental home in Delaware would not be as easy as it was just a few years ago.

"I started with a list of probably about 10 to 12 apartment complexes that I would be happy living in," Lenhoff said. "I narrowed it down to three or four very quickly just because there was no availability at a majority of them."

He began exploring his options and ultimately found that buying a home would cost about the same as renting. He decided to go in that direction instead.

"I had to have a decent amount of savings built up for it and that's the first hurdle that so many people are not able to overcome, unfortunately," he said. "The monthly amount I'm going to be paying in a mortgage probably lines up with what I would be paying in rent for an apartment."

With rising costs and stagnant wages, others who live paycheck to paycheck often do not have spare money to contribute to savings. That's just one of the many factors that contribute to the crisis Delaware—and the rest of the country—faces in terms of providing affordable housing for low- and moderate-income earners.

There are many causes, experts say, including insufficient government investment in affordable housing, burdensome regulations on landlords which result in higher prices, rising costs throughout the economy, and stagnant wages.

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HOUSING from page 9

Surprisingly to some, there's one group of people who most experts don't point to when assigning blame for the crisis: Landlords.

"I don't think we can put the blame on developers or landlords," said Sarah Rhine, housing unit manager with Community Legal Aid Society, Inc., which monitors fair housing violations. "We need more subsidies, we need more vouchers and we need more public housing, but we also have to think of subsidies more broadly. We need more investment in the development of units that are accessible, too."

Landlords, however, feel that they're being targeted, and the narrative that rising rents are the result of landlord greed has been perpetuated by two Democratic bills moving through the Senate.

"Being a landlord is really important work," said Debra Burgos, president of the Delaware Apartment Association. "You are responsible for someone's home, where they live. Ultimately you do need to make sure that your business is making money because you need money to maintain and take care of that asset."

"But that asset is someone's home, and it's something that most landlords take very seriously," she continued. "They want to provide safe and affordable housing."

What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing doesn't only refer to income-restricted units or ones that accept Housing Choice Vouchers, formerly known as Section 8.

Housing is affordable when someone is able to spend 30% of their income or less on it, including utilities, said

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See HOUSING on page 11

HOUSING from page 10

Dr. Ann Aviles, associate professor of human development and family sciences at the University of Delaware. One could calculate an affordable monthly rate for rent and expenses by dividing annual income by 12 and calculating 30% of that figure.

“When we say affordable, I think people just assume public housing,” Aviles said. “That is important—people who are really struggling financially definitely need that support. But I also think those middle-income folks are being left out of the conversation.”

Those low- to middle-income earners who struggle to find affordable housing are characterized by United Way of Delaware as “ALICE” households. ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Individuals in that group live above the Federal Poverty Level, but don’t have enough income to meet their basic needs. They often earn too much to qualify for government and non-profit assistance but aren’t financially stable.

“Sometimes we refer to the ‘working poor,’ but that’s not exactly right because ALICE folks are not necessarily poor,” said Dan Cruce, chief operating officer of United Way of Delaware. “These are folks who are working hard, who are unable to save, unable to find stable housing and unable to plan to buy. That is a crisis in and of itself.” The number of ALICE households in Delaware is greater than the number of households below the Federal Poverty Level.

According to United for ALICE—a United Way project—in 2019, 38% of Delaware households struggled to make ends meet. While 11% of those struggling house-

See HOUSING on page 12



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HOUSING from page 11

holds were living below the Federal Poverty Level, 27% were ALICE households. The data is old, but Cruce said “it hasn’t gotten better.”

ALICE households are especially vulnerable as a result of record inflation and stagnant wages. The cost of household essentials, such as housing, education, child care, food, transportation and health care, are rising faster than the cost of other goods and services.

That has a disproportionate impact on Delawareans living paycheck to paycheck, Cruce explained. Those individuals and families can quite literally observe the effect of rising costs on their weekly budget.

“Many of the folks who need our help are not the folks that we see on certain campaigns,” he said. “We actually work with them. We interact with them on a daily basis.”

Experts point to a number of factors when assigning blame for the affordable housing crisis. Among those factors:

- A hesitancy on the part of developers to build new housing after the 2007-2008 subprime mortgage crisis
- Irresponsible planning and zoning
- NIMBYism, or “not in my back yard-ism,” opposition by residents to proposed developments in their local area
- Burdensome regulations on developers and landlords

What’s happening to landlords

Democrats in the Delaware General Assembly have responded to the housing crisis by crafting legislation they say will protect renters and expand housing inventory.

