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photo link: Riverwalk Farmers Market



My Sisters Fault Reopens



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Milford Night Out Aug. 1

# HEADLINES



photo link: [Rosemary Connelly](#)



# RENOVATIONS COMPLETE IN MY SISTER'S FAULT

BY TERRY ROGERS

Sisters Angi and Rous Robles began their small Puerto Rican restaurant five years ago, renting a space in the historic Milford Chronicle building on Southwest Front Street. The business, named to reflect the closeness of the two sisters who said that if it did not work out, they could always say it was “my sister’s fault,” the restaurant was an instant success, offering Puerto Rican food with their own flare as well as stunning baked goods.

Angi and Rous grew up in Puerto Rico. They often talk about how they created baked goods in their Section 8 apartment complex, selling them door-to-door at a very young age. When they came to this country, they missed the foods they grew up with and began creating

what they call their version of Puerto Rican cuisine. When a bakery owner in town decided to close his bakery after the death of his wife, he approached the sisters about taking over the space and My Sister’s Fault was born.

A year or so ago, the sisters purchased a vacant lot on the corner of South Walnut and Southwest Front Street with the intention of building a new location as they were quickly outgrowing their current space. However, during the pandemic, construction costs skyrocketed and they were unable to save enough for a down payment on the new building, so the project was placed on hold.

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Then the sisters had a discussion with Zack King, owner of EasySpeak and Penny Square.

“We talked to Zack one day and he told us to just buy our building,” Angi said. “I had no intention of buying an old building, but he told us it would make sense to own it. He explained all the benefits and I began to see how this could be a good idea.”

The sisters began the process, talking to the previous owners to see what options they had. In the middle of the discussion, Angi learned that the house next door to Rous was for sale.

“I had never owned a home and this one was right next door to my sister,” Angi said. “So, I told everyone that if I had to choose between buying the building where the restaurant is or owning the house next to my sister, the restaurant could wait.”

Enter Bill Pfaff, the director of Economic Development for Sussex County, who talked to the sisters about grants and other options available to them. They applied for grants and loans, receiving approval for a mortgage with no money down. In addition, they received funding from the Encouraging Development, Growth and Expansion (EDGE) grant which they used to update the restaurant.

“Few are asking if we are you moving to a different location, for those who don’t know we purchased the building we have been renting for the past five years so we are at the same location!!!!!! We took this beautiful over 100-year-old building and reinvested over \$190K in renovations,” the sisters posted on social media. “Most of our budget was spent on things that many can’t

see like roofing (which by the way started leaking the second day we purchased), plumbing, electric, structure, updating alarm systems, renovating our waste and recycling areas, you know, the fun stuff. The best part is that we were able to add a separate kitchen area for sweet sister Rous and her team of bakers. Even though we will continue operating as a to-go place we have a small seating area available if you wish to enjoy your food here! We will continue encouraging our customers to order ahead (to avoid waits) we still cook everything to order and will not take any shortcuts to become faster.”

From the success of the business to owning the building they began that business in, has been nothing short of a miracle, according to Angi.

“This has just been a miracle,” Angi said. “The fact that we got enough to buy the building with no money down and enough to renovate it is truly a miracle. We have always done the right things to show that we handle our money well and banks recognize that, but for a business that has only been in business five years to be where we are, we feel like this is truly a miracle.”

The exterior of the building received a new coat of paint while the interior was completely renovated. The kitchen was expanded and new equipment purchased to make the restaurant run smoothly. Tables and chairs were added while the entire interior received fresh paint. A mural, painted by artist Nadia Zychal, is in memory of a close friend, Grecia.

“She was giving birth and, unfortunately, she and her baby died,” Angi said. “She was our biggest cheerleader.

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She was Puerto Rican, and she loved the tropics, tropical flowers, palm trees. We gave Nadia an image of her kissing her belly before she passed, and Nadia turned it into something beautiful that we will always treasure.”

Sections of the building are rented out to tenants, some of which were already there when the sisters bought the building. They are planning an event space, but that area still needs some updating. When asked what they plan to do with the land they purchased for a new building, Angi stated they had not even thought about it.

“We have been so busy with our own renovation, we have not had time to think about that,” Angi said. “I mean, even if I wanted to build something, I don’t have the money to do it right now. I had this crazy idea we would only be closed for one week to do all the renovations, but that didn’t happen. I didn’t count on all the inspections. That is what took so long. Plus, you are on other people’s time and they are busy.”

