

# MILFORD LIVE

photo link: Arena's Milford

 MilfordLive

 @Milfordlive

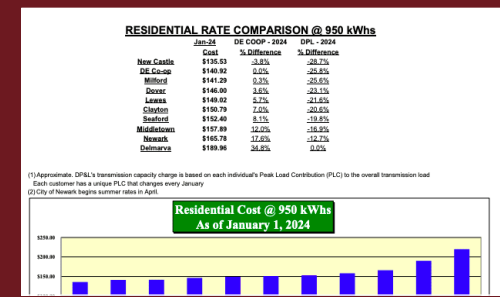
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**January 23, 2024**  
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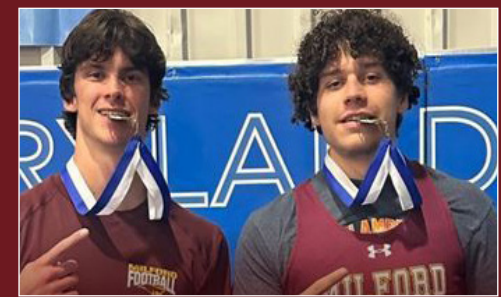
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**Marvel Agency Closes**



**Electric Rate Increase Explained**



**MHS Seniors Break School Records**

# HEADLINES



photo link: Milford Public Library DE



# MARVEL AGENCY CLOSES AFTER 75 YEARS

BY TERRY ROGERS

In what he says is a very bittersweet decision, Randy Marvel explained that, after 75 years, it was time to close one of the oldest businesses in Milford, Marvel Agency. Marvel plans to spend more time with his grandchildren and travel now that the business is closed. Over the past year, he has been slowly cleaning out files in the office in preparation for selling the building.

“My father worked up until he passed away in 1999, but he turned the business over to us,” Marvel said. “After that he was kind of our Rainmaker. He liked to talk to people and sit in the lobby and greet everybody that came in, he took all our pictures and socialized and he certainly advised us what to do.”

Marvel explained that his father started the business selling insurance door-to-door. His grandfather lived

in Houston and was a food broker. After Marvel’s father met his mother at a USO during World War II and the couple married, he entered the insurance business, eventually adding real estate as well.

“I think he probably enjoyed the reals estate side more than the insurance, but he had to do both to make a living,” Marvel said. “When you start a business, you have to do what the people need every day. At one time, we probably had close to 30 people working in the building.”

Marvel never regretted joining his father’s business, stating that he is proud of the way his family helped others in the community. The Marvel family introduced people to the town, helped them find a home, whether to buy or rent, developing land, managing apartments, all things that he found rewarding. The Marvel family



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also donated the Marvel Salt Marsh in Slaughter Beach to the Delaware Nature Society, another project Marvel said he was proud of.

“The most challenging thing in running a small business has to be aware every week, you have enough money to pay your salaries. So that’s always there,” Marvel said. “Interest rates over the years have been up and down, up as high as 80% as low as almost zero. That’s always a challenge handling that. Dealing with government regulation, certainly in 50 years, they’ve gotten a lot more restrictive. Some of the changes are good, some are not so good.”

see page 4

from page 3

As for the staff at the agency, Marvel stated that some moved on to other agencies while others who had been there many years, including Harvey Kenton, Connie Fox and Delbert Mills, also decided to retire. Marvel explained that they all turned in their licenses and made them inactive together. He got into the business because he always wanted to work with his brother.

“I got into the business because I wanted to work with my father. Growing up, everywhere we went, whether it was out to eat, when we visited relatives or what have you, we had to ride by something real estate. So, I grew up with it. And always enjoyed that. The generation I was from in the 60s, there was a lot of us that ended up working for our fathers. It was kind of a thing. But most of those people came back from World War II and had grown up in the Depression and started businesses. Not that they encouraged us, but they certainly liked that we followed in their footsteps,” Marvel said. “I can probably tell you 20 people in Milford from my generation that went to work for their parents in a family business. Most of them I knew and had grown up with, they were close to my age or older where I admired them and had seen him play sports through school.”

Not only did the family businesses in Milford help each business grow, Marvel explained that they also helped the community. Marvel’s father served as president of the Chamber of Commerce twice and the families were all involved in community groups, like the Rotary Club, People’s Place, the library, the senior center, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Food Bank.

