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photo link: Abbott's Mill Nature Center



Milford Continues with Park



Renovation Completed Downtown



Stewart Fisher Director at SDGC

HEADLINES



photo link: Milford Police Department



MILFORD WILL CONTINUE WITH PARK AT CENTER OF EMINENT DOMAIN CASE

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

Milford plans to refine its comprehensive plan and continue to build the park at the center of this month's controversial eminent domain case, the city manager said Friday. Mark Whitfield said he's neither shocked nor surprised by the decision this week to terminate the eminent domain **action** on Annette Billings' land.

"I'm here to facilitate what they ask me to do. I'm here to do their work," he said.

"Ideally we want to connect hiking and biking trails," said Council member Michael Boyle of Ward 1, which is where the park will be. "I don't know how we will figure it out right now. There's no other plan."

The Feb. 21st vote came during a special session of the City Council after weeks of dealing with upset residents enraged by the idea that the city would take private property. The city even released a long statement

Wednesday before the council meeting detailing how the case came to be. It pointed out that property it wanted was wetlands in a family trust, had been on the tax books as having no value and that no tax had been paid on the property. The statement said the city had tried to negotiate with Billings, but she did not respond to those efforts or show up for meetings.

The city's Feb. 15 court **response** to its suit over the land also accused Billings of leading a campaign that had led to city council members and city workers being verbally attacked and disparaged. The city cited the erection of a **billboard** calling the mayor and council thieves.

The 8.08 acre parcel outside Milford, considered to be in Sussex County just outside city limits, would have been used for a bike path. The city wanted the parcel to

better access the 19 acres it bought from Billings' brother for more than \$500,000. The city planned to pay Billings \$20,000 for her land, which is in a family trust.

The path would have connected the town and nearby housing developments to a proposed park on South Rehoboth Boulevard. Without the path, the park potentially would have only one access point for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians to share.

Whitfield said he doesn't think the lack of a bike path will affect usage. He pointed out that most people drive to Silicato Park near the Boys & Girls Club, and pedestrians will still have a walkway on South Rehoboth Boulevard.

No park in Ward 1

Boyle said there are a limited number of parks in Milford and this park would be the first in Ward 1, which he represents. The park, which doesn't yet have a name, is still in the planning stages and will be primarily playing fields, he said.

"There is no timeline for the park," Boyle said. "This is long range."

He and fellow Ward 1 Council member Daniel Marabello were the only two members of the council Wednesday to not vote in favor of terminating the eminent domain action on Billings' land. "We have no objection, but slightly different views since it is in our ward," Boyle said.

He reported mixed opinions about the case from his ward's residents, but Boyle said he and Marabello had no plans to stop or try to interrupt the council's decision. "We're all fine with it," Boyle said. "What happened, happened."

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On Feb. 21, Councilwoman Katrina Wilson said that the council had voted for eminent domain to extend its parks, based on the city's comprehensive plan, to enhance community space.

"I am dedicated to finding the solutions that uphold the value of our community," Wilson said that night.

Milford Mayor Archie Campbell declined to comment on what will happen with the park. "I can't talk to you," Campbell said, after he confirmed the name of Milford Live's CEO Bryan Shupe during a phone call request for comment.

Several people on Facebook said that Campbell had told them Wednesday night that there would never be another eminent domain case as long as he was mayor. An earlier Milford Live story said the council planned to never use eminent domain again. That was incorrect. The vote to stop the eminent domain case against Billings was only a vote in that case.



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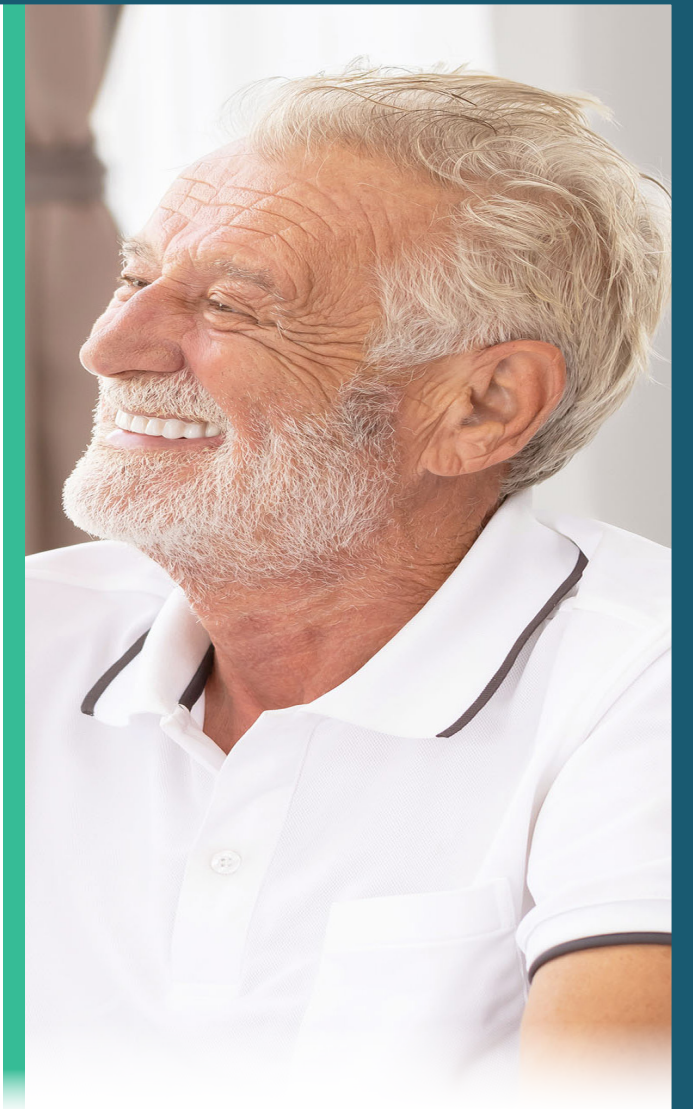
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CULTURE