Even though they purchased an old building, they did not run into many issues during the remodel.

“We’re so grateful for the community and everybody who supports us because if it wasn’t for them, there would not be the growth,” Angi said. “We saw an opportunity and we have met the right people at the right time to make this happen. I never would have thought I would own a house next to my sister or that I would own this old building, but it is happening, and we are so very grateful to everyone who has helped make this happen for us.”

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# CULTURE



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# CULTURAL TOURISM FOCUS OF WORKSHOP AT LIBRARY

## STAFF REPORT

The Delaware Arts Alliance is kicking off its Creative Economy and Cultural Tourism Recovery and Growth Plan at the Library Amphitheater on Wednesday, Aug. 2 at 10 a.m. The event will feature Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall Long as well as arts sector leaders and other officials focused on cultural tourism.

“We invite the press, policymakers and the public to join us as we launch community engagement efforts to gather input from artists, creative business owners and arts patrons,” Sara Bluhm, Economic Development and Community Engagement Administrator for the city of Milford, said. “This input will shape the nation’s first ‘Creative Economy and Cultural Tourism Recover and Growth Plan’ that aims to enhance Delaware’s creative economy across all levels of government.”

Anyone interested in attending the event should **RSVP** by Tuesday, August 1 at 2 p.m.



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## ABLE ACCOUNTS DESIGNED TO HELP THOSE WITH DISABILITIES SAVE

BY TERRY ROGERS

Although all parents worry about the future for their children, those who have a child with a disability also worry about the finances that may impact their child. According to former 5th District Rep. Melanie George-Smith, children with special needs are not allowed to save money as it can jeopardize other benefits they need, including Medicaid. For this reason, the state of Delaware developed DEpendABLE (ABLE), a savings program designed for young people with disabilities and special needs.

“That day that Kayla was born, I was sort of paralyzed by fear for our future,” Amy Kosmalski said. “It included everything. Will she be able to go to college? Will she be able to drive a car get married and a lot of that is financial based.”

Amy’s husband, Rick, stated that every parent fears for their child’s future with worries about what tomorrow may bring. When he and his wife learned that they would be unable to save money for Kayla’s future or risk losing benefits, they knew something had to change. Together with other families with children with either special needs or disabilities, they helped create ABLE.

“ABLE is designed to help kids with special needs be able to save, analogous to the 529 plan so that kids with special needs are able to grow up, go to college, live independently, live as fulfilling a life as they’re able to,” George-Smith said.

Amy referred to Kayla’s ABLE account as freedom as it provided families with the freedom and opportunity to save for things like college or a car, but also allowed

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them to access the funds should they need it while the child is growing.

“Our hope is that Kayla’s going to be able to go to college, to get a career, not just a job and to be able to save money, but there are other people with disabilities that may not be able to do that,” Amy said. “And really what this does is it levels the playing field. Just like you or I. It doesn’t matter what ability or disability we have, we can save for our future.”

Delaware State Treasurer Colleen C. Davis hopes the accounts will get people with disabilities to a point where they can achieve something great, that they are not bound by limitations. An ABLÉ account can be opened online with as little as \$25 and accounts can be accessed by phone or online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A checking option is available that allows access to funds by debit card and, by using Ugift, anyone can contribute to the child’s account. The best part about ABLÉ is that the savings does not jeopardize SSI, Medicaid or other benefits required by those with special needs.

Earnings on ABLÉ accounts are federally tax-deferred and withdrawals for qualified expenses are federally tax free as well. There is a tax deduction of up to \$5,000 for contributions to ABLÉ accounts on Delaware income tax returns. Some of the qualifying expenses include housing, living expenses, healthcare, transportation, education, job training and employment support.

“The ABLÉ account means to save me money for freedom, and it’s amazing,” Kayla said.

Learn more about the [DEpendABLE accounts](#).



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# GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo link: City of Milford

# CITY EXPLAINS PERMIT FEE PROCESS

BY TERRY ROGERS

Recently, there have been social media comments regarding permit fees in the city of Milford, especially when it comes to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). These are dwellings that are either constructed on the property of another residence or an already existing structure that is converted to a living quarter. According to some residents who are planning ADUs on their property, permit fees are as much as \$10,000, a cost that many feel is higher than it needs to be to add another dwelling on their property. However, according to Rob Pierce, city planner, about 40 percent of those fees are costs required by Kent County.