[Senate Substitute 1 for Senate Bill 101](#) would guar-

antee tenants the right to legal counsel in eviction proceedings and establish an eviction diversion program aimed at resolving disputes after a landlords files for eviction.

Proponents say the bill is necessary to protect tenants, most of whom cannot afford legal representation and are outmatched when they arrive in court for their eviction proceedings.

Opponents say the bill will force landlords to retain legal counsel for procedural eviction hearings—a cost that will inevitably get passed down to tenants in the form of rent increases.

A second bill recently passed in the Delaware Senate—[SB 90](#)—would mandate that landlords accept Housing Choice Vouchers, formerly known as Section 8 vouchers.

Advocates say landlords should not be able to discriminate against potential tenants simply because their rent is subsidized by the government. Making all rental units accessible to voucher recipients will drastically increase the inventory of affordable housing options, they say.

Detractors say Housing Choice Voucher recipients are not the problem, but rather the system itself, which they say imposes burdensome requirements and administrative costs on landlords and is marred with delays and inefficiencies. The Delaware Apartment Association’s Burgos said landlords should have a choice whether to accept vouchers or not.

Her association is a non-profit trade organization that represents about 60% of all multi-family rental owners and managers in Delaware.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)



Milford School District
Morris Early Childhood Center
Kindergarten Registration Information

2022-2023 School Year

March 10 (Thursday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
March 14 (Monday)	8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
March 29 (Tuesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
April 6 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
April 12 (Tuesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
May 4 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
May 19 (Thursday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
June 1 (Wednesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
June 7 (Tuesday)	4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Important notes:

- Please call 422-1650 to schedule a date and time
 - Please indicate if you will need an interpreter
- Child must be 5 years old by August 31, 2022 to begin kindergarten
- You must bring your child for screening on your scheduled date and time to assist

Documents required for registration include:

- State Issued Birth Certificate (with raised seal)
- Proof of Residency (utility bill, lease agreement, mortgage papers) within the Milford School District
- Guardianship/custody information if applicable
- Immunization (shot) record
- Physical Exam
- Tuberculosis Risk Assessment or PPD results
- Lead test result

*Please note: Any family who is interested in being considered for the 2022-2023 Spanish Immersion Program lottery will need to register on or before June 7th. Any late registrants will be added to the waiting list.



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EDUCATION





BY JAREK RUTZ

Republicans are going all in this year to support their candidates for school board elections that take place in three weeks.

The Delaware State Republican Party sponsored a “Super Saturday Day of Action” Saturday to encourage volunteers to meet candidates and help them campaign.

The right-wing Patriots of Delaware last week sent out an email saying “it’s time to double down on the presser, Don’t let up because things are getting BETTER,” and asking people to sign up to help their candidates’ campaigns.

A group of organizations, such as the ACLU, the Delaware PTA, the NAACP and the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence on April 26 will launch a series of six public forums about candidates running for New Castle County schools.

CONSERVATIVES MARSHAL FORCES AS SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS NEAR

And here’s the kicker: Until recently, school board elections traditionally have been considered apolitical. Candidates don’t register by party. They register by school district.

Today, conservatives argue schools have not been transparent with what they are teaching. With COVID-19 forcing children to learn from home, parents have had more exposure to what their children were being taught—and they weren’t all happy about it.

They are upset over critical race theory, which teaches that America is racist at the core of its laws and institutions. They’re also upset with a perceived increase in education on sexuality and gender identity, particularly in elementary years, as well as transgender bathroom use and sports activities.

Jane Brady, chairwoman of the Delaware State Republican Party, boiled the GOP’s battleground issues in the upcoming elections down to one theme: a parent’s right to know.

“A parent has the right to know what’s in their child’s curriculum and what you’re teaching them,” Brady said. “And it’s their right to know what’s going on with their child with regard to gender and sexuality.”

See **SCHOOL** on page 16

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All Delawareans 12+ should get a COVID-19 vaccine booster.

