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January 17, 2023
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Mispillion Bridge Hit Again



Block Grants Need Applicants



Winter Sports at Parks & Rec

HEADLINES



photo link: Killens Pond State Park

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BY TERRY ROGERS

The Mispillion Bridge, located on Rehoboth Boulevard, has been inoperable since it was damaged by a truck towing construction equipment struck it in December 2021. Initially, DelDOT indicated it did not intend to repair the bridge, leading to lawsuits from the owners of fishing vessels housed at the Vinyard Shipyard over the winter. In July 2022, DelDOT announced they planned to repair the bridge. However, those plans have been delayed after another vehicle struck the bridge again on Dec. 30.

“The carrying capacity of the bridge was not compromised, so it remains open to vehicle traffic,” Jason Hastings, MCE, PE, Chief of Bridges and Structures with DelDOT, said. “We are assessing the new damage to determine if additional materials will be required for repair beyond what is already planned to take place this year.”

MISPILLION BRIDGE DAMAGED AGAIN

According to Hastings DelDOT plans to move forward with the repairs which will allow the bridge to reopen to marine traffic and that it expects the work to begin soon.

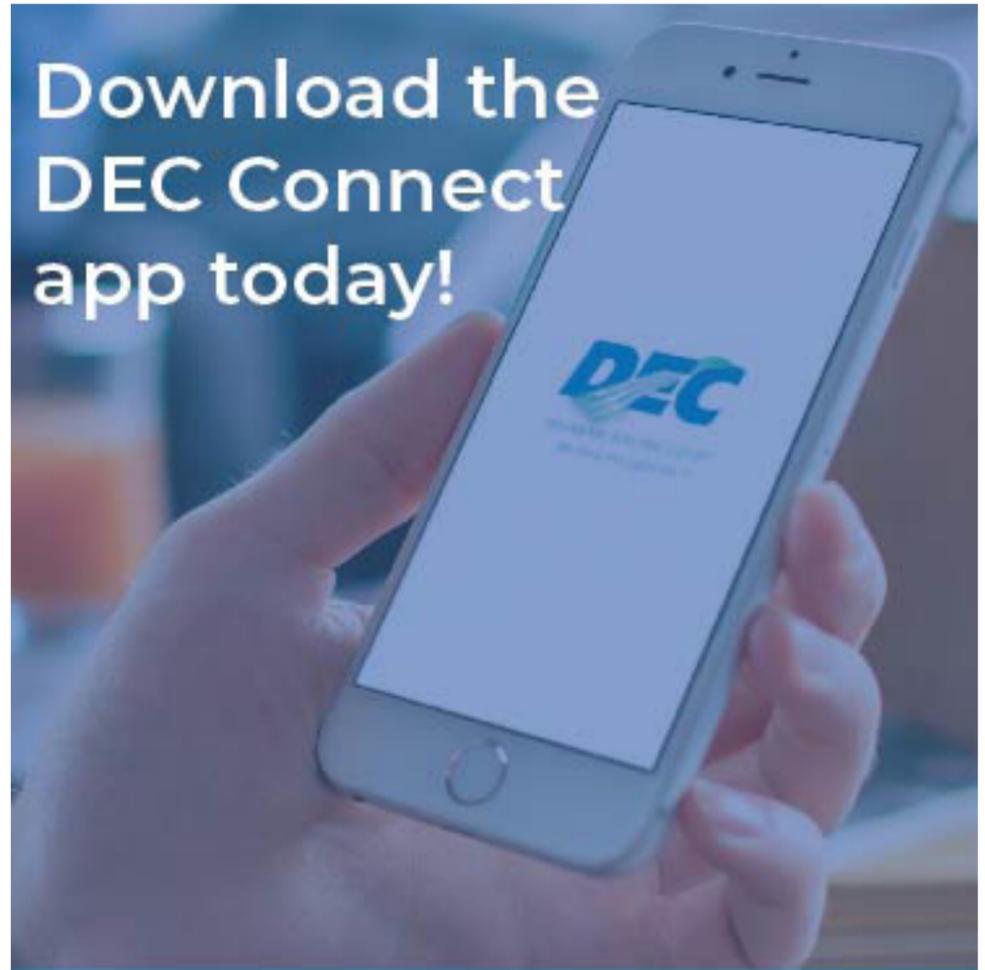
“We can’t say why the bridge has now been struck twice in the past year as there is posted signage about height clearance before and on the bridge itself,” Hastings said. “We are evaluating whether additional measures need to be installed to help warn drivers of the vertical clearance.”