“We are a contract user for Kent County, no matter where your house is in town. If you flush your toilet, it gets processed and treated at Kent County’s treatment plant by Meding’s,” Pierce said. “So, we are obligated by

our contractor user agreement with the county to collect the impact fees for the county based on their ordinance. And there are rules say, any dwelling it could be an efficiency apartment, it could be a house, it could be a trailer. It’s all one EDU. And so, to keep things simple, historically, the city has followed the same guidelines as the county. So, we’re not collecting ours at a different rate or calculation than the county.”

The average permit cost for any new structure in the city is around \$8,200, according to Pierce. However, there are other charges involved. To create an ADU, electric must be upgraded, water and sewer lines must be connected, all with additional costs. The cost for water and sewer backfill are \$35 each. The cost of electric inspections are usually included in the estimate

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given by the electrical contractor as they must have inspectors come in to be sure everything is done properly. Pierce explained that some residents may think that an ADU will have lower costs than building a completely new structure, but this may not be the case.

“You can say ‘I have a detached garage in my yard. I can build a new accessory dwelling unit in my backyard.’ But there’s still an impact on the system of a new family living on your property,” Pierce said. “So, even if I took an old house that was too big for one family and I got council to approve it to make it into two apartments, I would go from one to two. They’d have to pay impact fees for that improvement.”

According to Pierce, the city has been handling permit fees in this manner for more than 20 years, but because ADUs were just added to code, there were more questions about the cost. Often, when it comes to ADUs, the homeowner is handling the renovation themselves and they may not be as aware as professional contractors what the fees are to construct the new dwelling unit. Pierce also pointed out that many municipalities do not permit ADUs. The number of bathrooms or bedrooms a residence will have has no bearing on the impact fees either, Pierce explained.

“If I have if I have a household that’s got seven bedrooms and seven bathroom the fees are a little less than \$8,000 in impact fees. If you build a one bedroom ADU, the impact fees are \$8,000. If we got down to the point where we had to count every bathroom in every house, it becomes difficult,” Pierce said. “That little old

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lady may not use as much as a larger family. The county doesn't have water service, they don't meter water use. It is based on the Sewer Commission because the way we bill our customers is we measure the water service consumption. And we assume that's how much they're flushing down their toilets. At the county, they don't have that ability. So, the only one living in the house pays the same sewer bill as the family of 13 living next door. And is that right? I don't know. But it's the only way to do it though."

Pierce explained that there are concerns with changing the code so that more bathrooms require higher fees as people may not be honest, something that already happens with commercial buildings.

"Commercial is based on the number of toilets, sinks, floor drains, urinals. drinking fountains. We have to add them all up. And we get the state plumbing office who administers the plumbing code, and they go out and inspect things," Pierce said. "We make sure that they have their approval ahead of time. Because they'll sneak fixtures in on us because one fixture is probably two grand in impact fees."

This means that impact fees for commercial buildings can be difficult when people do not understand how they work.

"We've had the same discussion from people that develop apartment buildings, like a three-bedroom apartment is assessed the same impact fee as a one-bedroom apartment," Pierce said. "And they're like, 'well, we should get a discount or prorated rate.' Well,

the ordinance isn't really set up that way. Council can certainly change it if they'd like, same thing with ADUs."

Some of those who comment about permit fees are likely hoping to bring awareness in an effort to get council or management to present something council to modify the fees, but that could be difficult with the way the fee structure is set up to meet county requirements. The city could adjust their fees, but the 40 percent that goes to the county cannot be changed unless Kent County Levy Court chooses to change it, something Pierce felt was unlikely.

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# EDUCATION



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# STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT DISCUSSED AT SCHOOL BOARD

BY TERRY ROGERS

At a recent meeting, the Milford School District Board of Education continued to discuss updates to the Student Code of Conduct for both elementary and secondary schools. Matt Bucher and Dr. Adam Brownstein expressed concerns about several areas of the code, requesting changes.