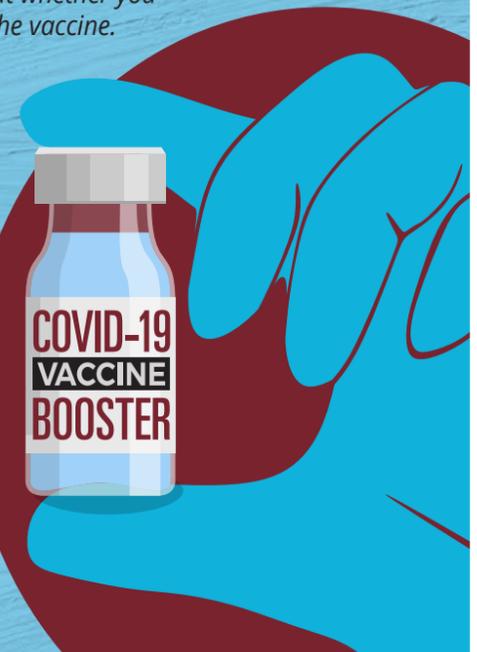
COVID-19 vaccines are incredibly effective against death and hospitalization. But due to new and existing variants, as well as decreasing effectiveness against the virus over time, it may be time to boost your protection. **Find out if you’re eligible and schedule your COVID-19 vaccine booster.**

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Received Johnson & Johnson single dose	Yes, if you are 18+ AND it has been two months since your first dose.

If you are 50 or older, or have a weakened immune system, talk to your health care provider about whether you should get a second booster dose of the vaccine.

 de.gov/boosters



SCHOOL from page 15

At the same time, progressives are pushing schools to expose students to systemic racism in America, as well as foster discussions about LGBTQ+ issues and making sure a school's faculty represents the demographics of the community it serves.

"Our student population of color is not matched with our staff," said Betty Wyatt, running for a seat in Lake Forest against DJ Silicato and Jake Martinez, "and we need to make a real effort to make sure that students sitting in a classroom see people who look like them."

Mike Matthews, former president of the **Delaware State Education Association**, said the politicization of school boards doesn't worry him because politics is involved in everything that goes on in the lives of educators and students.

"Who passes laws that impact the policies and salaries of educators? Politicians," he wrote in a Facebook message to Delaware LIVE. "Who writes regulations and standards that educators are supposed to teach and students are expected to learn? Knowledgeable and experienced bureaucrats appointed by politicians. Who approves collective bargaining agreements between a district and the local union? Elected school board members."

Politics aren't a dirty concept, Matthews said, and although politics always plays a role in education, partisanship has created very contentious school boards in recent years. "I will tell you there's only one party in the state today that has expressly endorsed candidates and it ain't the Democratic Party," he said.

See SCHOOL on page 17



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Endorsing candidates

There are 42 candidates campaigning across 16 different counties for the May 10 election. Thirteen districts have contested seats. Brandywine, Christina and Cape Henlopen each have an uncontested race.

The GOP supports every Republican candidate but specifically endorses everyone who is the sole Republican candidate in that district, offering help with door-to-door campaigning, emails and phone calls.

Five candidates took them up on that offer, including James Casper (Red Clay), Matt Bucher (Milford), George Del Farno (Seaford), DJ Silicato (Lake Forest) and Jonathan Snow (Smyrna). A full list of all GOP candidates can be found [HERE](#).

Brady said that most of the candidates need help just letting people know they're Republican so they are aware of how they align to key issues like gender identity and race.

To that end, the party had a "Super Saturday Day of Action" on April 23 so volunteers could meet candidates and help them campaign. They had a similar event on April 10.

The Patriots of Delaware email said the organization had put a lot of effort into encouraging candidates to run and now needs volunteers to help them. One of the easiest things people can do, the email said, is encourage people to attend one of their three meetings in the next two weeks. It did not say who its candidates are and they are not listed on its website.

They will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 26 at Greenwood VFW; 6 p.m. Thursday, April 28, at the Greene Turtle in

Dover; and 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 3, at the Greene Turtle in Dover. Participants will need to pay for their own dinners at the Greene Turtle.

The Delaware State Education Association doesn't endorse candidates, but its county groups do. Efforts were unsuccessful to reach them for comment.

Travis Williams, executive director of the Delaware State Democratic Party, said the party is not officially endorsing anyone. There is no mechanism for endorsing candidates unless it is a partisan race, which he said school board races are not supposed to be.