photo link: [Second Street Players](#)



BY BETSY PRICE

Editor's Note: Tom Maloney died Feb. 18 after a devastating fall at his home at the age of 100. Funeral arrangements are pending. It's not hard to tell from this 2021 article what a character he was.

Tom Maloney and his commanding officer were the first off their landing craft at Utah Beach during the 1944 D-Day invasion of Normandy. They dropped into 10 feet of water. Both were forced to ditch their packs and guns to reach the surface again. Able to climb back on the transport, Maloney's enraged captain grabbed a gun off one of his men and put it to the head of the sailor who had landed the boat.

"I'll blow your damn head off," the captain told the sailor. "You back this boat up. Next time she stops, she better be high and dry." She was and the troops raced across the sand amid bullets and bombs. The only thing

MILFORD MAN'S SERVICE TOOK HIM AROUND WORLD

Maloney carried was a hunting knife his daddy had given him before he left for war. He didn't fret.

"You're always going to find somebody dead and he would have rations and stuff," the 98-year-old Milford resident said. "And I knew guns and stuff like that were plentiful."

Participating in D-Day is one of many dramatic memories that Thomas Andrew Maloney has of his three years overseas during World War II as a member of the 295 Combat Engineers. His crew built roads and bridges for troops to pass over. He can still reel off his serial number: "32. 75. 48. 48. You never forget that."

Maloney was 19 when he was drafted in 1942. Raised on a farm in Milford Neck, a few miles east of Milford, he had dropped out of high school in 11th grade and was working at a bomber factory in Baltimore, fitting ball turrets into planes on an assembly line.

The oldest of six boys, he was the first of five to go to war. His war would take him to Africa, Italy, the British Isles, Belgium, France and Germany. He'd help burn wool uniforms in Africa, suffer through the Battle of the Bulge without winter clothes, single-handedly shoot down a strafing German plane on Utah beach, blow up a bunny he thought was a Nazi, hunt deer for fresh meat with a Native American sergeant who called him

see page 7



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“country boy,” and sleep under trucks or in old buildings, but never in a tent, which he called “not much good.” Neither was a chicken coop he chose on the way to Germany. He leaned a board up against a wall so he could sleep on it.

“Within about 15 minutes I had about 1,000 chicken lice on me,” he said. “Man, I couldn’t stand it.”

Maloney’s wife of 75 years, Gladys, and son Barry say Maloney didn’t talk much about the war for decades. Then about 25 years ago, the child of a neighbor asked Maloney to come to his class at nearby Lula B. Ross Elementary for show-and-tell. That seemed to loosen the tide of memories. Now he talks more freely about it.

“They said you had a choice,” Maloney said of being drafted. “I told them I wanted to be a sailor. They put me in the Army.”

He met other draftees at the Milford train station to travel to Fort Dix, where they were inducted. Maloney was put on a train to Camp Walker in Texas, a former cavalry post turned troop-training camp.

“We rode three days and nights,” Maloney remembers. “We’d ride forward all day and then back up half the night. I guess it was due to military traffic.”

Training wasn’t difficult for a farm boy, he said, but it also wasn’t exciting to be in the Army. “Just hard work,” he said. Maloney went with the flow. He was in good physical shape. He passed the 30-mile march test with no problems. And he’d used a gun to shoot rabbits back home, so he rated high for marksmanship.

Maloney was sent to radio school, where he studied codes and more. He didn’t like it, saying he went in “dumber than the devil and come out dumber.”

Between the radio training and his marksmanship rating, he was assigned to stay with the commanding officer of the company, “practically in his pocket, you know? Everywhere he’d go, I had to go.”