“I propose we delete the paragraph, the sole paragraph which is segregated by itself having to do with restorative practices. That’s number one, without re-litigating that which we did a year ago,” Bucher said. “Number two, and this definitely applies to the secondary, although possibly the primary, the elementary as well. I propose, and let me scroll to the correct portion under the category three offense which is on page 24, at least on the elementary, I propose that it read as follows ‘Number two, and this definitely applies to the secondary, although possibly the primary, the elementary as well.’”

Next, Bucher felt the section that read “and the electronic physical, verbal or written or action, indirect or direct that excludes, marginalizes or discriminates against other people or groups of people that are members of protected class,” be edited and “members of a protected class” removed, replaced with the wording “this includes what could be considered racial epithets and ethnic slurs” added to the language, stating that he felt that would make the code more consistent with



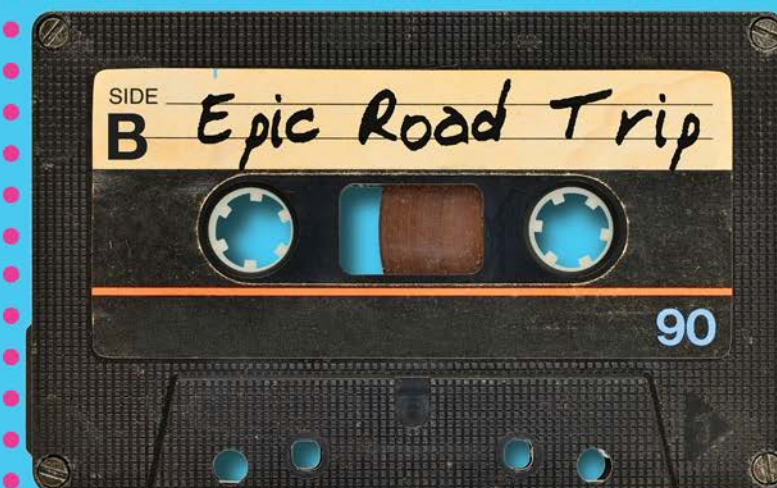
existing board policy and separate from the Code of Conduct.

Brownstein asked Dr. Laura Manges, who is currently the director of Human Resources but previously served as director of Student Services, to answer some of his questions regarding the code of conduct. One matter was simply a clarification regarding the mention of an appendix in one section that did not appear in both versions. The next concern Brownstein had related to students with disabilities who committed infractions and how those infractions were addressed, asking if one of the solutions was to change placement of that student.

“So, the team is required to conduct what’s called the manifestation determination to identify if there’s a nexus between whatever the behavior was either an IEP or 504,” Manges said. “Then an IEP team can always convene and should look at whatever transpired to lead to having to convene a manifestation determination,

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because that would be a pretty severe behavior. And make determinations not in a disciplinary fashion, but about the team's ability to support the student in the programming that they are currently receiving."

Brownstein explained that he asked about this section of the code due to feedback he had received from parents and teachers.

"So, one of the situations as it's been conveyed to me as a board member that oftentimes I've heard from teachers who do not report behaviors, because the teacher believes that it is related to the student's disability and therefore doesn't go through that process," Brownstein said. "And then, therefore, there's not a paper trail, and therefore it's very difficult to say whether the district is meeting that student's needs. On the front end, a determination has been made by the teacher, not by the IEP or 504 committee. And so, I just want to highlight that based on the code of conduct, even if a teacher feels that a behavior is disability related, it should still be looked into is that an accurate assessment?"

Manges confirmed that Brownstein was correct, and that the administration would do their best to convey to the staff that any student with a disability who violates the student code of conduct could be referred to a team for review. She stated that the first point of discussion would be whether the programming and services were meeting that child's needs and supporting that student in an effort to make them successful. Brownstein again confirmed that this would require that inappropriate behaviors be reported.

"Unless there is an alternative behavior plan, which some students on a 504 or an IEP already have, and

there is a place on that document that allows the team to make a determination that the student is not following the Student Code of Conduct, but is following an alternative plan customized based on their needs," Manges said.