The concern has been since the initial damage that if the bridge is opened to marine traffic, it may not close again. There were also some concerns that the bridge may actually collapse as some of the support mechanisms had been damaged. DelDOT did not want to open the bridge to any marine traffic until repairs were made for these specific reasons.

The Mispillion Bridge is considered historic, built in 1929. It carries more than 10,000 vehicles each day. Although marine traffic has dwindled over the years requiring the bridge to be opened less often than in previous decades, the Vinyard Shipyard offers storage of several fishing vessels that require the bridge to open periodically.



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Anniversary

CULTURE



Photo link: Marcia Reed



BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford Public Library held its first comicon on Thursday, Jan. 12. The all-day event, dubbed “741.5 Con” after the section of the Dewey Decimal system categorization of comic books, had activities for people of all ages, although most of the day was geared toward young children.

“We had quite a few children come out to participate” Carolyn Tabor, program coordinator, said. “The children were able to make buttons and create their own comic book. We showed superhero movies all day and held a costume contest. There were even competitions designed for teens in the evening.”

MILFORD LIBRARY HOLDS FIRST COMICON

Tabor agreed that holding an event like this on a Thursday was not ideal, but they were not sure what type of response they would get. They do hope to make this a much larger annual event, holding it on a weekend, as the library did receive considerable feedback from those who would have liked to attend, but could not as it was a work or school day.

“We are trying to come up with more events for teens and young adults,” Tabor said. “This being our first time attempting a convention of this type, we are still learning. We have the amphitheater outside that is under-utilized and we hope to move this to the spring in order to capitalize on the Riverwalk and the grounds outside the library.”

Ella arrived at the library wearing her Wonder Woman costume, explaining to everyone that “Wonder Woman’s human name is Diana.” Other children were dressed as princesses and other superheroes.

“We are always looking for ideas for teens and young adults,” Tabor said. “We welcome volunteers who would like to help us make these fun events happen.” For more information, contact the Milford Public Library at 302-422-8996.

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BUSINESS



Photo link: Marcia Reed



DMI SEEKING VOLUNTEERS FOR COMMITTEES

BY TERRY ROGERS

Downtown Milford Inc. has a goal to vitalize the downtown area in order to create a destination not only for those who live locally but also to entice others to come discover what downtown has to offer. Executive Director Janne Collins explained that the organization uses committees to achieve those goals, all of which are in search of volunteers.

“We are an accredited Main Street America member which means we follow their plan for the revitalization of the downtown area,” Collins said. “We are guided by our Board of Directors, led by our president, James Rabe, that is open to business owners who want to grow the downtown area. They meet the first Tuesday of each month at the DMI office starting at 5:30 p.m.”

Also led by Rabe is the Organization Committee which meets the second Tuesday of each month via Zoom which creates a strong foundation, sustainable revitalization efforts and cultivates community partnerships, Collins explained. This committee is responsible for creating and managing social media pages, the website and developing lists of resources for the downtown Milford area. Collins explained that DMI’s footprint includes North and South Walnut Street that extends through the downtown area. It extends down Southwest Front Street, out to the Riverwalk Shopping Center, down Northwest Front Street to Parson Thorne Mansion. It also extends down Maple Street to Westside Restaurant, around City Hall to the Vinyard Shipyard and Mulholland Spoon Mill.

See DMI on page 8

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“Our Organization Committee is looking for people to assist with website design as well as grant writing,” Collins said. “The goal of that committee is to ensure community engagement and encourage partnerships across sectors, including the Milford Museum, Milford Parks and Recreation as well as the Milford Public Library and Milford Senior Center.”

Currently seeking a chairperson, the Promotions Committee promotes a positive image of downtown to residents, shoppers, visitors and investors. The committee’s goal is to position the downtown commercial district as the center and hub of the community.

“We want to showcase the community’s unique characteristics like the Riverwalk, our charming downtown, things like that,” Collins said. “We do that partly by having festivals and activities in the downtown, whether it is a scavenger hunt or a huge festival. Last year, our festivals and activities, including the Farmer’s Market, brought more than 30,000 people into downtown Milford. This was not just local people. This is why DMI is here, to revitalize the downtown, not just for local people, but people outside of Milford. We don’t want to deter locals from coming downtown, but we have to pull people in from outside of Milford in order to truly revitalize. That is the ultimate goal of promotions to show people all over Delmarva that Milford is a destination.”

