#### MILFORD MILFOR







### March 12, 2024 Vol. 14 • Issue 11

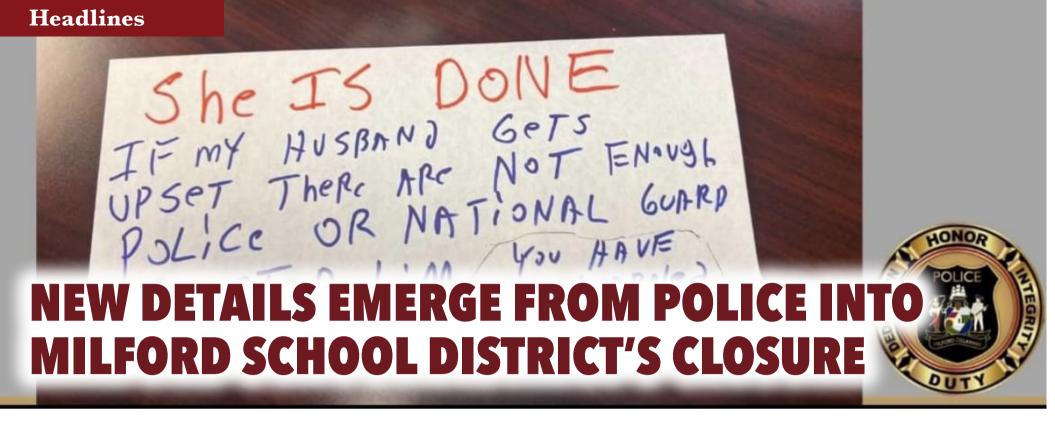
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### HEADLINES







#### **BY JAREK RUTZ**

Milford Police Department Chief Cecilia Ashe shed some light on an ongoing investigation that was linked to Milford School District closing schools last week (Thursday, March 7).

Last Thursday, several schools in the Milford School District were placed on "low-level" lockdown after a "credible threat was made toward Milford School District schools and offices." The entire district was closed Friday, but opened back up Monday.

In a seven-minute press conference with Ashe and Bridget Amory, superintendent of Milford, Ashe confirmed the online speculation that the school closures were related to the Milford Police last Thursday asking for public assistance in its attempt to locate Thomas Caffrey, a 59-year-old male from Lincoln, who investigators say they want to speak with regarding a terroristic threatening incident that occurred within Milford city limits.

According to Ashe, at approximately 1:20 p.m. last Thursday, Caffrey came to the Milford School District office at 906 Lakeview Avenue, to drop off a concerning letter for the school district.

"Contained in this letter was a district key access key card and building key for a previous employee of the school district," she said.

The Milford Police Department was contacted by district administration at that time and an investigation into the concerning letter began. Police were advised that Caffrey appeared to be agitated when he dropped off the letter to the district office.

"It is important to know that Caffrey is a former employee of the Milford School District," Ashe said.

As a safety precaution, Milford High School and Milford Central Academy were placed on a heightened

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awareness or as many have referred to, she said, a low-level lockdown. There was a subject matching Caffrey's description allegedly banging on the side door of the academy. This resulted in a full lockdown occurring at the high school and the academy.

Milford police school resource officers already at the school immediately responded to the area and it was determined that the subject was not Caffrey. Milford Police then worked with school staff to organize a plan to safely dismiss the two schools because the location of Caffrey was unknown. Once the plan was developed, it was put into action and all students were safely dismissed.

Milford police investigators attempted to make contact and locate Caffrey at the time to talk with him about the concern, but were unable to via phone or in person at that time. Investigators continued to attempt contact with Caffrey throughout the night and into the early morning hours of Friday, March 8, but were still unable to make contact with him or locate him.

"It was determined by the school district to close the schools on March 8, as a precaution to keep all Milford students safe due to the police being unable to locate Caffrey at that time," Ashe said. "This also allowed investigators, along with Milford Police Department, in the school district to develop a safety plan to safely bring back the students to school today, March 11."

On Friday, March 8, investigators consulted with the Delaware Department of Justice, who were in agreement with investigators to go before the Justice of the SOUTHERN STATES'
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see page 5

Peace Court to obtain a warrant for Caffrey for four counts of harassment stemming from this incident.

Ashe said Caffrey is believed to be operating a gray colored 2012 Nissan Titan pickup truck with plate "CL 64342" and or a vanity tag of "VF 6493."

