

# MILFORD LIVE

photo link: Marcia Reed

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**Community Learns More About  
New Golf Course**



**Education Professional of 2024**



**Opt-in 911 Calls for New Castle**

# HEADLINES



photo link: [Vincent Deskiewicz](#)

# COMMUNITY COMES OUT IN FORCE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NEW GOLF COURSE

BY TERRY ROGERS

Hundreds lined up outside the new Pro Shop on the Southern Delaware Golf Course, the former Shawnee Country Club and Rookery North course currently under renovation by Tim Johnson at an open house on Saturday, Dec. 9. Johnson explained that he held the open house to introduce people to memberships and offer branded items that could be used as Christmas gifts and that he was amazed at the turnout.

“Basically, we’re having an open house to offer our membership for the 2024 season and then limit it to 250 memberships as it’s a public course. That way people can sign up and make tee times, and then Jeff (Hamer) from Big Oyster was having some products, drinks and some food as he’s gonna be opening in late April or May,” Johnson said. “We’re shooting for May 1 that we will open to the public. There’s a time constraint now that winter is here. Things like paving won’t be done until probably April as the weather needs to be warmer. Things like lighting the parking lot, walkway lighting,

the brewery’s got to be built. So basically, we’re introducing it because a lot of people are asking what do you get your spouse for Christmas? So hopefully they’ll buy a t-shirt or, or golf shirt, a hat and a membership. So that’s why we wanted to be open for the holiday, so we can introduce it to everybody. Get them excited, give them something to look forward to.”

Johnson stated that the Pro Shop was not officially open yet as they were still waiting for the city of Milford to tie in electric, water and sewer, but he hoped it would only be a month or two. At the open house, Big Oyster provided its new food truck as well as some of their signature beers for the event. Although the footprint of the former Shawnee Country Club will not change, it is being completely renovated and one section torn down to build the brewery portion of the establishment. At a city council meeting when approval was granted for the new

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from page 3

brewpub, Jeff Hamer explained that the brewery would likely offer signature beers that would only be available at the golf course location, something similar to what they have done at other locations.

“I don’t think you could get a warmer welcome in any other town in Delaware than in the town of Milford,” Hamer said. “Residents have shown my staff at Big Oyster that every time we are up there working. What a friendly community! Can’t wait to officially be a part of it on a day-to-day basis. We are truly blessed.”

Those attending the open house were excited to see the changes to the course. Ray, who lives on the course, was looking forward to being able to once again walk over and play golf. Although there will be memberships, it is also a public golf course so anyone can play. His friend, Joe, agreed.

“The course is good, it has changed significantly,” Joe said. “They changed it in a few areas and cut down quite a few trees. That may actually make the course easier.”

Ray commented that people were out working on the course from sunup to sundown most days, adding that he noticed repair and replacement to the irrigation system which had been a problem on the course in the past.

“This is a great thing for Milford,” Butch Elzey said. “Tim Johnson does amazing things, and this course will be amazing. I am really looking forward to visiting and kudos to Tim for doing what he is doing.”



# CULTURE



photo link: [Downtown Milford Inc.](#)

# THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

BY TERRY ROGERS

Although Christmas trees have become staples in most homes during the holidays, the fact is that evergreen plants and trees have been used for centuries to decorate homes. Ancient people hung evergreen boughs over doors and windows throughout the year. In some cultures, it was believed the evergreens kept away witches, ghosts, illness and evil spirits.

According to the History Channel, there were other reasons to adorn a home with greenery. Ancient cultures often celebrated the winter solstice, which usually falls on Dec. 21 or 22, and is the shortest day of the year. On this day, people decorated their home with evergreen boughs to celebrate that the days would now grow longer. In ancient Egypt, green palms and papyrus reeds, symbolizing triumph of life over death, were used around the winter solstice. Romans during this

era used evergreen boughs to celebrate that fields would soon be green and fruitful while Druids used evergreens to symbolize everlasting life.