All the committees at DMI have some overlap, Collins explained, especially the Promotions and Economic Vitality Committee. Led by Dave Pickrell, the Economic

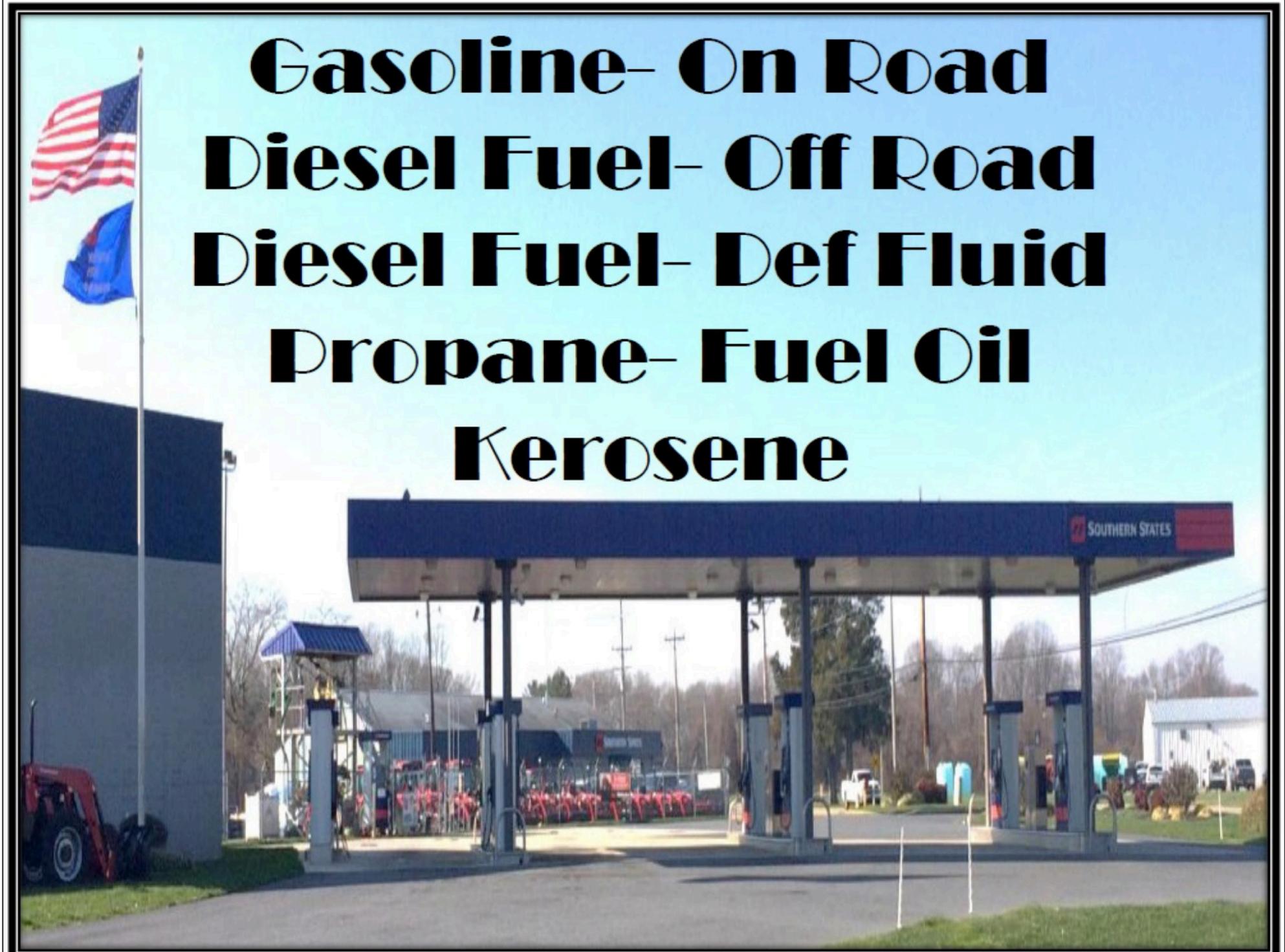
See DMI on page 9

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Vitality Committee meets the third Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. at DMI. This committee assists new and existing businesses while also working to recruit new business in the downtown region. In addition, the committee works to create a catalog of property available for new businesses, something they are working to develop.