However, he said, the party is ramping up efforts to email and call Democratic voters to encourage them to show out to the polls in May.

Voting guide

Jill Itzkowitz, who chairs the [League of Women Voters](#) voting and elections initiatives, agreed that it can be hard to identify which side a candidate adheres to. The League has recently published an online [voting guide](#) for each school board race.

Itzkowitz said candidates are contacted several times to answer the same questions, and about 75% of candidates have responded to the prompts this year so far—a higher mark than in previous years, she said. Smyrna School District is the only district where the League has received little to no responses from candidates this year, she said.

There's an art to asking questions that help voters, Itzkowitz said. The League wants to get meaningful answers but doesn't want to overwhelm candidates to the point they don't respond.

A few years ago, they began by asking very specific questions on controversial issues: "What do you think about gun control," for example. Conservative candidates told them that the question was not properly phrased. Last year, the League asked more general questions that weren't so controversial.

"Then people with really diverse views sounded pretty similar and you couldn't tell the difference between candidates," Itzkowitz said.

This year, the League went back to the controversial questions so voters get a better sense of candidates' positions on hot-topic issues such as book banning and systemic racism.

The six pivotal questions they chose were:

- What is your background and how do those experiences and skills allow you to be an effective school board member?
- What is the single most important issue facing your school district and how would you address it?
- Several school boards have banned books due to parental objections. How would you address these concerns, and are there books you would consider to be inappropriate? If so, please elaborate.
- What policies can school boards adopt to curb systemic racism and ensure equity for students and staff?
- How would you change, if at all, the present "Unit Count" funding system to give school districts more control over funding and to ensure equity for all students?

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HEALTH



PHOTO BY ROBERT J. NEARY PHOTOGRAPHY

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CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH OPENS IN MILFORD WELLNESS VILLAGE

BY TERRY ROGERS

What began as a mother's effort to get help for her children led to the creation of Champions for Children's Mental Health, a child mental health agency now located in the Milford Wellness Village. Barbara Messick, executive director, explained that when her son was two, she was basically a prisoner in her home because she could not take him to the grocery store with her.

"I spent years upon years trying to find services for my own children, mainly my middle son," Messick said. "He had been kicked out of daycare. They told me he was never going to make it in school, things like that, so you try to find help. You go to your pediatrician, and they are like "well, come back in six months. He spoke very well for just being two, so well I just knew he would be a politician. He was a runner, so I couldn't go to Walmart to get groceries because I had an infant in a car seat and a four-year-old. When he darted off, what was I supposed to do? Run after him and leave the other two or just let him go in the parking lot. Either way, it was going to be a DCF call."



Messick stated that if her mother or her husband at the time did not go with her, she could not leave the house. She tried specialists and experts who began telling her that there was something wrong with her, that she was a bad mom and that she wanted something to be wrong with her son. She started believing them because, as she said, they were the experts.

"Come to find out, it wasn't me, it was more the state did not have services for children his age," Messick said. "So rather than telling me that, they simply put it all on me. Then, the state got a grant for mental health services for kids under seven and we were the first family to get home-based parent-child interaction therapy and that started my journey with child mental health. It worked so well because they were in our home. They were dealing with the issues right where they occurred, not in an office. In an office, my kid could behave for 15 or 20 minutes, but when we got home and I am trying to cook dinner or give baths, it was so

See **CHAMPIONS** on page 20

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different. They came in and they did not work with just him, they worked with all three of my kids. Because my husband at the time was a commercial fisherman, he was never home, and I was really a single mom.”

After a few months of therapy, the family began to venture out into the community and her son began to learn the right skills to deal with his mental health issues in public. After graduating from the program, Messick took her children to Disney World, something she could never have done before the therapy.

“I was used to being a prisoner in my home,” Messick said. “But here I was in Disney World with my three kids. And they got compliments on their behavior. Yes, I will preach that service to anyone who wants to listen. For any mom or dad who has to take care of a child and have been made to feel like they are so horrible because of their behavior to let them know there is help out there.”

The family was such a success story, Messick was asked to share her story. Initially, she said absolutely not because she did not do well with public speaking, explaining that speaking in front of people scared her to death. They asked her to think about it and she did, remembering that it was not long ago that she could not even leave her house and now she was getting compliments at Disney World which can be stressful for families who do not have a child with mental illness.