“We have decided to sell the building,” Marvel said.

see page 5

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from page 4

“We own both sections of the main building as well as the parking lot behind us. We also own the building where Tax Chicks is located, what used to be Saunders Jewelry store. That will also be sold. This building was the original city hall and housed the first jail in Milford. We are hoping that it will be bought by someone with a vision of what it could be to benefit the downtown area.”

Marvel explained that his three children nor his brother’s four children had any desire to take over the family business. One of them is in insurance but none of the children live in Delaware. Marvel stated that he decided it was time to retire as he will be 71 this year and has had a license since he was 20. Many projects started by his father and other prominent Milfordians are completed, including Saw Mill Village, Woods Haven, Walnut Village and Shawnee Acres. They decided not to sell the business outright, choosing instead to end it after 75 years.

“It is a little unfortunate, because a lot of those businesses, a lot of the ones that the businesses I grew up with, the names that I knew, they are all gone, like Fisher Appliances. When thinking about downtown, I was trying to think who has been here longer, and who would be next. I think the only one still in downtown that was here before us is the Milford Café,” Marvel said. “It’s been here since the end of prohibition. Other than that, I don’t think there’s anybody here longer than that. I’m not sure who’s next.”

Marvel mentioned Walls Service Station which is third generation and is still operational. However, others, such as Warren Furniture which were third

generation and Fisher Appliances which was owned for two generations, are now gone.

“It’s a different dynamic. It’s a different downtown. It is as strong as ever, but it is different. Going through my files, I found an editorial somebody wrote complaining about how bad downtown was,” Marvel said. “Well, it goes through cycles. Certainly, there’s been improvements over the years the park, the parking lots. People invest in downtown.”

Although the agency officially closed a year ago, the buildings were just listed for sale this month.



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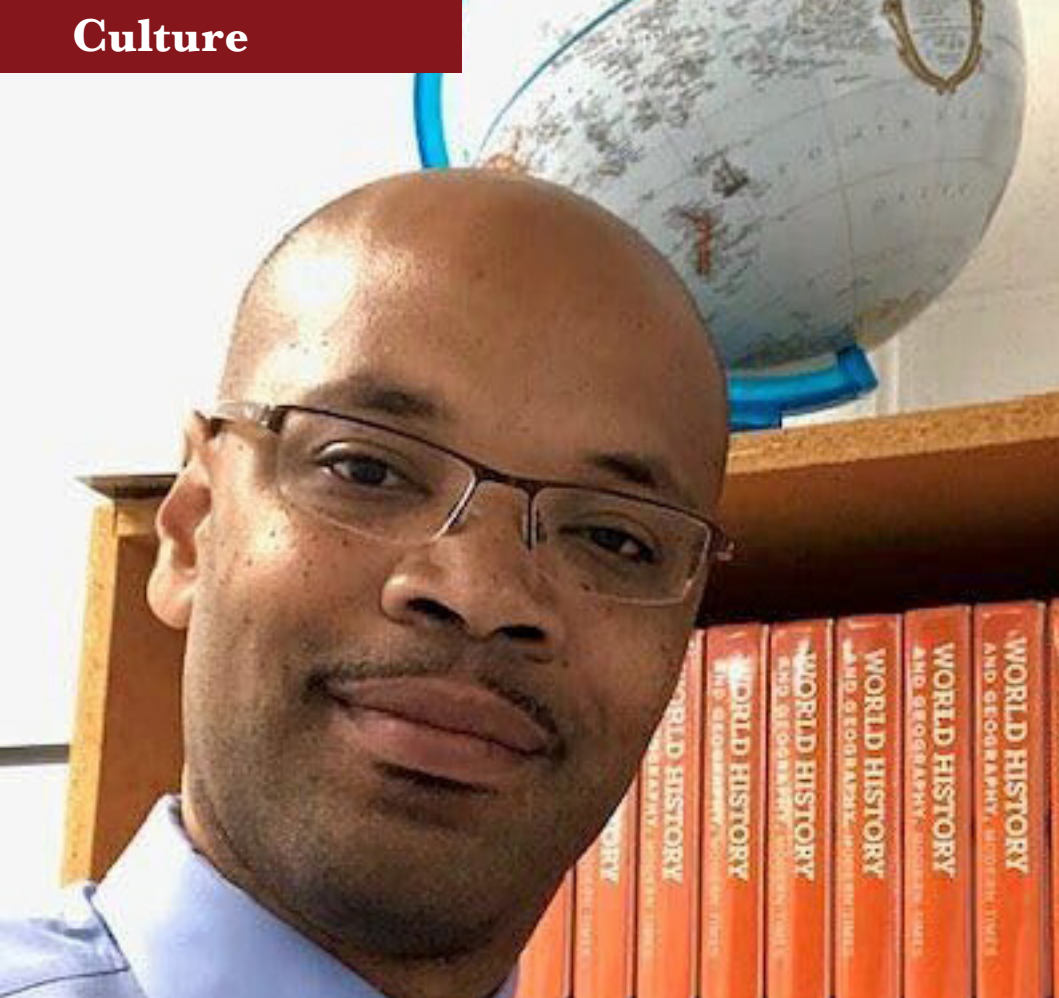
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# CULTURE