It was during the 16th century that the Christmas tree tradition we recognize today was established. Christians began bringing in evergreen trees, decorating them, while others created pyramids of wood that they decorated with evergreen boughs. Legend has it that Martin Luther was the first to light a tree using candles after seeing stars twinkling through evergreens during a night walk.

The Christmas tree tradition in America was slower to take root, however. Up until the mid-19th century, Christmas trees were viewed as an oddity. The first mention of trees being used to celebrate the holiday

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occurred during the 1820s in the German communities of Pennsylvania. However, there are records that indicate as early as 1747, German immigrants decorated a wooden pyramid as a community tree that was adorned with candles. Yet, through the 1840s, Christmas trees were viewed as pagan symbols in the rest of the country.

It is important to note that the Puritan leaders in America viewed Christmas celebrations as unholy. There is record of William Bradford of New England, who served as the pilgrims' second governor, writing that he was trying to "stamp out pagan mockery" of the observance of Christmas. He was also known to penalize any "frivolity" revolving around the holiday. In fact, in 1659, the General Court of Massachusetts made celebrating on Dec. 25 a penal offense and included fines for hanging decorations. Until an influx of German and Irish immigrants in the 19th century, those laws remained.

Puritan rule slowly took a backseat to changes in culture around Christmas and a sketch in "Illustrated London" in 1846 led to the end of laws related to Christmas celebrations. Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, who was German, were drawn with their children standing around a Christmas tree. One of the most popular British royals, what happened in Queen Victoria's court quickly became popular and her embracing the culture of her husband made Christmas trees fashionable.

Christmas tree popularity grew and, by the 1890s, German ornaments were arriving in the United States. However, the trees used in this country were far larger, extending from floor to ceiling, while European cultures preferred shorter trees around four feet in height.

Tree decorations have also changed over the years. In the early 20th century, German Americans used apples, nuts and marzipan cookies while others created hand-made ornaments. Stringed popcorn dyed bright colors and mixed with berries as well as nuts were very popular. Once homes had electricity, Christmas lights were added to trees which became a holiday tradition in many homes around the world.



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### BY TERRY ROGERS

Delaware Nature Society will hold its annual Citizen Science Recap in a virtual format through Zoom on Dec. 13 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The program is a recap of the Citizen Science program held throughout the year.

At the program, those attending will learn more about the Bird Box Monitoring program from Jen Llewelyn and Hawk Watch by David Brown. There will also be a discussion of Bird Banding and Ornithological Studies by Ian Stewart and Herpetology studies by Jim White.

The Bird Box Monitoring program, led by NestWatch Project Manager Llewelyn, has volunteers monitoring

## VIRTUAL CITIZEN SCIENCE RECAP PLANNED

hundreds of bird boxes at Ashland Nature Center, Coverdale Farm Preserve, Bucktoe Creek Preserve, Middle Ru Natural Area and Mt. Cuba Center. The program assists Cornell Lab of Ornithology whose data supports the International NestWatch program. Volunteers check and monitor bird nests in the boxes on a regular basis.

Hawk Watch volunteers meet from September through November each year to watch and monitor the more than 20,000 raptors that migrate through Ashland Nature Center. Standing on Ashland Hawk Watch Hill, volunteers count the raptors migrating through the area along with other migrant birds of prey. It is one of 200 hawk watch sites across the country. Hawk Watch Hill is located on the eastern side of a chain of hills that stretch from New York to Alabama known as the Piedmont and is known as a flyway for many birds heading south. As of fall 2022, almost 21,000 migrant raptors have been counted, much higher than the average of almost 13,000 counted elsewhere.