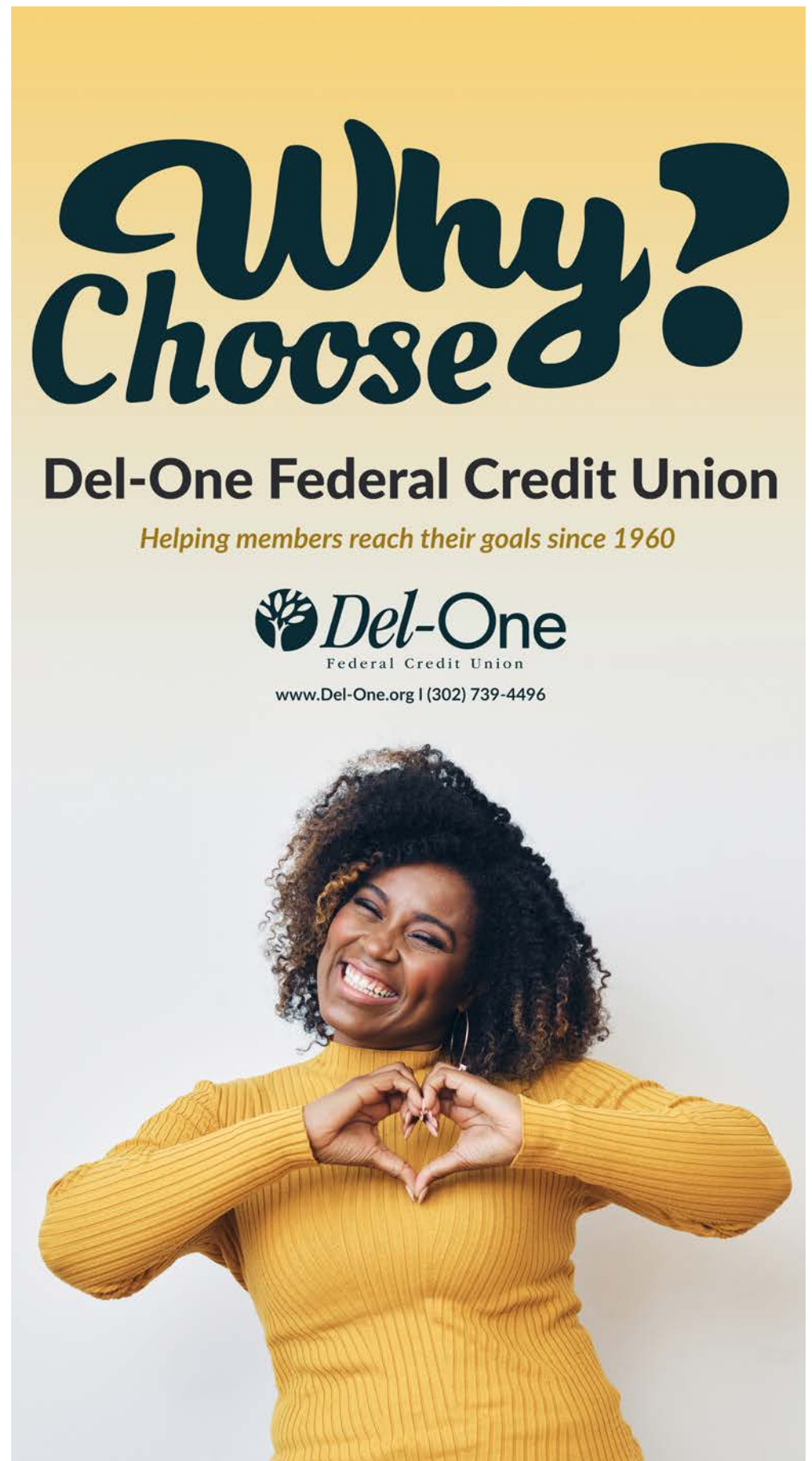
After training, the troops were allowed to go home to see their families. On the train ride back to Delaware, he and a buddy — “Joe Jonas’s son from over to Harrington” — decided in St. Louis that they wanted a beer. The conductor helpfully pointed out a joint right around the corner where they could get one. As they opened the doors of the bar, they glanced back to see their train pulling out. But because they were in uniform, they could ride any train and found a Flyer headed to Philadelphia. They beat the troop train by five hours.

Maloney was assigned to a company of mostly older soldiers — “some of them were 35 years old” — who had worked in Panama together. He credits them with taking care of the new guys and keeping a lot of them alive by training them well: “Do this. Do that. Don’t do this. Don’t do that.”

His company would become part of a convoy of 90 ships that left New Hampshire in the dead of night bound for Africa. The convoy changed directions every six minutes, he said, to avoid German subs and to confuse anyone watching about their destination.

They left Aug. 6, 1942, and landed in Ireland and Scotland before arriving in Africa in November. “We damn near smothered,” Maloney remembers. “We had wool clothes on.” Temperatures there were summer-like and sometimes rose to 110 degrees, Maloney said.


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utilizing recycled materials to construct unique masterpieces. From cardboard boxes and plastic bottles to old magazines and tin cans, students will unlock the potential of everyday recyclables. Let your child's creativity soar while making a positive impact on the environment. Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27; 12–1 p.m.

Class #3: "STAMPede" This is a stamp and stencil class for silly stompers! We'll use stamps, stencils and even your lil' ol' fingers with a mix of media to create a herd of fun. Get ready to explore with paints, inks, cool papers and more. It'll be a roaring good time! Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27; 2–3 p.m.

All classes hosted by Mr. Mike are for ages 9–12 years. Cost: Member: \$59; Nonmember: \$74; \$10 material fee for "I've Been Framed!"

In the coming weeks, Mispillion Art League will also host an array of adult/teen classes. Bring your sewing machine and craft your own reversible apron with Lyanna Anderson. Discover new methods for painting light and shadow with Joe Terrone. Make a botanical-themed ceramic platter with Mimi Galligan. Register for classes and check out what else is on offer at www.mispillionarts.org.