photo link: [Second Street Players](#)



BY TERRY ROGERS

The Milford Museum American History Series continues with a program to celebrate Black History Month titled “Black Women in WWII: Greatness Under Fire.” Presented by author and teacher Dante Brizill, the program will take place on Saturday, Feb. 10, 1 p.m. at the Milford Public Library. Brizill is the author of the publication “Black Women in WWII: Greatness Under Fire,” his third book in the “Greatness Under Fire” series. An often-overlooked chapter in our history, this presentation will introduce some of the key figures and events in this historical drama.

Brizill’s book tells the story of the “Black Roses,” an extraordinary group of women who worked in factories, shipyards and also served overseas, overcoming many

## BLACK WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II


barriers to serve the country. Their stories have been largely hidden and Brizill’s book provides insight into their service. The program at the library will detail how these women brought valuable talents and knowledge to the war effort.

Currently teaching at Polytech High School, Brizill has been a Social Studies educator in Maryland and Delaware for the past 19 years. A Philadelphia native, he has a B.A. in History from Hampton University and a Masters in Education from Wesley College. A published author, he has written a series titled ‘Greatness Under Fire’ that highlights African American heroes of WWII. This is the final installment of the ‘Greatness Under Fire’ series. He has also written articles that have appeared in newspapers around the nation as well as nationally published periodicals.

Sponsored by the Milford Museum, these monthly programs focus on a variety of topics concerning local, state and national history. These presentations are held on the second Saturday of each month, at 1 p.m., in the Milford Public Library. The Milford Public Library is located at 11 S.E. Front Street. For more information, please contact the Museum at (302) 424-1080, tom@milforddemuseum.org. These programs are offered through a generous grant from The Delaware Heritage Commission.

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# GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo link: Marcia Reed



**BY TERRY ROGERS**

Todd Culotta, Councilman for Ward 2, has announced his bid to run for mayor of Milford. Mr. Culotta has served on the city council for almost six years, and runs his own company, Bay Pro Contracting LLC, which focuses on commercial fit-outs and historic preservation.

“I thoroughly enjoy serving as councilman for the 2nd Ward of Milford and I look forward to serving the citizens of Milford as our next mayor. We are a growing city and with the increase in population, it is time to focus on accommodating the growth with more options for entertainment, dining and recreation as well as city services,” Councilman Culotta said. “As a council

# MILFORD COUNCILMAN ANNOUNCES CANDIDACY FOR MAYOR

member I have worked hard to put things in place to promote new jobs and encourage economic investment, all while responsibly managing the city budget with more oversight and transparency. My areas of focus as mayor will be economic growth, safe streets and fiscal responsibility. There has never been a better time to live and invest in Milford and I want to lead the way to a better future.”

Councilman Culotta is the chair of the Economic Development committee, a board member of the Milford Historical Society and a past commissioner of the Milford Museum. This will be the second time that Councilman Culotta has run for the mayor’s seat. In 2018, Councilman Culotta ran against Mayor Archie Campbell after then-Mayor Bryan Shupe stepped down to run for state office. Mayor Campbell won that race with a vote of 537 to Councilman Culotta’s 334, becoming the city’s first African-American mayor.

Soon after the race for mayor, a special election was held for a seat in Ward 2 after the death of Councilman Skip Pikus. Councilman Culotta ran against Andy

**see page 12**



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\*Students must meet eligibility requirements. Course fees and books are not covered by the SEED Scholarship.

from page 11

Fulton for the seat, winning with a vote of 92 to 77. At a later election, Councilman Fulton was elected to the second Ward 2 seat vacated by Lisa Peel.