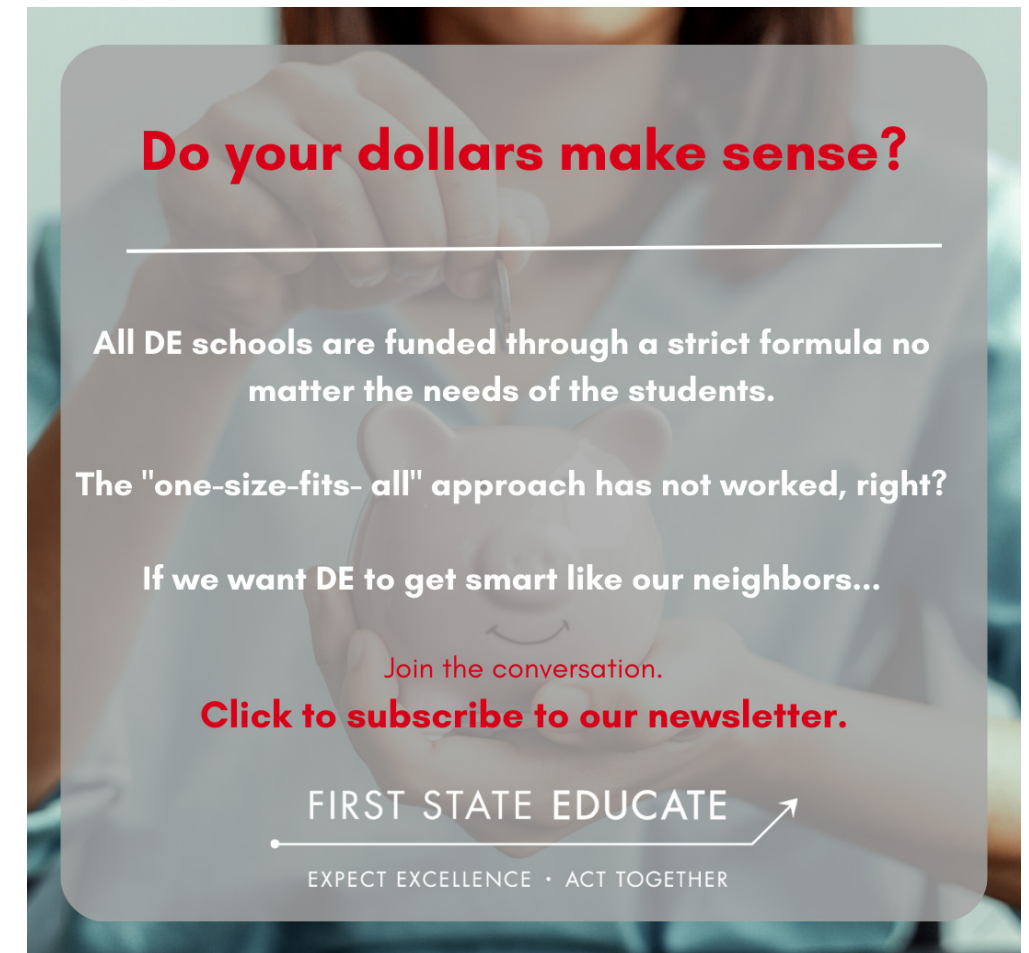
Brownstein then asked about the section regarding combination of offenses.

"Okay, so I envision a student has some sort of out-break let's say a meltdown in the classroom, desks get overturned, cursing ensues. Teacher gets punched on the way out the door," Brownstein said. "So, obviously, there are multiple infractions, and then the question becomes is my reading of this indicates that each of those infractions should be determined on an individual basis as part of a bigger picture, but each one of them is a separate incident, even though they happen concurrently? Is that your understanding?"

Manges explained that she was not part of the discussion related to this section of the code, so she was unaware if this was a change, but as an administrator, she encourages the team to take each infraction into account. She stated that administration and staff try to apply some level of common sense which is usually driven by the severity of the incident.

"So, the way this is written and I'm looking at this from the public's point of view, how would the public interpret this?" Brownstein said. "So, it says 'in separate incidents of violations of the code, offenses cannot be combined prior to disciplinary action, in order to determine the appropriate level and action or the latest events.' But then it goes on to say offenses are to be con-

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sidered separately. So, the verbiage to a non-educator, i.e., myself is, on one hand, sort of saying they're distinct, but on the other hand, it's kind of saying they're all the same. And so, if somebody who is familiar with this specific scenario of should they be combined, should they not be combined, there may be a way that we could reword that to make it more clear to the public."