Be sure to visit by March 23 to see the 21st Annual

see page 9

STAFF REPORT

Mispillion Art League is spotlighting a long-time kids' class instructor, member and innovative artist Michael Fleishman. He earned a 2020 "Emerging Artist" fellowship from the Delaware Division of the Arts. If your 9-12 year old has a passion for art or simply needs to get out of the house and make some friends, they will have a blast in Mr. Mike's April class series. He will host three different classes, each with four one-hour sessions. Your child may take one, two, or all three!

Class #1: "I've Been Framed!" Using old picture frames and recycled collage materials, students will decorate a funky frame that can stand alone or house their latest drawing. Saturdays, April 6, 13, 20, 27; 10–11 a.m.

Class #2: "Corrugation Nation" Welcome to Corrugation Nation, where creativity and sustainability meet! Mr. Mike guides students on a journey of imagination,



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Judged Show. No need to drive into the city. Check out awesome original art right here in lower Delaware, including pieces from the talented exhibit awards winners. The show was judged by Jill Glassman, an oil painter and pastelist who resides on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Awards were given in the categories of pastel, watercolor, acrylic/oil, fine craft, photography and other.

Mispillion Art League is grateful to be a part of this year's DoMore24 Delaware campaign. The 24-hour event is day of giving designed to help nonprofits raise money and engage new donors. This is a fun and easy opportunity for Delaware residents and businesses to join forces in promoting philanthropy and cultivating a supportive community. Your gift will fund the Art League's efforts to provide community-wide access to quality visual arts programs. MAL brings art to Milford through exhibits, classes, outreach classes, events like The Big Draw Festival, and so much more. Please consider donating online between Thursday, March 7, from 6 p.m. through Friday, March 8, at 6 p.m. Donate [HERE](#).

Keep up with MAL events on social media (Facebook and Instagram @MispillionArts) or sign up for the monthly newsletter. Become a member to exhibit and get discounted rates on classes. Mispillion Art League is open Tuesday-Saturday 10-5, located at 5 N. Walnut Street. Milford.

This organization is supported in part by a grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. The Division promotes Delaware arts events on www.DelawareScene.com.



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WATERFOWL ORGANIZATION RAISES FUNDS FOR KSI

BY TERRY ROGERS

Delta Waterfowl Bay to Bay Chapter recently donated \$3,300 to Kent Sussex Industries. The proceeds were from the waterfowl organization's annual fundraising banquet.

"One part of this year's banquet was a legacy table honoring past KSI Vice-President Ann Haggerty, who was a supporter of the Bay to Bay chapter prior to her death," said Alicia Hollis, KSI's director of Community Relations. "It included a special auction package that elicited a \$3,300 winning bid donated to KSI."

The Bay to Bay Chapter, located in Felton, traces its roots back to 1911 when James Ford Bell of General Mills founded the original chapter. Bell had concerns about the duck population, especially canvasbacks, and

began a program that replaced two ducks for every one shot during hunting season at the Delta Marsh hunting club in Manitoba.

Still concerned about the duck population in the area, Bell brought in Aldo Leopolds, the father of today's game management, in order to create a waterfowl research facility. Hans Albert "Al" Hockbaum, became the first scientific director of the facility, in Bismark, ND, in 1938. The organization pioneered the study of breeding duck ecology while also making important discoveries on duck habitat as well as behavior.

Learning of the mission of Delta Waterfowl, 17-year-old Ashton Stafford, his 21-year-old brother, Austin, 16-year old cousin Ethan Stafford and 22-year-old friend



Gage Williams, decided to start a chapter in Delaware, creating Bay to Bay.

Its first annual banquet raised \$99,000 for the mission of Delta Waterfowl, a national chapter record for fundraising at a single event.

The donation to KSI will be used to support the programs for people with disabilities," Hollis said.

"That was something near and dear to Ann's heart," she said. "It was a remarkably generous action in honor of an individual who had a tremendous impact on countless Delaware lives."

MILFORD
LIVE

BUSINESS



photo link: [Marcia Reed](#)



RENOVATION COMPLETE ON WATSON-CARLISLE HOUSE

BY PETER OSBORNE

Dan and Rhonda Bond got a surprise when they started renovating the 1855 Watson-Carlisle house.

“When we began the renovation and removed a drop ceiling in one of the rooms, we discovered a beautiful plaster design,” Bond said. “There were wires and plumbing running through it, so a lot of it was broken. Todd Culotta and his BayPro Construction team were able to restore the ceiling.”

The renovation of the home built by Curtis Watson in what was then the business district of Milford, is now complete. Located at 10 Northwest Front Street, it sits next to another historic home built by Curtis’ brother, Bethuel.

The Bonds and John DiTomasso now offer office space on the first floor as well as apartments on the upper floors and in the rear.

In addition to the beautiful plaster work, crews discovered fireplaces and brickwork that had been hidden behind drywall. Alan Huntsberger, a BayPro Builders contractor, was able to remove the original flooring, repair its infrastructure and then piece back the floorboards. The handrail in the foyer, which runs from the first floor to the third, also is original.

“The front section of the house was clearly designed for the family,” Bond said. He said they couldn’t tell if extensions on the back of the house were original, “but we think based on certain building features, this was the servant quarters.”