“Main Street has a vision for what downtown should look like,” Collins said. “It should be mostly shopping and restaurants, not office space. Ours is top heavy with office space right now, but we are starting to get more shops. It’s diversifying in that regard, slowly, but it is moving in the right direction. One of the things we’ve learned through Main Street is, they did a study on this, if you are walking through a downtown and you go more than 20 feet without seeing a shop where you can look in windows and see things they have, people will turn around and go back to their car. They will not continue exploring your downtown.”

Joe Phillips heads the Design Committee which meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Causey Mansion. Collins explained that this committee is responsible for creating a beautiful downtown.

“They put all the flowers out, they decorate the downtown for each season, they make sure we have banners in place,” Collins said. “They were responsible for the military recognition banners and the international banners that were placed in the downtown area. They support the community transformation by enhancing the physical and visual elements in the downtown while

See DMI on page 10



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capitalizing on our unique assets like our Riverwalk and they celebrate our historic character as well. They encourage people to create public spaces that are beautiful and accessible.”

Collins stated that some committees are formed from other committees. This includes the Farmer’s Market which was originally under Promotions but has grown so large it has become its own committee. Led by Melissa Pingue and Shelby DiCostanzo, this committee meets the second Thursday of the month at 5 p.m. at the DMI office. This committee handles anything to do with the Farmer’s Market.

“This is ideal when we develop something that is sustainable, that can operate on its own,” Collins said. “That is the model we want to follow. We want things that are repeatable. Third Thursday is a good example, if there was a Third Thursday committee that would enhance those events.”

Volunteers can serve on more than one committee if they choose, Collins explained. Currently, DMI is creating an Arts and Humanities Committee with the goal of not only bringing more arts, music and cultural events to downtown, but provide a group where local artists, writers, historians, genealogists, photographers, dancers, videographers and others who work in the art realm can share ideas as well as work together to promote the arts in Milford.

“That committee is open to anyone who wants to be part of it,” Collins said. “One thing that is a common misperception is that DMI is only for downtown businesses. We are open to anyone who has a passion for

revitalizing the downtown area. People who live in Ellendale, Lincoln, Houston, Slaughter Beach, South Bowers, even Frederica and Harrington, come to Milford to shop and participate in activities. Although our footprint focuses on growing the downtown, we welcome anyone who wants to see the downtown become a destination for visitors and residents.”

Anyone interested in volunteering for a committee or the Board of Directors at DMI can reach out to Collins by calling 302-839-1180 or emailing director@downtownmilford.org.



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GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



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COMMUNITY BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM NEEDS APPLICANTS

BY TERRY ROGERS

In December 2022, Brandy Nauman, director of Sussex County Community Development informed Milford City Council that her organization was seeking applicants for the 2023 Community Block Grant program. This program could award more than \$2 million in funding to Kent and Sussex Counties for housing rehabilitation projects for low-income families. These projects range from sewer and water hookups, handicap ramps, demolition and more. However, as of the Jan. 9 city council meeting, there had been no new applicants for Sussex County.

“As a reminder, both counties, Kent and Sussex are looking for help with eligible households for the CDBG,” Katrina White, deputy city clerk, said. “Brandy Nauman has sent a follow-up email to get names for Sussex County’s waiting list as there remain no names from Milford and without at least four, they are unable to ap-

ply to the state of Delaware for review.”

Wilson continued that the deadline for applications was initially the first week of January in order for the applications to be submitted to the state by the first week of February. Since none had been received, Nauman was asking the city to identify low-to-moderate income homeowners who could benefit from the program as soon as possible in order to get the applications submitted.

In the last five years, Milford has received over \$420,000 in funding from the program with about 18 households assisted. In order to continue receiving the grant funds, Milford must show a need in the area which is why it must have at least four properties on a waiting list. Nauman explained in December that they prefer to have at least six.

See GRANT on page 13



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GRANT from page 12

“The funding can be used for small infrastructure projects, like sidewalks or water-sewer infrastructure, but those projects typically require a lot of planning and engineering as well as a match from the city,” Nauman said. “Normally, we do things like rehab or demolition. We have funding for some water and sewer hookups, but that is something we address for unincorporated properties when they want to connect to a county expansion.”

In order to qualify for the program, property owners must have an income that is 120 percent of the poverty level. In Kent County, that means a household with one person must earn less than \$43,250 while in Sussex County, they must earn less than \$53,800. Amounts vary depending on how many people live in the home.