As a councilperson, Culotta has been a strong proponent of creating a more business-friendly town, believing that doing so will result in more jobs and options for consumers in town. He has also pushed for better safety throughout town.

Before returning to Milford, Mr. Culotta had a successful career in technology sales and project management, traveling the country building the internet network through companies such as Verizon Business and MCI WorldCom. He also managed high traffic web sites of well-known sports entities for IMG Media. Through this experience, Mr. Culotta developed an understanding of how technology and innovation can help government, increase operational efficiencies and reduce costs.

Mr. Culotta is a 1991 graduate of Milford High School. He holds an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management and a B.A. in Communications from California University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Culotta also served in the United States Marine Corps.

Mr. Culotta lives in a historic Milford home with his wife, Kalle, and their 4-year-old son.

“As a Councilman, I have no higher purpose than to serve each citizen of Milford, by acting as a steward of the taxpayer. My commitment is to always be available to residents and business owners of our community.”





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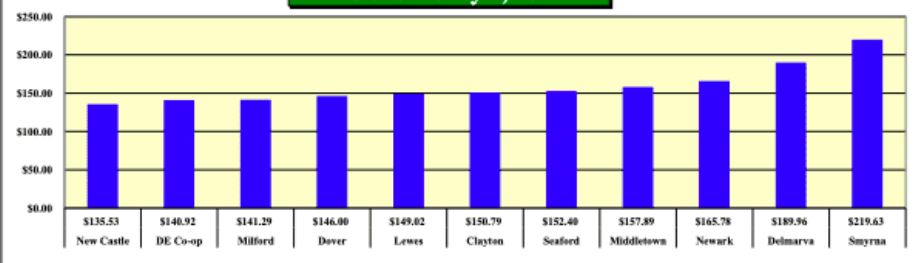
Selected Area Utilities

RESIDENTIAL RATE COMPARISON @ 950 kWhs

	Jan-24	DE COOP - 2024	DPL - 2024
	Cost	% Difference	% Difference
New Castle	\$135.53	-3.8%	-28.7%
DE Co-op	\$140.92	0.0%	-25.6%
Milford	\$141.29	0.3%	-23.1%
Dover	\$146.00	3.6%	-21.6%
Lewes	\$149.02	5.7%	-20.6%
Clayton	\$150.79	7.0%	-19.8%
Seaford	\$152.40	8.1%	-12.7%
Middletown	\$157.89	12.0%	0.0%
Newark	\$165.78	17.6%	
Delmarva	\$189.96	34.8%	

(1) Approximate. DP&L's transmission capacity charge is based on each individual's Peak Load Contribution (PLC) to the overall transmission load. Each customer has a unique PLC that changes every January.  
 (2) City of Newark begins summer rates in April.

Residential Cost @ 950 kWhs  
As of January 1, 2024



BY TERRY ROGERS

Recently, the city of Milford announced that electric rates would be increasing due to an increase passed on to the city by the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation (DEMEC). This organization is a not-for-profit entity made up of eight municipalities that offer their own electric service, including Milford.

“DEMEC has professional staff that is responsible for purchasing power as well as planning for the future,” Mark Whitfield, Milford city manager, said. “They are a joint action agency that represents the interests of all eight cities at the state and federal level for fair and equitable regulations for power suppliers.”

Last year, DEMEC announced that it would have to increase rates charged to the municipalities in part due to the shutdown of the Indian River Power Plant. Although Milford did not purchase power from that plant,

# CITY OF MILFORD ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE EXPLAINED

the shutdown substantially increased transmission and congestion costs, according to Whitfield.

“These costs are billed to DEMEC through PJM, the regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity,” Whitfield said. “Energy charges to DEMEC increased more than five percent. Renewable energy requirements also increased by nine percent. Lastly, to keep rates stable throughout the year, DEMEC uses a rate stabilization fund. Based on actuarial study that included power system costs, an increase was needed to adequately fund the reserve account over the next five years.”

Many people believe that the city of Milford has excessively high electric rates and often question when the city releases information that they are the third lowest in the state. The fact is that the city of Milford does have much lower rates than other municipalities and the Delaware Electric Co-op.