The original ceilings were sloped, from four to eight feet. It wasn’t unusual for servants to have smaller rooms that required them to bend over to get to their living

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quarters. Other indications were a very narrow back stairwell and a short set of steps leading from the back section of the house into the front. That short set of steps is still used in one of the renovated apartments.

“Probably one of the most interesting things was that the two back wings had a courtyard between them with porches,” Bond said. “Since his brother, Bethuel, owned the house next door, I imagine they thought when they retired, they would each sit on their porches, smoking their pipes and talking to each other.”

The new owners filled in the courtyard and connected the wings to create two additional apartments.

Curtis Watson lived in the home with his second wife, Lydia A. White Watson, until his death at the age of 80.

At the age of 21, Curtis joined a mercantile business, B. Watson & Son, with his father, bringing his brother, Bethuel, in 10 years later when their father retired. After his brother joined the company, the name was changed to C.S. Watson & Co. In addition to the mercantile business, Curtis was also a shipbuilder and landowner who had 2,500 acres of farmland and forests when he died. His company built 15 wooden sailing ships used to ship grain and lumber to Philadelphia and New York.

Curtis also was a founder of the First National Bank of Milford and served as a director for the Junction and Breakwater Railroad. He was a member of the Milford Board of Commissioners, the predecessor to today’s City Council, and was named chair several times. In 1859, Curtis was elected to the State Legislature, serving two terms and the State Senate for one term.

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In his will, Curtis left the home to Jennie Stanton, who was married to Dr. James Stanton. For many years, the building was known as the Watson-Stanton home until it was purchased by J. William “Bill” Wells. The home housed Wells Insurance, operated by Bill, and Wells Real Estate, operated by Bill’s wife, Lida, and his son, Joe.

The first floor’s two office spaces include handicap accessible bathrooms. Even so, Bond said the renovators couldn’t come up with a way to create a ramp into the building, so the building itself is not accessible.

There are five apartments, two on the second floor and one on the third. Two smaller apartments are available with entrances behind the home. Rent for the apartments ranges from \$1,800 for the third floor unit, which takes the entire floor, to \$1,200 for the smaller, one-bedroom unit.

“The upper units actually have nice views of the downtown area,” Culotta said. “This is downtown living. If you’re young and single, you can walk over to fondue or down to Milford Tavern.”

Bricks were removed from the sidewalk leading to the back apartments and replaced so they provide a nice walkway with an historic look.

“This project benefited from the Downtown Development District program and the Delaware Historic Preservation Tax Credit program,” Bond said. “We could not have done this without those programs. More people should look into those options in order to preserve some of these beautiful historic businesses.”



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COOLEST THING MADE IN DELAWARE OFFERS 50 CHOICES FOR VOTERS

BY BETSY PRICE

A contest meant to highlight the diversity of Delaware's manufacturing — and raise the business sector's profile — has opened its first round of voting. Fifty items including candles, Dogfish Head beer, doggie doughnuts, eco-plastic tables and an outer-space habitat, have been entered in [The Coolest Thing Made in Delaware](#) contest. It received more than 100 nominations.

"This contest provides an exciting window into Delaware's manufacturing sector," said Mike Quaranta, president of the [Delaware State Chamber of Commerce](#). "From space suits and treatments for type 2 diabetes that push the boundaries of innovation, to consumer goods like personal care products and chicken wings, the sheer variety of entries showcases the depth and breadth of our state's production capabilities.

"It's a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of Delaware's manufacturers and a reminder that 'cool' can come in all shapes, sizes and purposes."

The chamber is cosponsoring the contest with the [Delaware Manufacturing Association](#). Tournament-

style voting will help reduce the field until the final products go head-to-head in late March. The first-round choices can be found [HERE](#), with voting ending Thursday, Feb. 29. Votes can be cast once a day.

Quaranta said at the chamber's annual dinner that business leaders want to raise interest in manufacturing as a career path while increasing awareness of Delaware's advantages for manufacturing.

Many experts think companies that once moved to China for less-expensive manufacturing will soon be seeking other locations because China's population isn't growing due to its one-child-per-family policy. While China has rescinded that rule, many young people aren't interested in having a bigger family, reports say.

About 28,000 people now work in Delaware manufacturing businesses. Delaware is well positioned for transportation alone, among other qualities, Quaranta said, to compete for future manufacturing.

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GOVERNMENT & POLITICS



photo link: Marcia Reed



MILFORD CITY COUNCIL DROPS BILLINGS' EMINENT DOMAIN CASE

BY KATIE KAZIMIR

The Milford City Council Feb. 21 ended its attempt to take property from Annette Billings to use for a park and voted to end the eminent domain process. Councilwoman Katrina Wilson made the motion to abolish the city's right to take private land for public use during a special session Wednesday evening. The crowded City Hall chamber erupted into applause as six council members voted "yes" to the historic motion.

"It's amazing the turnout and support," Billings said.

There were no votes against the motion. Two councilmen chose to abstain: Daniel Marabello and Michael Boyle, both of Ward 1.

"As much as this was a black mark for the City Council, it was an amazing testament to the power of citizens coming to the rescue of their fellow citizens," said Billings' lawyer Ron Poliquin.

Billings was served a lawsuit Jan. 25 notifying her that 8.08 acres of her land, which was in a family trust, was

being condemned so Milford could use it to complete a park and bike/pedestrian path to connect its four wards.