"I can ensure the parents of the Milford School District students and their staff that the Milford Police Department is doing everything that we can do to locate Mr. Caffrey," Ashe said. "As a parent myself, I understand the concerns that parents and staff members may have expressed over the last few days. However, also as a law enforcement officer, we have to continue to balance the overall public safety and integrity of investigations so that we will continue to prosecute and bring people to justice when they do these actions."

Amory said that she wanted to remind everyone that the safety and well-being of students, staff and community members remain a top priority.

"Every threat that we are receiving is treated with the utmost seriousness, and we're dedicated to upholding a secure learning environment for all," she said. "In addition to our school counselors and support service teams, there are additional supports available throughout the week for our students and staff. We highly encourage that you keep your students in school based on our work with law enforcement we can confirm our district is safe and secure."



## CULTURE







#### **BY TERRY ROGERS**

After searching for a new executive director after the retirement of Janne Collins in February, Downtown Milford, Inc discovered that the person they needed in the job was right under their noses. On March 5, 2024, the board voted to hire Sara Isaacs LeBright as the executive director of the organization.

"We received a few resumes, but after watching Sara work absolute magic in the DMI office over the past few months, first as our part-time administrative assistant and then stepping in when Janne announced her retirement, we knew this was the right decision," Shelby DiCostanzo, president of DMI, said.

# LEBRIGHT BECOMES DMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LeBright grew up a pastor's daughter, her father growing up what she calls a "Walnut Street kid."

"Both my parents grew up in Delaware, but my dad was from Milford and his dad worked on the railroad," LeBright said. "His mom was at Calvary Church and then Avenue. The rest of the family were local farmers. Both my parents graduated from Milford High School, I didn't but I still live in Lincoln."

LeBright joked that she was the youngest of three and the most "well rounded," compared to her older brother and sister. Her husband, Joe, is a builder and they have two children, 11-year-old daughter Grayson and 8-year-old daughter Avery. She and her husband purchased the home in Lincoln where she grew up.

"I ended up volunteering and helping at a local school," LeBright said. "They put me in a para-teaching position, and by the end of the year, I was taking over most of the class. That was where I found my joy for learning and education as well as working with people."

Furthering her education in elementary education, LeBright was looking for a part-time job that would allow her to be available for her children.

"Shelby Nash reached out to me when she saw a post I put up on Facebook asking if anyone knew of a part-time position available," LeBright said. "I applied and



was hired as the part-time administrative assistant. I had a hard time leaving my job because I enjoyed doing it, but since I have been here, I have come to love all the business owners downtown that I've met. I've always had a desire to help people and work with people, so I have absolutely enjoyed this."

DiCostanzo explained that when LeBright was hired, it was with an understanding she would be trained and step into the executive director position in a few years. When Collins retired in February, there was a need to accelerate the process in order to have someone leading the charge at DMI.

"Just watching her interact with people and bring vibrance, excitement and a sense of community into the office has been such a pleasure," DiCostanzo said. "We are super lucky to have Sara guiding our board and helping us grow downtown into something outstanding."

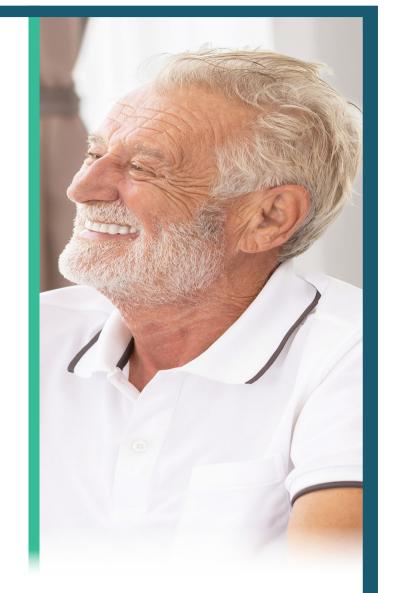




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### GOVERNMENT & POLITICS







#### **BY KATIE KAZIMIR**

Twice delayed because of rain, a ribbon cutting for two new electric vehicle charging stations in downtown Milford finally took place Friday, March 8. Sunny skies and a comfortable temperature hinting at the upcoming segue to spring made for a pleasant ceremony at the NE Front Street parking lot.

A couple dozen people, including city officials, staff and local media, gathered around the two new EV charging stations, which can be found in the corner of the parking lot closest to the Milford Senior Center.