“The average, and I stress average, city of Milford resident uses 950 kwh per month,” Whitfield explained. Based on that usage, our rates are within one-half percent of the Co-Op and significantly lower than Delmarva Power, the only providers of electricity in the 19963 zip code. Depending on usage and how each entity bills, customers who use more than the average may have a higher Milford bill than the co-op or other

see page 14

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utilities because of the way they tier their charges. We have tried to keep our bills simple with a flat usage fee for both summer and winter. Many utilities have a much higher ‘summer’ rate, so Milford’s rate usually looks better in comparison in the summer than in the winter.”

Based on a chart provided by Whitfield, New Castle and the Co-Op are the only two electric providers with lower rates than Milford. A New Castle customer using the average 950 kwh would pay \$135.53 for their January 2024 bill while Co-Op customers pay an average of \$140.92, compared to \$141.29 for Milford customers. Looking at rates higher than Milford for the same 950 kwh, Dover customers would pay \$146.00, Lewes \$149.02, Clayton \$150.79, Seaford, \$152.40, Middletown \$157.89, Newark \$165.78 and DP&L \$189.96.

“When comparing electric usage and rates, city residents also need to look at the electric portion of their utility bill,” Whitfield said. “We have found that many folks compare their overall utility bill, which includes water, sewer, trash and recycling, to that of out-of-city resident bills that are electric only. Electric is just one portion of their monthly utility bill.”

Whitfield explained that the city recently transferred \$3.25 million from the electric fund to the General Fund in 2024.

“This transfer sharply reduces property taxes and funds various general fund activities, such as police and public safety, planning, administration, streets, community festivals, and parks and recreation,” Whitfield said. “Neighboring cities that do not have an electric utility, do not receive money from the electric utility

serving the community, which leads to higher taxes and user fees for those communities. There is a huge advantage to consumers to be served by a municipal non-profit electric company, including reliability, lower taxes and lower electric rates while providing excellent police and public service amenities.”

Whitfield stated that most of the information for each utility can be pulled from the utility website, allowing anyone to do the calculation he provided in the chart.



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# EDUCATION



photo link: [Milford School District](#)



## STATE RELEASES ONLINE TOOL TO HELP SCHOOLS EVALUATE FACILITIES

BY JAREK RUTZ

The **Delaware Department of Education** released a new tool to establish an evaluation and assessment system to determine whether a school facility is in good repair. The **facility assessment tool** will help school districts review and assess conditions in a standardized way.

Structured like a rubric, the assessments will help identify areas in need of attention, so school facilities are clean, safe and functional for staff and students.

The evaluation is broken up into categories like plumbing, mold and mildew, roofs, gas leaks, water quality, fire safety and more. Attached to each category are questions pertaining to a facility component and a severity index of minor, moderate or major. For example, next to the electrical section, questions touch on whether there are problems or inadequacies with exterior light-

ing, as well as whether the electrical system is outdated, undersized or otherwise problematic.

The release of this evaluation tool is particularly timely as five school districts head to referendum this year to increase local revenue through taxes and for state-matching funds. Many of the projects the districts are seeking funding for deal with deferred maintenance, or facility repairs and upkeep.

One of those districts is Colonial, which was approved for \$122 million for maintenance and improvements on all of the district's 13 school buildings. The revenue raised in the referendum will help the district upgrade and renovate the parking lots, roofs, ADA accessible playgrounds, sidewalks, athletic facilities and lighting installments to sports fields.



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The facility assessment tool will be provided to all 19 districts to allow them to begin using it. They are required to provide the assessments to the Department of Education in May each year, along with a board-approved repair and maintenance plan.

The tool allows for basic school information, including address and building size, to be confirmed or updated so the education department's information is complete and accurate.

MILFORD  
LIVE



# HEALTH



photo link: Bayhealth



**STAFF REPORT**

Bayhealth is teaming up with Blood Bank of Delmarva (BBD) and Delaware State University (DSU) Athletics to host the third annual Ballin’ for Blood Drive on Thursday, Feb. 1. The blood drive is scheduled from 1-6 p.m. on Bayhealth Court in Memorial Hall Gym on the main DSU campus, 1200 N. DuPont Hwy., Dover, DE 19901.