"I never dreamed in a million years it would end up like this," Billings said Wednesday evening.

Wilson said the decision made by City Council to explore the possibilities of extending Milford parks was based on the city's comprehensive plans and aimed at enhancing community space. "While I fully support the idea of expanding our parks. I want to make it clear that I do not condone the notion of taking land unjustly," she said.

The eminent domain move outraged many Milford residents who thought it was wrong for a government to be able to take private property, even for parks. It was a hot topic on social media and one Milford real estate agent even had a billboard erected that accused the council and city officials of theft.

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Others created a webpage documenting the eminent domain case. More than 100 showed up to a council meeting last week and again on Feb. 21 to show their opposition to the move.

The city argued this week that taking the property through eminent domain was legal — even if the property was outside city limits — and that Billings would have been paid \$20,000 for property that was not even on tax rolls. The city needed the property to be able to access the 19-plus acres it bought from Billings brother for more than \$500,000.

Residents who supported the move felt like the council was being bullied. The city said Billings’ supporters had verbally attacked council members and city employees.

“To those employees who have been attacked for simply carrying out their duties, I extend my sincere apologies. It is unfair to them to be targeted in this way,” said Wilson.

“I don’t think there was a single person who was for Milford and against Billings,” said Sue Lindale, an avid bicyclist who opposed the bike path. Lindale and her husband Tim said most cyclists wouldn’t have used the proposed bike path because it would not connect to any roads Milford cyclists used.

Going forward, Wilson said constructive dialogue and cooperation are key to finding solutions to city issues. “I urge you to refrain from adopting a negative tone that may come across as bullying or intimidation,” she said.



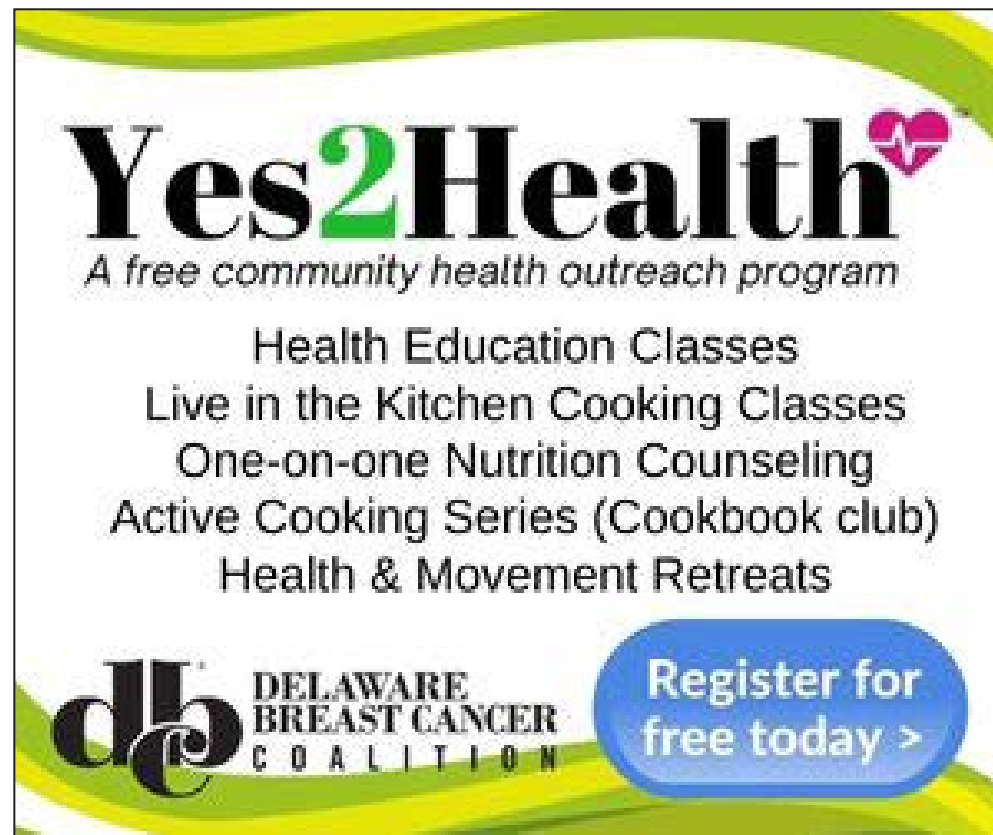

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photo link: [Milford School District](#)

MHS DRAMA CLUB PRESENTS SPRING MUSICAL "THE ADDAMS FAMILY"

STAFF REPORT

Step into the creepy, kooky world of the Addams family as they take the stage at Milford High School this weekend in a delightfully wicked musical spectacle! With catchy tunes, witty humor and plenty of spooky charm, this show promises to be a devilishly good time for the whole family. Get ready to snap your fingers and embrace the wonderfully weird in The Addams Family!

The show takes its inspiration from the New Yorker comic created by Charles Addams that went on to be a successful television show and movie series. The plot of The Addams Family musical (school edition) is an original story: set in present day, 18-year-old Wednesday finds herself in love with a fine, upstanding, "normal" young man. Oh, the horror! How will her parents react? What will happen when the Addams family hosts dinner for Wednesday's boyfriend and his parents?