Anyone interested in applying should contact Sussex County at 302-855-7777 or Kent County at 302-744-2480 as soon as possible.



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CITY CONTINUES TO GRAPPLE WITH HOMELESS DISPLACEMENT

BY TERRY ROGERS

Just before the Christmas holiday, Milford Advocacy for the Homeless and the city of Milford learned that property on East Masten Circle was sold to a developer who planned to clear the land in early January. The land was the location of Tent City, a small homeless encampment with approximately 40 people living in tents on the property. Through the efforts of Councilman and Vice-Mayor Jason James, the developer agreed to delay clearing of the property for one week to give MAH and other entities time to address those who would be displaced. Over Christmas weekend, when temperatures dropped well below freezing, the city opened its Public Works building as a warming center while others worked to find a solution for those who were being forced from Tent City.

“We want to thank the mayor and vice mayor for their continued partnership and support to address those members of our community who are displaced. We also want to thank the officers who monitored and assured

safety to everyone. The warming center provided shelter for 17 displaced people that weekend during the dangerously low temperatures. Let me tell you a few of the lives that you affected by opening up the warming center,” Martha Gery, founder and CEO of MAH said. “We had people who were living in unheated tents, in abandoned buildings who were deprived of heat and food. Two of them had hypothermia upon entering the center, one we treated there with heat. The other had severe hypothermia and was sent to the hospital. After a couple of hours of treatment, she returned and remained the rest of the weekend. If the warming center had not been open, they would have spent the weekend in temperatures going to minus nine degrees with a windchill factor. The use of the Public Works building as a warming center literally saved the lives of our Milford citizens that weekend.”

See **HOMELESS** on page 15

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HOMELESS from page 14

Gery plans to present proposals to the city to continue the emergency warming center at the Public Works building when prolonged freezing temperatures are expected. She is also asking the city to include in its annual budget funds for a warming center as well as additional funds to support those displaced in the community. Gery explained that the need for low-income housing in Milford is much higher than the options available which results in more people living on the street. She also noted that there is not much forestation left in the city and what is available is privately owned which means many of the homeless have nowhere to go. Although MAH is attempting everything possible to address the situation, much is left to be done.

“For 20 years, I shouted at the top of my lungs when no one in Milford wanted to recognize Milford’s homeless,” Councilwoman Katrina Wilson said. “When no one wanted to help the homeless. I saw it coming. All of us did. It was just hidden a little bit better. But now that it’s here and Milford is taking major steps, because that was a major step for the city of Milford, I just want to say that I definitely want to be part of this. I want to get on this ride so we can see this thing through. Maybe, in the next couple of years, we’ll have made some progress and have something more permanent in the city of Milford, especially for the size that we are compared to towns throughout Delaware.”

Mayor Archie Campbell stated that he learned more about the plight of the homeless at a meeting held just after Christmas where some of the residents of Tent City

See HOMELESS on page 16



The poster features a cartoon robot holding a beach ball, a smiling sun, and a beach umbrella. Below the robot, the text reads "Beach Babies Child Care" and "Where Learning Is Fun". The main headline is "NOW HIRING ALL CLASSROOM POSITIONS!" in large, bold, blue letters. Below this, it says "MILFORD, LEWES, REHOBOTH & TOWNSEND!". A QR code is positioned in the center, and the "DELAWARE STARS" logo is to its right. At the bottom, there are illustrations of diverse children and the website "BEACHBABIESCHILDCARE.COM".



The advertisement features the Goldey-Beacom College logo at the top right. The main headline is "NEW GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS" in large, bold, yellow letters. Below this, a list of programs is provided: "Certificate in Marketing", "Certificate in Human Resource Management", "Certificate in Health Care Management", "Certificate in Entrepreneurship", and "Certificate in Information Technology". Three diamond-shaped photos show graduates in blue and black gowns. At the bottom, contact information is provided: "LOCATION: 4701 Limestone Road, Wilmington, DE 19808", "CONTACT: 302-225-6248, Admissions@gbc.edu", and "WEBSITE: www.gbc.edu/". The background shows a building with the college name.

described how they ended up homeless. Mayor Campbell explained that anyone in the room could be in that situation at the drop of a hat. However, he also explained that he had spoken to Mayor Bill West in Georgetown where a pallet city was currently planned who wanted to make it clear that the pallet city did not mean Georgetown was the location to send every municipality's homeless. Mayor West told Mayor Campbell that that pallet city could only take around 40 people and that there were strict rules and restrictions.