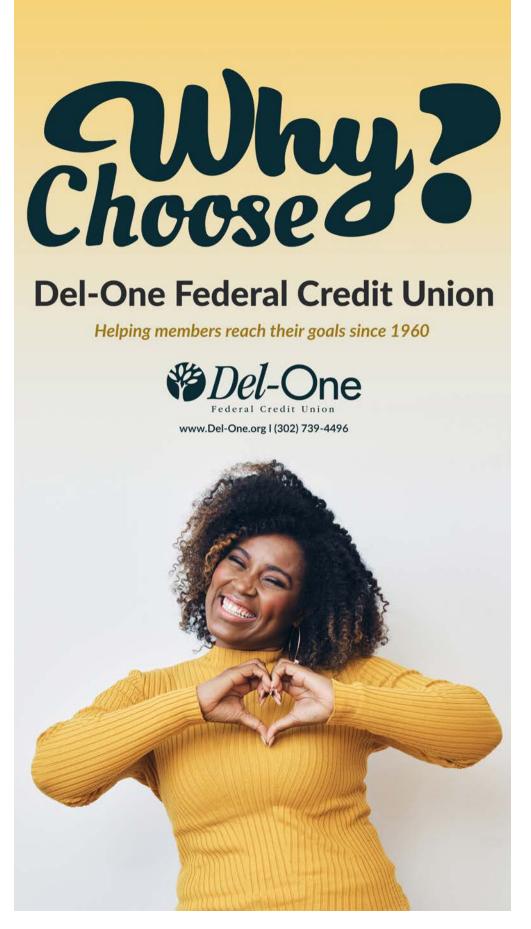
As the group engaged in friendly conversations amongst themselves, Milford Mayor Archie Campbell, with oversized scissors bearing the words "GREATER MILFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE" in hand,

made his way to the front of the crowd. "Are we ready?" Campbell asked the handful of photographers poised ready with cameras after other key players in the EV chargers implementation flanked the mayor behind a ceremonial long red ribbon.

"Move a little to your left everyone so we can get both charging stations in the shot," one photographer directed. A couple steps to the left for the group and Campbell clipped the red ribbon as cameras clicked and the small crowd applauded.

Two years in the making, the EV charging stations were paid for with a DNREC DC Fast Vehicle Charging

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Station Grant Program, with funding from the VW Mitigation Settlement Fund (July 2022).

### **Adding EV chargers**

By adding EV chargers in the downtown corridor, Milford officials hope to draw more foot traffic to the town's active Farmers Market, Public Library, Riverwalk, local shops and restaurants. They also will provide public charging for those traveling Del. 1 and Del. 113. The chargers will be accessible to the public 24 hours a day and users will pay a fee for powering their vehicles.

The EV charging stations are one of 14 project locations throughout Delaware made possible by the DNREC grant. They offer a variety of charging location types made by different manufacturers and reflect geographic diversity across the state.

Funded sites will also be in shopping centers, hotels and traditional fueling centers, and will provide both en route charging opportunities and neighborhood charging opportunities, a DNREC press release said.

"These charging stations represent the first wave of major investments in Delaware to build out a network of reliable and convenient fast electric vehicle charging stations for our residents and visitors," said Shawn M. Garvin, DNREC secretary, in a press release.

The state won't stop with the 14 locations.

"DNREC and DelDOT are working together on an electric vehicle infrastructure plan that will guide future investments and programs to ensure a smooth transition to a cleaner, more equitable transportation system," Garvin said.

DNREC says transportation is the largest single source of Delaware's greenhouse gas emission. Building out the state's charging network is meant to encourage (some say force) people to buy electric vehicles and while reducing emission to meet Delaware's Climate Action Plan.

The funding builds upon Delaware Clean Transportation Incentive Programs, which include a suite of rebates for light-duty vehicles and Level 2 charging stations, DNREC said. Funding for the DC Fast Charging Stations comes from the Environmental Mitigation Trust, a negotiated settlement between Volkswagen and the federal government.







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## EDUCATION







#### **BY JAREK RUTZ**

On the day Gov. John Carney preached the impact of working together in his State of the State address, the Senate watched a tense interaction divided by party lines that one legislator called "childish behavior." The interaction between Sen. Eric Buckson, R-Dover, and Sen. Bryan Townsend, D-Newark/Glasgow, and their similar education task force resolutions, were enough to cause comment from a veteran lawmaker during the session.