“So, I started doing some public speaking and, in 2012, the department offered me a contract to do work with families who were in similar situations as we were, actually working with the same program,” Messick said. “I was like, okay. I was going through a divorce so it

worked for me because I could work my schedule around my kids. It was just wonderful. So, I started with that and I loved it. This wasn’t what I wanted to do, I was in school for occupational therapy, but I fell in love with it once I started doing it.”

Eventually, the state asked Messick if she could create a service in Delaware that offers families who have kids with mental health disorders or diagnoses peer support using her own experiences. She agreed and Champions for Children’s Mental Health came to life.

“I worked with the state and developed family peer support based on my own experiences,” Messick said. “I created what would have helped me if it had been available. What I wish I would have had when I needed it. We provide what the family needs when they need it. If they need a shoulder to cry on, we got you, we can do that, we will likely cry with you. But once the tears are done, we will create a plan to help you move forward because we are not going to stay in this low place.”

A lot of what the program does is help people navigate through the many systems that provide help for children with mental health. The school system is a huge advocacy, and they do a lot of IEP meetings, teaching families that it is not an “us vs. them” issue. They are the bridge that helps families understand their rights and responsibilities. They also help professionals understand that the parents are not trying to be right or difficult, but they simply do not understand why their child is still having problems when they have had a plan for six years. Messick does not call it mediation because that is not what they do, but more a support system.

“You walk into a room for an IEP and they have a whole table full of people and you are just one person,” Messick said. “We do a lot of roleplays before we go, making sure they know what is going to happen. We also make sure they represent themselves appropriately, like don’t show up in your pajamas. We have a list of questions, and we go with them so if they get overwhelmed, we can ask for a break for a few minutes. We get them back on track saying “did you want to cover your list or do you want to wait til next time?” So, it is just that extra support.”

In addition to the family supports provided by her agency, Messick explained they also try to find natural supports, so the family does not have to depend on someone getting paid to help them. They ask what support system is already in place and they often hear that the parents have no one. Messick explained they then ask who the mom or dad would call if they got a flat tire or if their child was having a meltdown. Often, the response is a grandparent, someone from church or a best friend.

[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

BAYHEALTH SPOTLIGHT: KRISTEN GUN

extremely careful coming home from the hospital and all he wanted was to be held by his mom—it was heartbreaking.” Persevering through that challenging time built character. “My workload doubled during the most severe seasons of COVID, but the unity established at Bayhealth among our team really shined during that time. I knew I was never doing any of it alone,” Kristen said.

Relationships are a big motivating factor that keep Kristen coming back day after day. The connection with her patients means everything: truly getting to know them, educating through the therapy process and helping them recover. Kristen has been with Bayhealth for almost five years now but has been an RT since 2014.

During the time Kristen was in college, her grandfather got critically ill. She was planning to pursue nursing, but his situation guided her decision to go into respiratory therapy. She shared that he passed away before she finished her schooling, which ignited her passion for RT. Kristen strives to honor her grandfather; working diligently to help patients recover and go home to their families. Those positive outcomes keep her going.

Kristen values the team that she is a part of at Bayhealth. She said she has truly grown in confidence and knowledge. She is looking forward to pursuing more of the opportunities available for her to further her education and deepen relationships with her team.



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PRESS RELEASE

Compassionate and hardworking is Respiratory Therapist Kristen Gun, RRT, at Bayhealth Sussex Campus. Rounding to nearly every department, her job consists of more than just nebulizing treatments and inhalers. Intubating, extubating, pulmonary function tests, and BIPAP/CPAP are just a few of the many services Kristen and her Respiratory Therapy (RT) peers provide on a regular basis. However, her most important role is being a mom to her 17-month-old son. Kristen said he is the reason why she works so hard to help others.

As one of the frontline workers in the midst of COVID, a respiratory disease, Kristen reflected on how challenging it was for her son. She said, “I needed to be

COVID CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS RISE ABOUT 50% IN LAST MONTH, STILL LOW

BY BETSY PRICE

The daily average number of COVID-19 cases in Delaware has risen by 50% in the last month, but is still miniscule compared to the thousands per day in January.