"The very fact that one woman came into Public Works who was frozen is concerning," Mayor Campbell said. "When she came in, we had to ship her out to the emergency room, call an ambulance. We had to put that on us. In Newark or Wilmington, someone froze to death that week that we had the Public Works building open. The people there were so thankful. We had Code Purple at two churches, the women at the Nazarene and men at Avenue. Because we opened our center, they had less people. In fact, one day at Avenue Church, not one person showed up. They all came to the center which was a major plus for us."

Gery stated that the issue many faced is that not all of the homeless qualify for other programs as many are employed or receive benefits of some type. She also explained that some of those in Tent City have mental issues that will make it difficult to get them to move. Although many had been placed in programs, most of those programs were short-term which means some may return to homelessness once the program ends. Councilman James explained that Brandywine was

assisting MAH with trying to get people placed, doing assessments and working with those who struggled to understand what was happening.

"We are not going to solve the homeless problem this week, that's impossible and it's not going to happen," Councilman James said. "What I want this council to think about, because this is what I am hearing from constituents, particularly the Fourth Ward because that is where all the homeless population is. It affects the whole city, but particularly in the Fourth Ward, individual residents and the business community. I think the city has a dual role here to do as much as possible, to facilitate as much connection with services as possible, whether it's through Milford Advocacy for the Homeless, with Martha. We have David's House; we have several organizations that are involved. But I've heard loud and clear that doing nothing is not an option. Not that it was an option before, but it's definitely not now. So, this council needs to think about how do we help, what does participation from the city mean?"

Councilman James continued that council should not make decisions lightly as they are stewards with a responsibility to taxpayers as well. He also pointed out that there was not a readily available plot of land to relocate this small group of people. This meant that council needed to look at both short- and long-term options.

"I have learned that not everyone is homeless because they choose to be," Councilman James said. "Some are just a victim of circumstance so anything we do as a municipality will be helpful. I've examined a lot of mu-

nicipalities on how they approached the homeless and it seems to me there has always been a partnership with a non-profit group, for-profit enterprises and the municipality to address it. None of these have been able to do it alone. It has taken all three of those to do it together and I don't think it would be any different for Milford."

Councilman Todd Culotta agreed with Councilman James, stating that this was a bigger discussion that could not be resolved in one council meeting.

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EDUCATION



Photo link: [Milford School District](#)

THREE SUSSEX CHARTERS ASK FOR MORE LEGISLATIVE HELP

BY JAREK RUTZ

Officials from three Sussex County charter schools told state representatives Jan. 12 they need more legislative support to best help their students and communities.

“We don’t have the available resources for a wellness center,” said Eric Anderson, head of **Sussex Academy**. “Our kids are like any other, and they need these supports.”

His school hosted a joint breakfast that included **Sussex Montessori**, the **Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence**, local education groups and a few state legislators. Anderson pointed out that charters rarely receive capital funding from the state, unlike district schools.

“We have to raise money ourselves for most projects,” he said, “and that’s money that’s being taken out of the classroom.”

Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, who sits on the House Education Committee, said some Delaware legislators feel unfavorably to charters. “That’s why it’s crucial you

have lobbyists,” Collins said. Anderson said charters do, and pointed to Kendall Massett, executive director of the **Delaware Charter Schools Network**.

Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Magnolia, said it’s important for legislators to come to events such as the joint breakfast.

“We need to find a way to get legislators in the room and listen to schools,” he said. “Education is rooted in everything and it’s where the fight is, because children are our leaders of tomorrow.”

The breakfast also allowed the Sussex charters to showcase themselves, listing enrollment, core values and classroom philosophies.

Chantelle Ashford, head of Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence, a charter that will open this fall, said equity is one of her school’s core values.

To truly achieve that, she said there needs to be universal access to local resources, which again starts with the legislature.

See **CHARTER** on page 19

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CHARTER from page 18

Stevenson School's other principles are excellence, community, hope and voice, she said.

Sussex Montessori, which has 403 students enrolled, states its mission is "to nurture the development of empathetic, collaborative, persistent and innovative global and community citizens in accordance with the time-tested philosophy of Maria Montessori."

Its Head of School Lisa Coldiron said a strong community bond and partnership is important for the success of any school.

"These children aren't just children of one school, but they're all of our children. They're Delaware's children," she said. "We have to own that and collectively put them in the best position to succeed, regardless of what school they come from."