Agreeing that the wording was confusing, Manges stated they would look at the wording. Brownstein explained that he would not want a parent to come in "waving this" because their interpretation was different. He felt the way the section was worded; it could lead to conflict.

"A clear reading of the policy, and I'm not advocating one way or another, clear reading of the policy indicates that if there are multiple offenses, they are to be considered separate and to use a word often used in the Department of Justice, charge stacking," Bucher said.

The issue, according to Brownstein, was that the language was contradictory. In one section it says offenses cannot be combined prior to disciplinary action, but then the code says that the offenses are to be considered separately.

"I understand that what they're trying to put in there, they're trying to, maybe I'm misinterpreting it, but what they're trying to avoid there is, and again, I'm not advocating it one way or another, but it looks like they're advocating compressing the offenses," Bucher said. "What they're saying is pretty clear, that they want to avoid charge stacking. I am kind of with Dr. Manges on this, I'm not really sure that we don't want to give the administrator the authority and the flexibility to do

what he or she thinks is best in this situation."

Brownstein agreed that administration should have the autonomy to do what is best. Bucher suggested that it would not hurt to look at the language to make it clearer, but that he did not want to create a harsher discipline code, but that they wanted to apply the code consistently. He felt educating frontline teachers and administrators was a better option than creating a "draconian code." Brownstein thanked Bucher for the statement and agreed, stating that he was just seeking clarification as he had spoken to employees in the district who were not clear on the policy.

"The last for this document, and I am seeking some input from other board members because I do not have an appropriate solution to this dilemma," Brownstein said. "But on page 14, where, and this section is predominantly talking about gangs, aggressive groups and gang policy is the title head, and they note an aggressive group is any group of two or more students who act collectively in an aggressive confrontational or territorial manner towards another student within the school or in violation of discipline rules of the district. That seems incredibly broad and problematic because of how broad it is."

Using the example of two students walking down the hall toward their next class who decide to make fun of another student coming toward them down the hall.

"Student A says something, Student B says something and now they are technically an aggressive group because they are two or more individuals. And I'm not really sure that that is in the spirit of what they're talking about," Brownstein said. "I don't see that problem. But

my gut tells me that's not the intent. They're not trying to label two students who happen to be walking together who happen to violate the code of conduct. They're not trying to create a scenario where they are a gang. So, any thoughts for board members on how we could remedy that?"

Board member Butch Elzey questioned how two students could be considered a gang. Brownstein explained that the policy actually labeled it an "aggressive group," but there was further delineation calling them a gang. He believed "aggressive group" was a slightly lesser version of a gang. School Board President Scott Fitzgerald stated that the code noted that a gang and an aggressive group were basically the same when it came to violating the code of conduct. Brownstein pointed out that this was the only area in the code where the term "aggressive group" was used.

"I was not part of that discussion, but I am going to just think that maybe part of that language, that language specifically may be related to some of the regulatory language around bullying, and just some guidance that we've received in the past from our legal counsel," Manges said. "They encourage us to be specific and not necessarily make a determination from certain points of view, but that of the individual that is potentially being bullied. So, they would feel like it was an aggressive group if it was more than one person and that I'm just surmising that that language may have come that we can certainly research it and respond back."

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# HEALTH



photo link: Bayhealth Medical Center

## KEEPING YOUR COOL IN THE EXTREME HEAT

BY TERRY ROGERS

With temperatures expected to remain near or above 90 degrees over the next few weeks, keeping yourself cool is critical, especially if you have to be outside for any length of time. Whether you work outdoors or have the need to be outside for more than an hour or so, these tips can help you reduce your risk of heat stroke and other heat related illnesses.

The American Red Cross states that an extreme heat event is a “series of hot days, much hotter than average, for a particular time and place.” Extreme heat kills more people than any other weather event, the Red Cross advises. The first step in helping you stay safe in the heat is to stay hydrated.

“An average person needs to drink about three-quarters of a gallon of water daily, although individual

needs vary,” the Red Cross says. “If your urine is a dark yellow color, you may not be getting enough water. You should also avoid sugary, caffeinated or alcoholic drinks if you will be in the heat.”

If you are sweating, consider eating snacks or drinking sports drinks to replenish the salt and minerals you lose during the perspiration process. It is also important to talk to your doctor about any medications you are taking that may interact negatively with extreme heat.