Director Carissa Meiklejohn says, "With the popularity of the Netflix show 'Wednesday', as evidenced by a large number of Wednesday Halloween costumes this year, we felt it was a good time to put on The Addams Family."

Student performers in this production include Aria Boyton, Giovanni Burgos, Joy Cooper, William Evans, Marlee Gray, Merary Haro-Purata, Jada Hooper, Trinity Hopkins, William Judd, Kirby Kirby, Michael McKain, Cameron Murray, Jude Parfitt, Elliot Peel, Alvaro Perez, Anthony Ramirez-Zamora, Eli Rauch,

Avery Richard and Bronx Stanfield.

All performances will be held in the MHS auditorium. Tickets will be available at the door.

- Thursday, Feb. 29 at 6 p.m.; Friday, March 1 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, March 2 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- \$5 students (18 years or younger); \$8 Senior Citizens (60 and over); \$10 all others

For additional information, please contact Producer Erica Snyder at esnyder@msd.k12.de.us or 302-422-1610.



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The Addams Family
SCHOOL EDITION

Thursday, February 29 at 6 PM
Friday, March 1 at 7 PM
Saturday, March 2 at 1 PM and 7 PM
2024

Milford High School Auditorium
Gerald W. Thompson Center for the Performing Arts

Tickets
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SUSSEX COMMUNITY VOCALIZES NEEDS, HOPE FOR EDUCATION

BY JAREK RUTZ

A few dozen parents of students, educators and concerned community members shared their frustrations with education in Delaware and hopes for the future during a town hall Feb. 21. The few students in the crowd received applause and praise from the crowd for caring enough to be involved in changing the status quo of a system still funded by an 80-year-old formula. It was the penultimate meeting in a series of five sponsored by the Vision Coalition of Delaware.

“Tonight is about getting feedback from you that will help us as a leadership team develop our vision for the next 10 years,” said Mark Holodick, secretary of education.

Attendees were asked to write a word on one sticky note describing the education now and another word

on a different sticky note with how they hope state education evolves.

For the first prompt, people wrote words such as disconnected, disorganized, ambitious, overwhelmed, underfunded, dismal, struggling, vulnerable and trauma. For the second, they said trauma-informed, collaborative, supportive, equitable, empowered, evolved, balanced, transparent, united, inspiring and appropriately-compensated.

Attendees were then asked to discuss the Vision Coalition of Delaware’s “North Star,” which its leaders describe as something that “guides our journey on the path to excellence. It’s designed to show what students need to be, know, have and do for a lifetime of success.

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“It serves as the beacon for our vision to improve public schools for every Delaware student,” the coalition’s website says. “Students will need core academic knowledge to provide a foundation for learning, yet they will also need skills and attributes that go beyond academics.”

Attendees seemed to agree that everything in the diagram is crucial, but many highlighted the need for life skills such as budgeting and communication. Some also stressed the importance of community — encouraging students to give back and successful schools having strong partnerships with community organizations.

Among other topics were the shortage of teachers, multi-language educators and the need for early intervention for struggling young learners. Some audience members talked about how many industries are global, so language immersion programs and opportunities to study abroad are beneficial.

The public meetings were organized by **Vision Coalition**, a public-private partnership of Delawareans working to improve public education. It includes education, community and legislative leaders. The coalition’s leadership developed the **Vision 2015** plan in 2006. Ten years later, with Delaware adopting more than 75 percent of its recommendations, Vision Coalition helped create a new 10-year plan.

Holodick said one of the strongest elements of that first plan was pathways, which allow students to specialize in courses with a specific career or field in mind. Many schools have adopted them.

The town halls are a part of an ongoing process to help Delaware create the next 10-year plan. The final Vision Coalition Town Hall is a virtual one, set for Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 6 p.m. Register **HERE**.

There was little discussion about the school funding system and the recent 200-page report from **American Institutes for Research** that recommended the state invest between \$500 million to \$1 billion more in public education. One aspect of the report that did get attention was that certain populations of students, such as English language learners, receive about 10 times more funding in other states.

Meeting organizers pointed out that the landmark funding report will be presented to the state legislature March 7, at 11 a.m. in a Senate Education and House Joint Committee meeting. It can be watched **HERE**. This is the first time since the report was released to the public in December that it will be presented to the General Assembly.



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BY DAVID MCCALLUM

Stewart Fisher developed his love of golf as a college student at East Carolina University in Greenville, NC, and he's looking forward to bringing that love to the Milford golfing community as the first director of golf at the new Southern Delaware Golf Club (SDGC). The SDGC, formerly known as Shawnee Acres and Rookery North, is tentatively scheduled to open in mid-April, according to Fisher.

"When I talked to Bill (Kupfer, SDGC's director of agronomy) about the position," said Fisher, who was working as an assistant professional at Queenstown Harbor Golf Club at the time. "He (Kupfer) told me what our owners are hoping to do here, and I fell in love with their love for Milford and what they believe in this

STEWART FISHER NAMED DIRECTOR OF GOLF AT SDGC

golf course and what it can be. I'm very excited and honored to be a part of it."

The vision is to "reboot" the golf course in a way that golfers who played Shawnee Acres and Rookery North in the past will remember, but with a few tweaks.