Delaware Nature Society's bird banding project allows volunteers to see wild birds up close while also learning how the organization helps the bird population, learning about their habits and what they need not only to survive but also to thrive. This is part of a worldwide banding effort and occurs from April to December each year at the Bucktoe Creek Preserve on Wednesdays. The program began in 2015 under the leadership of Stewart, a federally-licensed bird bander. In the first year, Stewart was able to capture and band 413 birds repre-

senting 37 species. Some were nestlings reared in bird boxes located at Ashland Nature Center, Bucktoe Creek Preserve, Abbott's Mill Nature Center and Coverdale Farm Preserve.

Herpetology studies reptiles and amphibians. White will talk about the many reptiles and amphibians who make the area home as well as efforts to conserve their species.

**Registration** is required for the virtual event and can be completed through Delaware Nature Society. A Zoom link will be sent the week of the event.

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# HANUKKAH STARTED DEC. 7

BY TERRY ROGERS

The first day of Hanukkah began on Dec. 7, celebrating what is also known as the Festival of Lights in the Jewish faith. Although this holiday is considered a rabbinic holiday, according to Rabbi Sholom Vogel of Chabad of southern Delaware, which means it has fewer restrictions than other holidays in the faith, like Passover or Sukkot, it is one with specific traditions that have lasted for centuries.

“Hanukkah is a holiday commemorating two things. The story of Hanukkah takes place in during the Second Temple era around 300 BC, if I’m not mistaken,” Vogel said. “The Jewish people were under Greek rule. And at that time, there was a lot of the Hellenistic movement, so anti-Semitism was pervasive in the entire culture. And that was seeping into the Jewish customs as well. Many Jews were, unfortunately getting trapped into that. And there was a lot of oppressive rules and restrictions by the Greek Empire over the Jewish people,

forbidding them from doing certain commandments that they had, which they did not approve of, and there’s much to be discussed as to which commandments they were not happy with and what was the reason?”

Many of the rules established by the Greeks didn’t make much sense, such as telling Jewish people who keep the Sabbath as a day of rest that they could have the day of rest, but it may be any day during the week, not the Sabbath day the faith required. One of the most oppressive rules established was that when a Jewish girl was to marry, the army would be permitted to “inaugurate” the woman before she was allowed to marry.

“It came a point where there was the head of the Maccabees, the Hasmonean Dynasty, so the father, it was his daughter that was getting married, and this general was coming to do what he does, and the father having none of it and the general ended up being killed,”

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Vogel said. “And that is what provoked the Maccabee revolt. The Hasmonean people created a revolt, and their followers were called the Maccabees, which is an acronym of Matityahu haKohen ben Yochanan. Essentially, it’s Hebrew for ‘but who is mighty in the strength of God?’”

During the battle the Jewish temple was overtaken, but the Maccabees were able to eventually take the temple back. The day that battle was won is the first day of Hanukkah as the Jewish people could then serve God the way they wanted in the temple.

“Now, the issue was one of the main commandments or rituals that you do in the temples, you light a candelabra every single day, a menorah and this menorah needed special olive oil in order to be lit. In Judaism, we have spiritual impurities and when something becomes impure, it cannot be used for a whole new purpose. So, we need a specific type of oil, that would be found in a clay jug, sealed with a seal of the high priest and that was a way of showing that this is intact pure oil that you can use for the menorah,” Vogel said. “After taking back the temple, we couldn’t find any such oil until eventually they found one small jug of oil which when used, there would be enough to light the menorah for one day. Now the issue is it takes another seven days to go to the fields, to reap the olives, press them, filter it and then bring back more oil. That’s a seven-day process. So, the issue is we only have a little bit of oil, what are we going to do? We can leave the temple now but then we still have too low of an amount of oil, and we may not be able to fulfill this commandment or to practice this ritual.”

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The decision was made to use the oil and light the menorah for one day and figure out what to do the next day when the oil ran out. The miracle, however, was that the oil, that should only have lasted one day, actually lasted for eight. Vogel explained that the miracle did not end the war, which lasted for many years after that, but it demonstrated that God wanted the temple used to serve Him.