Bayhealth will be cheering on the Hornets and encouraging fans to register for the Ballin’ for Blood Drive during the Hornets’ basketball doubleheader against South Carolina State University on Saturday, Jan. 27. The women’s game begins at 2 p.m. and the men’s game is scheduled for 4 p.m. All donors who present to donate at the Ballin’ for Blood Drive will be entered into our sweepstakes to win four tickets to a Philadelphia 76ers game! All donors will receive a \$10 Chick-fil-A gift card as well.

Bayhealth is the primary healthcare provider for DSU Athletics and long-time partner of BBD which supplies blood to Bayhealth’s hospitals and standalone emergency

# BALLIN FOR BLOOD PLANNED FOR JANUARY 27

rooms across Kent and Sussex counties. The goal of Ballin’ for Blood is to raise awareness of the importance of a stable and diverse blood supply and to ultimately save lives in our communities by filling 50 donation appointments.

“Bayhealth is proud to leverage its partnerships with these two like-minded organizations to directly benefit the health of our community through blood donation,” commented Interim Vice President, Marketing, Communications & Community Engagement Amanda Bowie, MSM. “The blood collected through events like Ballin’ for Blood is used by our care teams to save lives every day.”

The drive also coincides with the start of Black History Month. Dr. Charles R. Drew, an African-American physician, is known as the father of blood banking. BBD will work closely with community partners to increase African American donors. DSU, a historically black college, will play a role in those efforts. African Americans make up about 22% of the state’s population and more than 50% of this demographic has type O blood. In addition, the number of African American donors at BBD increased to 5.7% in 2023, up from 5.1% the previous year.

see page 19



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“By having a diverse donor population, we can help ensure a better blood match for patients needing treatment,” said Steve Corse, executive director, Blood Operations at BBD.

Last year, the Ballin’ for Blood Drive brought in 48 donors, while the inaugural event brought in 33 donors. Most of the donors have been DSU students and staff, local residents, and Bayhealth employees and volunteers.

“DSU Athletics is excited to once again partner with Bayhealth and the Blood Bank of Delmarva to help raise awareness and teach our students, fans and community about the importance of a stable blood supply and how to help save lives in our community,” said Hornets’ Director of Athletics Alecia Shields-Gadson. “Our partnership with Bayhealth is all about utilizing our joint resources to inform and educate the University family and community at large on all things health and wellness, and this blood drive is a critical part of that mission. Bayhealth is truly ‘Here for Our Hornets.’”

Visit [Bayhealth.org/B4B](https://Bayhealth.org/B4B) to learn more and to register to donate.



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# EDGE

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TUE. JAN 23 | 10 - 11:15 A.M.



[DE.GOV/EDGE](https://DE.GOV/EDGE)

# SPORTS



photo link: [Milford High School Cross Country](#)



BY TERRY ROGERS

Congratulations to seniors Ben Gusciora and David Fuhrman who broke Milford Indoor Track & Field records in their respective events at the Pat Russo Invitational held on Dec. 20. Ben topped the indoor high jump record, clearing 6'4", while David bested the indoor shot put record with his throw of 48'8"!

### Other Results

In the boys' 55-Meter Dash, Jahmarie Thomas (6.91) finished in 13th while Tevez Pierre (7.26) finished in 31st. For the boys' 300-Meter Dash, Angelin Clauvil (42.28) earned 22nd while Wilderson Alexandre (44.77) finished in 28th. Boys' 500-Meter Dash results had Gervens Meus (1:28.37) finishing in 32nd. Boys' 800 Meter Run results show Anthony Nash (2:24.50) in 17th and Nathan Hague (2:34.43) in 26th. For the boys' 1600-Meter Run, Nate Waydelis (4:52.79) ended in fourth while Anthony Nash (5:21.11) came in 20th. In the boys' 3,200-Meter Nate Waydelis (10:46.48) was fifth and Eli Parfitt (11:35.98) 11th. For the boys' 55-Meter

# MHS SENIORS BREAK SCHOOL RECORDS AT INDOOR TRACK MEET

Hurdles Wilderson Alexandre (9.32) came in seventh.

Guscoria's high jump score earned him first place while Jahmar Austin finished sixth in the same competition with a jump of 18-00.00. Jahmar Austin jumped for 9-00.00 in the boys' Pole Vault Finals, earning 10th place. Fuhrman placed first in boys' Shot Put Finals with his record-breaking throw and Brandon Hinmon placed 12th with a throw of 38-00.00. Azion Rodriguez (37-01.50) and Jaron Tate (36-11.00) rounded out the shot put team, placing 15th and 16th.