As of Thursday, the number of daily new cases, averaged over seven days, was 157.1, up from 94 on March 25. The number of hospitalizations was 25 Thursday, up 10 from March 25. Six people are in critical condition, up four since March 25, according to the Delaware Division of Public Health.

The division now is issuing monthly roundups of statistics, instead of weekly, but all the information can be found online and on social media each day.

Deaths remain low, with two during the last month, and 57 added to the rolls from a review of vital statistics. The state will hold a memorial service May 3 for the dead and the people who lost family members and friends. Delaware has seen 261,118 COVID cases since March 11, 2020.

The state is still warning people to watch out for the flu. There were 251 laboratory-confirmed cases reported

the week of April 10-16, the most recent date for which flu statistics are available. There have been 1,708 laboratory-confirmed cases for the current season, an increase of 807 since March 25.

The cases involved 793 individuals from New Castle County, 371 from Kent County and 544 from Sussex County.

Because only a fraction of case are confirmed by a lab, there likely are thousands of other cases that have occurred or are circulating.

In addition to staying home if you have flu-like symptoms, and taking antiviral medication as directed, DPH recommends that you:

- Practice social distancing by keeping your distance from well people if you have cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Wear a well-fitting face covering if you feel ill and have to go out in public to a doctor's appointment or pharmacy.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and dispose of tissues immediately; if no tissue is available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow.

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POLICE & FIRE



CITY AWARDS POLICE STATION CONSTRUCTION BIDS

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a special meeting of Milford City Council, bids for the construction off the new police station were presented. Richard Y. Johnson & Son, the project manager for the product, opened bids for the various aspects of the construction on March 22, 2022, and all bids provided were valid for only 30 days, requiring the need for a special meeting. Final bid estimates place the cost of the building at \$16,171.916, although the city will only need to borrow \$15,366,322, well below the \$20 million cap placed on the project by voters.

“I’ll start off here this should be this is a culmination of about six or seven years’ worth of work, coming to the point of awarding bids for the police station,” Mark Whitfield, city manager, said “I’d like to say it was it’s a bit climatic, but it is thanks to the job that Becker Morgan, as well as our city staff, Mike Svaby and Lou Vitola. I’m happy to report that all the bids came in just

as Becker Morgan told us they would way back when, so I wish I had a lot of surprises to tell you about but there’s very few surprises.”

According to Svaby, director of Public Works, the bids were divided into 17 sub-bids based on trades. Svaby stated that the bids needed to be awarded by April 21 in order to be under the 30-day requirement.

“In some cases, you can reach out to vendors and say ‘Hey, can you extend us another 30 days?’ In some economic environments they would,” Svaby said. “Steel is of grave concern as a commodity to us and there’s two elements in this project where steel is upgraded, packed naturally in the framework and raw materials, and also in the mechanical systems. So that accounts for about \$4 million worth of the contract. So, we have to keep a close eye on the clock.”

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POLICE from page 24

All bids also included five alternates that were bid separately beyond the base bid for the building. These included upgrades to Northeast Fourth Street, Reduction in the rear parking lot, sod for the front of the building, a maintenance building and a high-density filing system. Staff recommended that the sod and maintenance building alternate be declined as it would increase the price of the building significantly. The upgrade of the Northeast Fourth Street, parking changes and the filing system were recommended for approval.

“But the first alternate was the rehab of Northeast Fourth Street and that was an important one to us. We didn’t want to have a new facility shined up and polished looking and have not so great a street so that was one alternate,” Svaby said. “We wanted to review the size of the parking lot in an expanded fashion. We considered putting sod in the front yard. We considered a storage building for the site in addition to the regular police headquarters building. And the last alternate, alternate five was a hybrid city filing system. I’ve seen those in action. They’re very impressive. They’re a thing of the future in as much as it’s still a way to maintain our files, but it’s a technologically advanced piece of equipment.”

Dean Johnson of Richard Y. Johnson and Sons outlined each individual bid and stated who the apparent low bidder was for each portion of the building. The majority of the contractors were local to Kent or Sussex counties, Johnson stated. Whitfield explained that there was bond money available that could cover the cost of

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the maintenance building at a later date with some reconfiguration. City Finance Director Lou Vitola provided details on how the cost of the police station, using conservative figures as far as interest rates, would impact the average homeowner.