Sussex Academy's Anderson agreed, saying that charters by nature are meant to serve specific needs and one school might meet a child's needs better.

"But if we all work together," he said, "we collectively can have everything for everyone."

Sussex Academy, which grew in enrollment during the pandemic after it began offering classes for grades six through eight, now has 1,118 students.

The charter's mission is "to foster academic achievement and social responsibility in a small school environment where students participate in a highly accelerated college preparatory program that prepares them for the technological and global mindedness needed for the 21st century and that instills ethical conduct and service to others in their day-to-day lives."

The need for collaboration echoed throughout comments during the breakfast.

"Just like charters and district schools need to break down the barrier, let's break down the barrier between Sussex, Kent and New Castle County," said Caroline O'Neal, executive director of Reading Assist. "We aren't different countries, and we need to work together."



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HEALTH



Photo link: [Bayhealth Medical Center](#)



BY BETSY PRICE

The number of post-holiday COVID-19 cases is dramatically down this year than it was last January, according to the [Delaware Division of Public Health](#).

This time last year, the state saw 3,666 new cases reported on Jan. 6 with 759 hospitalizations on Jan. 12. This year, there were 266 new cases reported on Jan. 6, with 202 hospitalizations (24 critical) on Jan. 10.

The reduced number of new cases can partially be attributed to the number of people who test at home and don't seek tests in clinics or hospitals, where they would be reported to the state.

The lower number of hospitalizations likely is because the current strains of COVID-19 are not causing as much serious illness, partly because vaccines have helped prevent that.

Even with the encouraging signs, Public Health urges people to stay healthy and prevent the spread of the virus by staying home when sick, testing when symptoms

COVID-19 SURGE FAR LOWER THAN 2022

appear or when exposed to someone with COVID-19, staying up to date with vaccinations and boosters, and considering wearing a mask in crowded spaces.

COVID stats

Those who may want to seek treatment for COVID-19 include people who are 50 years or older (especially over 65, as risk increases with age); unvaccinated; having chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, a weakened immune system or other underlying conditions.

Public Health stats released Friday show Delaware has:

- Total positive cases since March 11, 2020: 324,137*
- 7-day daily average of new positive cases: 221.3, an increase of 62.2 average new positive cases reported since Dec. 15, 2022
- 7-day daily average for the percentage of total positive tests: 15.5 percentage points, an increase of 6.1 percentage points reported since Dec. 15, 2022
- Hospitalizations: 202 current hospitalizations, 24 critical hospitalizations
- Total COVID-19 deaths: 3,220
- 2,099,714 vaccine doses administered
- 77.2% of Delawareans 5+ fully vaccinated
- 81.3% of Delawareans 12+ fully vaccinated
- 82.9% of Delawareans 18+ fully vaccinated
- 73% of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated (CDC data): 73.1%

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Don't let COVID-19 freeze your holiday season.

COVID-19 doesn't just crash holiday get-togethers — it cancels them. So whatever you're celebrating this season, make sure you've gotten your bivalent booster and follow these other steps to stay safe and leave COVID out in the cold.