“Today, most people celebrate by lighting their own menorah inside their own homes. Every Jewish family has their own menorah or should have their own menorah. If they don’t have their own, they can reach out to me and I can provide it for them. And we light the candles on day one. So, the first night which is tonight, we will light one candle, tomorrow night before our Sabbath light two candles, Saturday night, three candles and so on, until the eighth night,” Vogel said. “That’s how we actually practice it and then customs have come along the way. Remember, this story incorporated oil so now to remember that in a fun way that keeps it going, we eat foods that are associated with oil so that’s why you’re gonna have lots of latkes, which are potato pancakes but fried in oil. We have donuts which are fried in oil. You have different food items which are fried, and we also have a custom to have cheesy foods as well because there was a different story that took place that it was associated there was cheese took a role in that story. So that’s foods and then there’s a little game called the dreidel game.”

Even the dreidel game is steeped in legend, according to Vogel.

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# BUSINESS



photo link: Marcia Reed

## CNU FIT CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY WITH RIBBON CUTTING

BY TERRY ROGERS

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford, friends and family recently held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the five-year anniversary of CNU Fit, LLC. Evans Armantrading Jr, CEO and founder, along with city officials and members of CCGM, were on hand for the celebration.

“Central Delaware’s Premier Transformation Studio, CNU Fit is proud of this significant milestone—the five-year anniversary of our Milford location,” Armantrading said. “For 14 years, CNU Fit has been a beacon of health and fitness for busy professionals. In Milford, our dedicated team has spent the last five years tailoring fitness journeys for our clients, helping them lose weight, fit their clothes better and increase their energy levels.”

Overall, CNU Fit has assisted over 3,500 individuals in losing more than 45,000 lbs. The company specializes in fitness solutions for those over 40, understanding the unique challenges this age group faces. Programs are 100 percent customized to cater to individual needs, focusing on enhancing mobility and metabolism. This approach is pivotal in helping clients not only shed weight but maintain their fitness long-term.

“CNU Fit is committed to empowering the citizens of central Delaware to become the best versions of themselves,” Armantrading continued. “Our money back guarantee is a testament to our belief in our services.”

CNU Fit is the leading fitness studio in central Delaware, specializing in personalized fitness programs for



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busy professionals, particularly those over 40. With over 14 years of industry experience and a significant milestone of five years in Milford, CNU Fit stands as a testament to sustainable weight loss and fitness solutions. They are located at 613 N. Dupont Boulevard. For more information about how you can join CNU Fit, visit their [website](#) or contact their studio at 302-689-3489.

For information concerning the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford call 302-422-3344, visit our [website www.milfordchamber.com](http://www.milfordchamber.com) or find us on Facebook.

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## DMI SEEKING BUSINESSES TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW EVENTS

BY TERRY ROGERS

After one of the most well-attended Holiday Strolls in Downtown Milford Inc.'s history, the organization wants to keep the excitement going after the holiday season ends. As a result, the promotions committee has created two new events designed to keep high energy in the downtown area after the holiday season ends.

"Jammin' January is one of the events we hope will continue the excitement downtown," Janne Collins, executive director of DMI said. "We are asking businesses to plan inside events designed to draw customers to their establishment and encourage them to visit others as well. The activity could be games, live music or anything unique that the business thinks will draw in crowds."

Businesses who participate will receive recognition on the new Milford Community Calendar as well as mentions on social media and in press releases from DMI. There is no charge to join Jammin' January, but DMI requests if the business event has a fee, to mention that when they reach out by emailing [Director@downtownmilford.org](mailto:Director@downtownmilford.org) by Dec. 15.

"The other idea was Foodie February," Collins said. "February is the month for love and we all know how people love food. Restaurants, cafes and bars can simply create a new food or drink item that is only going to be available in February or they can raffle off gift cards throughout the month. Retail stores can hold food-



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themed trivia games or partner with a local restaurant to raffle gift cards as well. Just be creative with what you want to do to celebrate the Month of Love!"