“Once we pile on all those costs to get a grand total for the whole project, based on those base bids, less our cash financing, you reach a financing requirement which when you do the math equates to \$102 a year or \$8.51 a month for the average residential property taxpayer in Milford,” Vitola said, basing the figures on a home valued at \$150,000. “You’ll see in the excerpt from publications we put out when you were describing the process and the facility during the referendum and the potential for the debt financing to the community. And what we put out there was that yes, there’s a \$20 million limit. But there’s hope the building could be as low as \$12.5 million, but most likely in the \$15 to \$17.5 million range and we’re there.”

Councilman Jason James applauded the work staff had done on the bids for the new station.

“I just want to acknowledge hard work that people put into anything, and I want to acknowledge the mayor also, because when he saw the costs start to escalate, and he knew that the citizens put their trust in us to stay at a certain range,” Councilman James said. “We gave them our word. They voted on a referendum based on what we told them that we could possibly do. And he was determined that we stay within those boundaries, so we did not deceive the taxpayer. I think that’s huge. I think the mayor deserves a lot of credit for standing

firm on that. And the staff who put their heart in it, I much appreciate it, Mark and Lou as well as the committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee. Everyone played a very important role for this very important endeavor. And all the work that the chief has taken on being the quasi project manager on this police station. I’m sure you learned a lot about cost of things while you were going through this. And that’s all I wanted to acknowledge everyone and tell everyone a big thank you for getting this done.”

Councilman Culotta reminded everyone that costs go up in construction every year, but that in the past two years, costs have considerably risen. Mayor Archie Campbell asked if there were any details on how much the school referendum would raise prices. At this time, the district had not filed for permits on the new building and Councilman Mike Boyle pointed out that the information on the potential increase was available from the school district. Mayor Campbell reminded council that the citizens were looking at three tax increases between the police station, the school and the reassessments in Kent and Sussex counties. Councilman Culotta pointed out that council could only worry about the police station increase.

“And I always like to disclose and make sure that it’s because people do get confused,” Councilman James said. “It was something my wife asked me. But the city of Milford, City Council, city administration has no weight and no bearing in what the school tax does. That’s done at the district level. The city of Milford does not assess a school tax at all. We have no part of that.”

All but two low bids were approved by council with a vote of seven to zero as Councilwoman Katrina Wilson was not present. Councilman James and Councilman Culotta abstained from two votes as they had contracts with the contractors outside of council. The contractors awarded the bids can be found in the City Council Agenda Packets on the city website.



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MILFORD CUSTODIAN ARRESTED FOR CHILD PORN AFTER BEING REPORTED BY TWITTER

BY BETSY PRICE

A Milford school custodial employee was charged with three counts of dealing in child pornography after being reported by Twitter, according to court records.

Darin A. Albright, 57, is being held on \$180,000 cash bail at the Sussex County Correctional Institution, according to the Delaware Department of Justice. His charges are Class B felonies, which carry penalties of up to 25 years with a mandatory minimum sentence of two years. If convicted of all charges, Albright could face six to 75 years in prison.

Families in Milford were alerted Saturday by telephone message that a school custodial worker had been arrested on child porn charges. No Milford students were involved, and the images were pulled from the internet, according to the message from Milford Schools Superintendent Kevin Dickerson.

Albright was arrested April 21 after the Delaware Child Predator Task Force received a tip from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. It said that Twitter reported a user allegedly engaging in physical sexual assault of multiple minors. Twitter reported that one account was telling another account that he was engaging in sex with with his 10-year-old daughter and it included a photo of a dressed girl performing a sex act on a sitting male.

Delaware officials tracked the Twitter account to Albright in Milford and obtained a search warrant. Albright was detained in a traffic stop a short distance from his home and taken to State Police Troop 3 before the search warrant was executed.

Albright admitted creating a fake Twitter account and posing as a married female user starting about three

months ago, court records say. He said he has received both adult and child pornography and that he sent three photos of child pornography to two or three other Twitter users as recently as April 21, court records say.

“While this is an active investigation and we are limited in what we can say, we will continue to act on this kind of evidence as aggressively as we would if these children were our own,” said Delaware Attorney General Kathy Jennings. “Nothing matters more than protecting our kids.”

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