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SPORTS

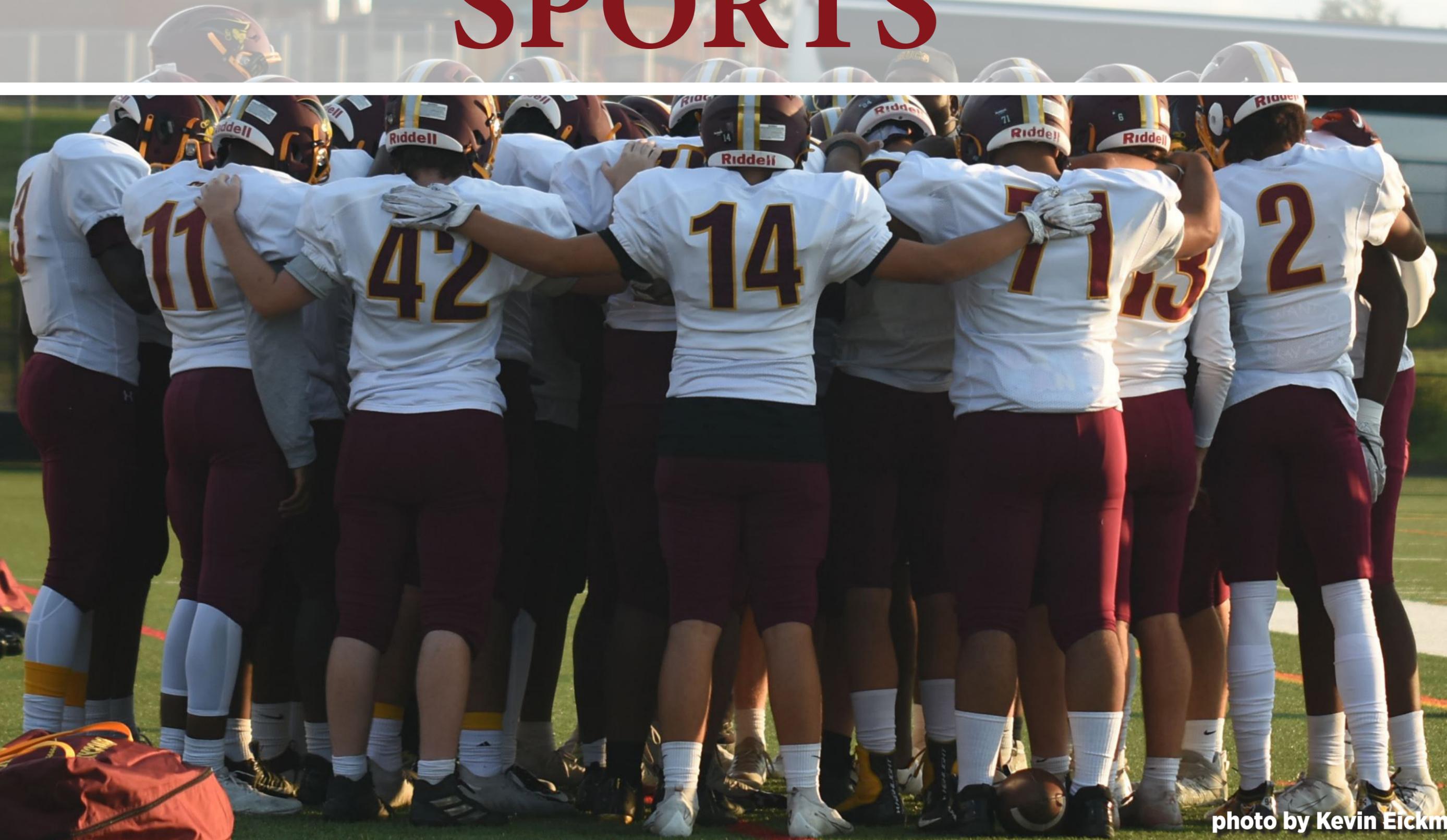


photo by Kevin Eickman

WINTER SPORTS BEGIN FOR MILFORD PARKS AND RECREATION

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford Parks and Recreation has kicked its winter sports schedule into gear now that the holidays are over. There are programs available for children and adults in order to promote a healthy, active lifestyle.

“Indoor soccer for 11- to 13-year-old children still has openings,” Brad Dennehy, director of Parks and Recreation said. “The cost is \$50 and the program is held on Sundays from 3:15 to 4 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club. There are wait list options available for seven- and eight-year-old soccer programs which are held from 1:45 until 2 p.m. on Sundays at the Boys and Girls Club. Unfortunately, our nine and ten as well as our five and six indoor soccer leagues are full.” The indoor soccer programs run from Jan. 8 through Feb. 19.

Other sports that have waitlist options available include Instructional Basketball for ages six and seven which runs from Jan. 10 through Feb. 21. The program is held on Tuesdays from 6 to 6:45 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club. Eight- and nine-year-old basketball, along

with 10- and 11-year-old basketball with practices on Tuesday and games on Saturday also has a waitlist as does the under-15 basketball league which has practice on Thursday and games on Saturday.

“We also have adult programs available,” Dennehy said. “Our adult drop-in basketball runs from Jan. 21 through March 4. Sessions take place on Wednesday from 6 to 8 p.m. and on Saturday from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Boys and Girls Club. We also offer adult drop-in pickleball starting Jan. 12 and running through March 2. The \$60 fee covers the entire length of the program and includes 30 hours of pickleball. Times are Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 to 11 a.m.”

Dennehy explained that Milford Parks and Recreation is always looking for volunteers as they play a huge role in making the programs a success. Volunteers are needed for coaching, officiating and event staff. Anyone interested in volunteering can access the volunteer form by clicking [HERE](#).



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