Like Jammin' January, there is no fee to participate. Simply email [director@downtownmilford.org](mailto:director@downtownmilford.org) by Jan. 12 to let DMI know what the business plans to do during the month.

"We are hoping this not only encourages more people to visit our wonderful downtown, but also businesses to try something different or new," Collins said. "We also hope there is some collaboration among businesses that could benefit the entire downtown as well."

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# GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo link: [Marcia Reed](#)

# HEARING ON HOUSING, HOMELESS LEADS TO PROMISE OF ATTENTION

BY BETSY PRICE

A joint legislative hearing held by Delaware Senate and Housing committees Dec. 6 started picking threads out of the tangled wad of factors affecting affordable housing and homelessness in Delaware.

The convening of the joint session was clearly a shot across the bow of the state political ship and a forerunner to more state, local and community action on the topic. Among other things, the 20 members of the Senate Housing & Land Use Committee and the House Housing Committee heard:

- The last time the state convened a task force or group to look at the statewide problem was before 2017, and maybe as far back as 2007, said **Dr. Stephen Metraux**, director of the University of Delaware's Center for Community Research & Service. It's time for the state and the stakeholders to reconvene, look

at research and all try to get on the same page instead of going in different directions.

- The pandemic showed stakeholders that there were many more homeless than the state realized when people surviving in the shadows came forward for help as COVID shut or hindered services. Some homeless have faded away again.
- At the same time, inflation soaring last year—and largely blamed on federal COVID 19 handouts—sent housing and rental costs soaring. Rental prices alone rose 40% in recent years. And the state's move to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour by Jan. 1, 2026, will not help with that level of price hikes.
- Ideally, a family pays 30% or less of its income toward housing costs. However, in Wilmington, the

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median household income is \$50,000. That means the household rent should be \$1,250 or less per month and rents at the level are difficult to find for small spaces, much less a two-bedroom apartment.

- A lot of interest was expressed in government legislation or programs that might create a housing trust fund giving developers incentive to help create duplex, townhouse and other spaces that are more affordable to rent and buy. Most new home construction is single-family detached homes, which are also the most expensive to buy and run.
- A few people suggested programs that set aside certain space for affordable houses for workers near the jobs and schools they need to be near, but acknowledged that zoning is usually a county or town matter.
- A lot of the money supporting people who need emergency shelter through hotel vouchers and more comes from the federal government, and there's so many needy people—especially as the weather turns cold for winter—that few beds are available, even with a voucher.
- Those most at risk for homelessness include Black individuals and families; immigrant families; households with disabilities; and single parent households. Domestic abuse also is a large factor in causing homelessness.

### A look at housing

Four groups who focus on housing and homelessness, clearly with an eye toward finding ways to join forces,

establish connected community groups and pass more legislation related to the topics, talked about recent studies:

- Sequoia Rent, chief of the Bureau of Health Equity with the Department of Health and Social Services, who talked about data in its [Delaware State Health Needs Assessment](#) survey.
- Metraux hit the highlights of his 2023 report “[Homelessness In Delaware: An Assessment](#)”.
- Rachel Stucker of [Housing Alliance Delaware](#) summarized that agency’s [2023 Point In Time Count](#).
- Caitlin Del Collo of the [Delaware State Housing Authority](#) reviewed findings of its [2023 Delaware Housing Needs Assessment](#).

The speakers all agreed that homelessness had gotten worse in the last five years, spiking at the end of 2022 and that affordable housing continues to be a major issue for lower-income working families as inflation and rising prices have caused soaring costs to buy a house or rent a space. Senate Majority Whip Sen. Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman, chair of the Senate Housing & Land Use Committee, noted that some legislation passed in last year’s session of the Delaware General Assembly was designed to help and that legislation that was not passed will be back next year. The Delaware General Assembly convenes Jan. 9.