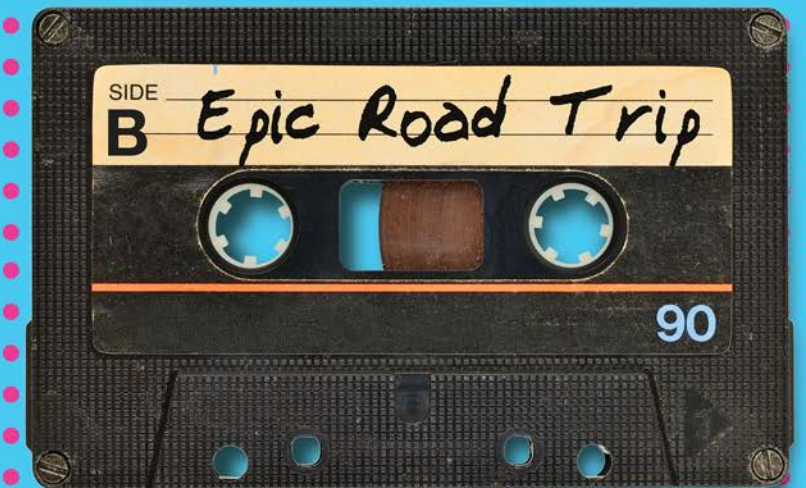
"Different is the word I would use," said Fisher, who has been working in the golf industry for the past 10 years at courses such as Queenstown Harbor (most recently), Bayside in Selbyville and the Bay Club in Berlin, MD. "That's the word I use a lot in going from golf courses that are already established. They've got a lot of procedures, got everything up and running, and I've been lucky enough to just step in and continue with the process.

"Difficult sure, but different and really having to use your imagination more than I've had to at other courses, but in a great and exciting way. It's an opportunity to create a golf operation, a culture and a team, a family if you will at a rebooting, reopening golf course."

Fisher says the reworking of the course is akin to golfers facing a blind tee shot or one into a green where the imagination is needed to put the ball in the right position to achieve the upmost success on a hole. He attributes much of that to Kupfer who is overseeing the changes that are being made to the course.

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“Unfortunately, I didn’t get a chance to play Shawnee or Rookery North, but I’m hearing through word of mouth what it was like,” Fisher said. “What golfers who have played here before and new golfers can expect are brand-new greens. Bill (Kupfer) and his team, all in-house, did a great job. They’ve done the new greens, resloping, new bunkering. There were 69 bunkers when the project started and now there are 59 — all brand new.

“As for a layout from a visual perspective for golfers — it’s going to look very similar to what Shawnee and Rockery North looked like although we are moving a couple of tee boxes. That will be exciting, so there will be some new views for certain tees.”

Kupfer is also seeding tee boxes and fairways which will all be Bermuda grass, Fisher said. Trees have also been removed from certain areas to make tee boxes, fairways and greens “happy.”

As for a “signature” hole, Fisher said, it’s still a little early to be determined because the course is still a little “raw” and trees have not begun to bloom yet.

“Having said that, I believe 18 will be a fantastic finishing hole. It’s a long, par-4 up the hill,” he said. “It will be a really nice view with the new clubhouse and the restaurant (Big Oyster) in the background,” he said. “Number two is a hole I’m big fan of. It’s a long, thin par-5 with a great green complex that will get you in trouble if you’re not careful.

“This course has a ton of character and that’s what I’m most excited about.”

In addition, there are plans to update the driving range with 50-foot netting going down the range’s left side and at the end of the range which will allow golfers to use their woods whereas they could not previously, Fisher said.

In addition to Fisher, there will be a full-time assistant pro in the pro shop to assist golfers with their tee times, greeters will be out front at the bag drop area, starters on the first tee and marshals out on the course. The driving range will also be staffed as well as having staff to clean and take care of the carts.

There will be golf lessons available for members and the public at large, as well as junior lessons from Fisher and the incoming assistant pro. Fisher also said the club plans to be part of the First Tee program for the area’s youth to take part in during the summer.

“One of my favorite parts of being in the golf industry is the instruction and helping people grow their game,” he said.

The course is semi-private, which means opportunities for daily rounds will be available to the public, Fisher said. The club’s website is set to go live April 1 for those wishing to book their tee times. There are a “handful” of local tournaments already on the books.

“If there’s anyone looking to join a local scramble or fundraiser to participate in, I will be happy to pass along information that I have,” he said. “There will also be weekly leagues, a ladies’ day and a seniors day, all of which are to be announced.”

The club shop will be fully stocked with modern clubs and apparel, which will include TaylorMade, Titleist, Callaway, along with Bridgestone golf balls. The apparel will include Greg Norman, Under Armour, along with FootJoy apparel, shoes, etc. There will also be SDGC apparel as well as having Big Oyster apparel and hats since the club is partnering with the restaurant.

The restaurant will be running the food and beverage service at the course and will also be brewing on-site, Fisher said. The restaurant will have an outdoor patio that will overlook No. 1 tee, No. 9 and 18 greens, and No. 8 fairway.

Single and family memberships, along with cart plans and driving range plans, are still available. Those interested in more information can visit the pro shop Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday. People can also contact Fisher via email at southerndelawaregolfclub@gmail.com



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