Although fans can move air when it is extremely hot, they may not prevent heat-related illness, especially in those who are unhealthy or elderly. If your home does not have air conditioning, consider finding a location that does if even for an hour or two, such as a local

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library or café. Take a cool shower or bath as well to cool your body temperature. When heat is expected to last several days, some municipalities offer cooling stations designed for those who do not have air conditioning at home. Wear lightweight, loose clothing as well to keep your body temperature down.

Another tip is to be aware of the symptoms of a heat-related illness. Heat cramps are muscle spasms caused by losing large amounts of salt and water. Symptoms include muscle pain or spasms as well as heavy sweating. Heat cramps can be treated with water and sport drinks as well as moving to a cooler location. If the cramps last more than an hour or if the person impacted has a heart condition, seek medical attention.

Heat exhaustion can be a life-threatening illness. Symptoms include heavy sweating, cold, pale and clammy skin, a fast, weak pulse, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, tiredness or weakness, dizziness, headache and loss of consciousness. Treatment should be immediate and includes moving the person to a cool place, loosening their clothing and having them sip water slowly. Cool the body with wet cloths, misting, fanning or a cool bath. If they are experiencing vomiting, confusion or if symptoms last more than an hour despite cooling attempts, seek immediate medical attention.

Heat stroke requires emergency treatment as quickly as possible. Symptoms include a body temperature of 104 degrees or higher, hot, red, dry or damp skin, a fast, strong pulse, headache and dizziness. There may also be loss of consciousness, nausea and confusion. The

symptoms may be confused with heat exhaustion, but the results can be far more deadly. Call 911 immediately if you suspect someone is having heat stroke. Move them to a cool location and cool the body with fans, mist, wet cloths or a cool bath. Do not give them anything to drink.

By following these tips and being aware of heat-related illness, you will be able to manage excessive heat and not only keep yourself safe, but friends and family as well.



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## MILFORD'S NIGHT OUT PLANNED FOR AUG. 1

BY TERRY ROGERS

Milford's Night Out, part of a larger community building campaign known as National Night Out, promotes police-community partnerships is planned for Aug. 1 from 6 to 8 p.m. in Bicentennial Park. National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement by bringing back a sense of community.

"The purpose of the event is to heighten awareness of our services and crime prevention, but more importantly, to continue to build a strong relationship in the Milford Community," Lt. Robert Masten said.

The program began in 1984 on the first Tuesday in August with communities across the country celebrating the event. Dubbed "Milford's Night Out," the police department began celebrating the event in 1994. This

will be the 27th event since there was no National Night Out in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID.

"Each year we have free food, drinks, a band, emergency vehicles on display and a variety of safety-related displays," Lt. Masten said. "We value our community relationships and enjoy celebrating with them during Milford's Night Out. The displays also allow for the community to learn about a variety of safety-related services provided in our area."

The public is encouraged to attend the event.



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# MPD TO PARTICIPATE IN COPS AND BOBBERS

BY TERRY ROGERS

In a joint effort with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources (DNREC) Police, Milford Police Department will participate in “Cops and Bobbers.” The event begins with an educational presentation by DNREC on Delaware fisheries and general recreational fishing information.

“After the presentation, participants, who must be accompanied by an adult, will then join officers from the Milford Police Department and members of the Mispillion Bass Club to fish from the banks of the Mispillion River,” Lt. Robert Masten said. “During the event, food and drinks will be provided thanks to partnerships with Wawa and Benvenuto.”

Lt. Masten explained that the police department was always looking for ways to build relationships with the community and to spend time with citizens.

“Pfc. (James) Matthews thought this idea would be a nice addition to the events we participate in during the

year,” Lt. Masten said. “It highlights the benefits of enjoying the outdoors and enjoying the beauty of the Mispillion River.”

According to Lt. Masten, anytime the department can strengthen relationships with the community and its youth, it assists them in serving the city.

“Crime prevention is a team effort and strong relationships with our community is essential,” Lt. Masten said. “It also presents an opportunity to introduce children to a new outdoor activity which is both rewarding for our officers and beneficial for the child.”

Anyone interested in registering for Cops and Bobbers can call Pfc. James Matthews at 302-422-8081 or reach him by email at james.matthews@cj.state.de.us.

photo by Marcia Reed



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