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# EDUCATION



photo link: Milford High School Band

# EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NAMED AT CEREMONY

## STAFF REPORT

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) honored 20 educational support professionals for their outstanding work supporting their students and school communities on Dec. 5. Milford’s nominee for the honor was Education Support Professional of the Year, Christa Henderson.



“Educational support professionals’ roles vary greatly. They provide one-on-one support to students in the classroom. They safely transport children to and from school. They keep our buildings clean and safe. They provide nutritious meals, so our children have the focus and energy to learn. They keep our offices running. They support the technological needs of classrooms. And so much more. Their work often is behind the scenes and rarely do these employees get recognized for how important they are to the success of our schools,” Secretary of Education Mark Holodick said.

A paraprofessional/library specialist who opens the school library during lunches so students can have a space where they feel safe and cared for was named Delaware’s 2024 Delaware Educational Support Professional of the Year.

“The library has an open-door policy so students can take a break, check in or have someone listen to them,” said Sinead Ronan of Caesar Rodney School District’s Magnolia Middle School. “This supports the development of self-regulation and provides an outlet where students can feel heard.”



Ronan immigrated to the U.S. from Ireland 16 years ago and has 11 years of experience as an educational support professional. She considers forming successful relationships with students, families and colleagues her most important responsibility. Relationships form the foundation of a successful school environment in the short-term and strengthen the community for the long-term, she said.

“The prefix ‘para’ means ‘beside,’ and individuals in our school community know I will walk their journey beside them,” Ronan said. “My role is to support, empower and encourage them. I believe the personal relationships I establish create a ripple effect across the school environment, creating lasting positive relationships for students.”

see page 20



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from page 19


Ronan also facilitates and hosts school community events such as Family Literacy Night, Month of the Military Child Celebration, and STEM Night to provide additional connection points.

“As a parent, I know that communication with families is effective. I prioritize calling and meeting with families, focusing on the positive and encouraging student growth and family-school trust. Adults are not perfect, and we shouldn’t expect students to be, either,” Ronan said. “I utilize an asset orientation that shifts the focus from student compliance to personal growth.”

Like the rest of the district and charter nominees, Milford’s Henderson will receive a \$2,000 personal award from the district. Ronan will receive an additional \$3,000 personal award from the department as well as \$5,000 from the department to be used for the educational benefit of her students.




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# HEALTH



photo link: [Bayhealth Medical Center](#)

## 302 FAMILY MEDICINE OPENS MEDICAL PRACTICE

BY TERRY ROGERS

The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford, friends and family recently celebrated a ribbon cutting and grand opening celebration with Dr. Michelle Bretzius, owner of 302 Family Medicine at 306 Polk Avenue.

302 Family Medicine is a female-owned, private family medical practice. Their goal is to provide quality and patient-centered primary medical care to the population of lower Kent and Sussex counties, Delaware and surrounding areas.

“We are focused on a patient-centered model with an emphasis on combined decision-making between patient and physician,” Dr. Bretzius said. “As a private practice, we hope to become part of our patients’ families and provide them with continuity of care with a personal touch

which may otherwise be lacking in other practices.”

302 Family Medicine welcomes patients of all genders and walks of life, providing care from birth to end of life including routine vaccinations, small office procedures and well-woman exams such as Pap tests. They are a full spectrum practice and manage many common medical conditions including Type 2 Diabetes, COPD and high blood pressure.

For more information 302 Family Medicine, call 302-300-3514 or visit [www.302familymedicine.com](http://www.302familymedicine.com). For information concerning the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Milford call 302-422-3344, [www.milfordchamber.com](http://www.milfordchamber.com) or find them on Facebook.

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# BAYHEALTH WELCOMES NEW PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN, LAUREN PARMER, DO

## STAFF REPORT

In carrying out our mission to strengthen the health of our community, Bayhealth is expanding **primary care** availability for central and southern Delawareans who need it.