Milford's 4×400 Meter Relay Finals team finished 13th with a time of 4:09.45 while the boys' 4×800 Meter Relay Finals team finished in eight with a time of 9:38.10.

Girls also did well at the invitational. In the girls' 55-Meter Dash, Adrionna Fountain (8.36) placed 16th while Sinaia Duffie (8.43) finished 19th. In the girls' 300-Meter Dash Finals, Duffie (49.55) finished 15th with Amani May (51.35) finishing in 25th. Jorja Willey (1:29.87) finished seventh in the girls' 500-Meter Dash with Erica Mollura (1:36.11) finishing in 12th. Willey (2:39.71) finished fifth in the girls' 800-Meter finals. Faith Mitchell (5:41.41) finished third in the girls' 1600 Meter with Kayla Ashton (6:00.72) finishing in sixth. In the girls' 3,200-Meter Run, Mitchell (12:14.71) finished first and Ashton (13:29.64) finished sixth. Standings for the girls' 55 Meter Hurdles had Amani May (10.65) in sixth.

In the girls' 4×200 Meter Relay, the Milford team (2:04.86) finished in seventh while in the girls' 4×400 meter Relay, the team (5:11.52) finished in 12th.

Kara Sivels (28-00.25) earned second in the girls' Triple Jump while Kayla Ashton (8-00.00) finished third in the girls' Pole Vault. De'Myje Lewis (28-06.50) finished seventh in girls' Shot Put while Kaitlyn Sivels (27-04.00) finished ninth.

The next indoor track meet will be the Worcester County Track Meet on Jan. 24.



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# POLICE & FIRE



photo credit: Milford Police Department



# FINANCIAL BURDENS CAUSE OPPOSITION TO PENSION BILL

BY JAREK RUTZ

A bill that would adjust the pension calculations for Delaware’s police officers and firefighters faced opposition from those very groups in the Jan. 18 House Judiciary Committee meeting.

**House Bill 266**, sponsored by Rep. Cyndie Romer, D-Newark, would add wages earned as a result of required additional work hours to the definition of “compensation” for purposes of calculating pensions in the county and municipal police and firefighter pension plan. Under the current system, mandatory overtime earnings are not included in the pension calculation. Romer clarified that this would not take into consideration volunteer time.

“When a firefighter or police officer volunteers for overtime...that pay does not go towards their pension plan and that does not change with this bill,” she said. “However, there are times when they are ordered to work due to lack of staffing, and if they refuse, they are

subject to disciplinary action and could be terminated. So this is not optional work, but it is also not paying into their pension plan.”

Nationally, police departments have been hit with staffing shortages. Last year, **House Bill 39** was introduced. It would pump an extra \$20 million into local police departments, and several officers testified that it would help with their marketing and advertising initiatives to help recruit more officers. That bill is awaiting consideration in the House Appropriations Committee.

In the Jan. 18 hearing, Romer also explained that the final average compensation rate for pensions is calculated by taking the average of the highest paid 36th consecutive month of a person’s career to determine the base pay.

“There is no cost to the state because this is not a state plan,” she said. “We just administer it, but the cost will be shared across the agencies.”

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from page 23

Captain Joe Malloy, a firefighter in the city of Wilmington, said the employees are overworked and provided stats stating that the average state employee would have to work an additional 63 days a year to match the hours he and his colleagues work, which is more than 2,400 hours a year.

“We’ve always asked for more manpower and every year we go to the city through budget appropriations, asking for more manpower,” he said. “Since I’ve been on the job, we have never added additional manpower, we’ve only removed it.”

Malloy said there’s a rotating list of employees that will be selected to work mandatory overtime.

Several committee members said the bill needs some clarification on what mandatory overtime is.

“The county municipal police and firefighters pension plan is a very rich pension plan — that means that the minimum number of years to retire is lower and the benefit calculation is higher,” said Joanna Adams, the pension administrator for the state. “For example, the FY25 normal costs portion of this pension plan rate is 12.74% compared to the state employees pension rate, which is 6.15%.”

If House Bill 266 were to be signed into law, she said, the normal cost component of the pension rate would most definitely be increased by several percent, which could have a major impact on the finances of the 40 employers participating in the pension plan.

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