Lauren Parmer, DO, is the newest family medicine physician at **Bayhealth Primary Care, Milford**, joining Jonathan Simon, MD; Matthew Reetz, DO; and Saranya Biswas, MD, in the practice. Dr. Parmer is now accepting primary care patients of all ages.

The Bayhealth Primary Care, Milford practice is part of Bayhealth Medical Group, a partnership of highly trained physicians and advanced practice clinicians, their staff, and an administrative support team that operates medical offices throughout Delaware.

“Naturally as our communities grow so does the need for primary care and we’re thrilled to welcome a new family medicine physician to our team,” said Bayhealth Vice President, Physician Services and Clinical Integration Lawrence Ward, MD, MPH, FACP. “Dr. Parmer is highly experienced in providing personable and thor-

ough care to families and individuals in every stage of life. We know she’ll be an asset to our community members.”

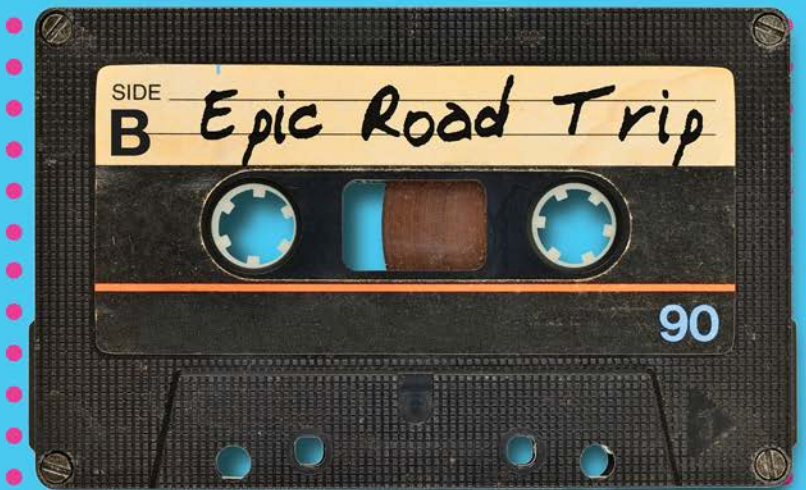
Dr. Parmer earned her doctor of osteopathy medical degree from West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lewisburg, WV. She completed an internship and residency in family medicine at St. Luke’s Warren Hospital in Phillipsburg, NJ.

Prior to joining Bayhealth, Dr. Parmer worked as a family medicine doctor for almost 10 years in Pasadena, MD. She was named Best Primary Care Doctor by the *Pasadena Voice* in 2019 and named a Top Doctor in Primary Care by *Chesapeake Magazine* in 2020.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Parmer, please call 302-424-0600. Visit [Bayhealth.org/Medical-Group](https://www.bayhealth.org/Medical-Group) to learn more about the Bayhealth Primary Care, Milford practice, or our other primary and specialty care office locations.



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## STAFF REPORT

Members of the Bayhealth Medical Staff gathered to present a memorial plaque to honor Steve Ruggles, PA-C. Ruggles was the first physician assistant credentialed at Bayhealth. He passed away in April 2023. Ruggles spent most of his career working alongside physicians T. Noble Jarrell III, MD, Brian M. Benson, Jr., MD, Christopher Giles, MD, Michael G. Sweeney, MD and Marisa Conti, DO at Internal Medicine of Dover.

In addition to the plaque, the medical staff donated \$10,000 to the Bayhealth Foundation in honor of Ruggles,

## BAYHEALTH MEDICAL STAFF DONATES PLAQUE IN MEMORY OF DELAWARE'S FIRST LICENSED PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

who faithfully served the central Delaware community for 36 years. Following a brief program where colleagues shared memories and thanks, the plaque was unveiled to Ruggles' wife Debbie, who shared her heartfelt appreciation for the donation and gesture honoring her late husband.

"Honoring a life well-lived and a career that impacted so many lives is something that the Bayhealth Foundation is always eager to take part in," shared Bayhealth Foundation President Lindsay A. Rhodenbaugh, DMin. "By all accounts, Steve was among the best caregivers who served patients in our area in recent years."

The plaque will be placed outside a patient care room in the Progressive Care Unit at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus.

Visit [Bayhealth.org/Foundation](https://Bayhealth.org/Foundation) or email [Foundation@Bayhealth.org](mailto:Foundation@Bayhealth.org) to learn about the various ways to donate to Bayhealth.



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## NEW OPT-IN VIDEO CALL OPTION LETS 911 SEE EMERGENCY LIVE

BY BETSY PRICE

Starting Monday, New Castle County 911 operators were able to ask callers if they would be willing to let 911 see what they're witnessing through real-time video. If so, 911 will text a link to the caller that allows that person to livestream video of a scene through a phone camera. The choice to turn on the camera phone and provide video is the caller's, county officials emphasized. It will never be required, officials said Friday during a demonstration of the system.

Allowing 911 operators to see what's going on could save lives, pinpoint the exact location of a caller in need, give emergency crews a better idea of what's going on and save them time for response, and even help police officers tell the difference between victims and perpe-

trators before they reach a scene. The video will be stored in the digital cloud and may be used in a prosecution, officials said.

"I think we all can imagine many, many different types of emergency incidents where video in addition to audio adds information that can and we are confident will save lives," said County Executive Matt Meyer. "It's crazy to me that I can call my sister and brother, who don't live in Delaware, and have a video call set up instantly. But when it's time to call 911...residents haven't been able to use that technology."

"Most people know the emergency communications division depends on our callers for critical scene information," said Acting Chief of Emergency Communica-

tions Donald Holden. "This new video feature will save lives. Without a doubt, this will save us this time."

The demonstration showed a caller who said someone was breaking into cars in a parking lot. In reality, it was a county employee filming another employee in a county parking lot. But after the caller activated the link he was sent, a screen popped up and the 911 operator could see a figure of a man walking from car to car and trying to open doors.

In the demonstration, the caller seemed to be hiding behind a vehicle as his phone tracked the man walking from car to car. 911 operators will not put callers at risk or ask them to track someone, Holden said.

Not every caller will be asked to provide video.

### Not all 911 calls

"We will look at the type of incident and if we think video will be valuable, we will discuss that we really would appreciate that," Holden said.

He pointed to an alleged shooting at Christiana Mall. It would have been valuable to have video from that scene, especially if they could have spotted the alleged shooter, he said. Even so, 911 would not ask anyone to do anything that would put the caller at risk, he said.

When 911 first started taking calls by text, many people wanted to provide photos, Holden said, but emergency services didn't want to go down that road because they couldn't be sure what they would get or whether the photo would be helpful.

New Castle County handles half of the state's emergency service calls, Holden said. It will be the only call center in the state and one of the few in the nation to have the video capability.

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from page 27

Maj. Laura O’Sullivan of the New County Castle Police said the video program’s biggest assistance for her officers would be the chance of having a description of the suspects and victims in an emergency. Knowing what they were wearing would be helpful for officers arriving on the scene if the suspects were trying to feel the area.

“You can interview 10 different witnesses that are at a scene and get 10 different statements of what they were wearing, what they look like,” she said. “Sometimes, video is a little bit more concrete detail, so I think in that way it will certainly assist us.”

The county officials also took the opportunity to ask residents to register the county’s **Smart911** program. That allows them to enter details of the home so emergency workers have a better idea of what they may have to deal with if called to a scene. The system includes an app for smartphones.

“By providing more information in your Smart911 profile, you can help us help you faster,” Holden said. “This new video feature is just one more tool in our continuous effort to ensure the safety and well-being of all New Castle County residents.”



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