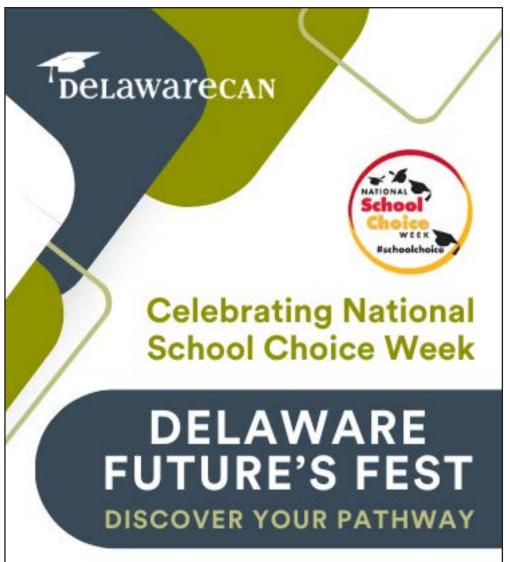
"We either correct our own misbehaviors and go forward and serve the public as we've sworn to do, or we continue this childish, 'I can one-up-you' behavior," said Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel. "If we continue that,

we don't serve our people. We only hurt them and that we all should be ashamed of."

The fracas began after a quick, smooth unanimous Senate vote Tuesday on a bill relating to educators donating days off to one another with a resolution that would create a task force focused on school discipline.

**Senate Concurrent Resolution 117**, sponsored by Buckson, who was an educator and is a member of the Senate Education Committee, would establish the Classroom Behavior and School Discipline Task Force. The 25-person task force would be responsible for reporting findings and recommendations to improve student behavior in schools.

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Fights, student bullying and disrespect to teachers are common tales in the legislature and at school board meetings. That has fueled concern about school safety, which has led to schools and districts hiring more constable and school resource officers while implementing safety features into buildings, including metal detectors. So, it seemed like the resolution would be a hit.

Enter Senate Majority Leader Townsend. who proceeded to introduce Senate Concurrent Resolution 119. It would establish pretty much the same group Buckson's bill would, but would be called the Student Behavior and School Climate Task Force. Its goal would be to look at the causes and impact of student behavior issues on the student body.

Another difference is Townsend's bill would study teacher dissatisfaction. It cited a 2022 American Psychological Association study showing about 50% of teachers are thinking about quitting their job because of a negative school climate.

The introduction of Townsend's legislation triggered the argument. Buckson said that while drafting his legislation, he was provided bipartisan support as well as help from both chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees, both Democrats. But, there were some changes he was not willing to make.

"When I was asked to change many parts of the original draft, I said yes," he said. "However, when I was told by the majority leadership that I had to eliminate the minority party having an option to choose someone to represent us on the task force, I said no. When I was told to remove the word 'discipline.' I said no, you're SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS

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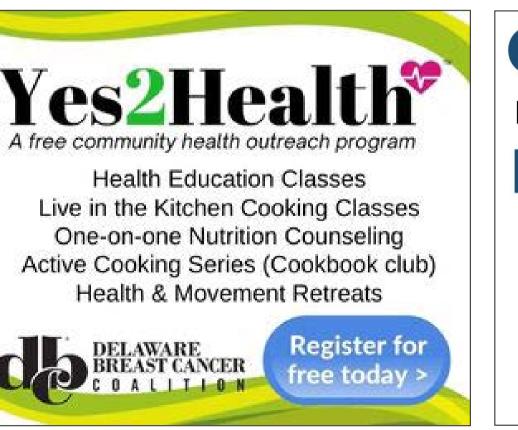
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dancing around it. When I was told that leadership and not the task force members could choose who the chairs would be, I said no."

Buckson said Townsend called him for a meeting less than two hours before the Senate hearing to tell him he had a competing resolution. Townsend essentially told him "you get on board with my resolution or you get run over," which Buckson called "horse crap."

"This is a bright example of what's wrong with this place and I mean that sincerely," Buckson said. "Instead of helping our kids, we worry about who gets credit or who's in control and it's a disservice to those who put us in the seats we occupy on their behalf and we should expect more from us but I guess not."

He said the two resolutions are similar, but not the same. He described them as "cousins" and said his resolution would be "ours" and not "mine" like Townsend's.

"This is about education, it's about our classrooms, it's about the safety of our students and our teachers," Lawson said, "and now we're going to play games with it. I think that's wrong... It is just a shame that we can't sit down and work through these things and put them together so that we can work together instead."

Townsend noted that while the word "discipline" was taken out of his resolution's task force name, it still is included in the bill. He said students who misbehave are still entitled to empathy and shouldn't just be removed or segregated from the behaving students because that would be regressive. He said Buckson's position on school discipline is "quintessential shoot first, aim second."

"It disappoints me that you use the term segregate. That is absolutely not what is done," Buckson said. "What is being done is recognizing right now that we have a very, very small percentage of individuals, and I'm talking less than 10 at times in an entire class and school are taking over the school in the classrooms, and if we have to, in order to protect the classroom instructor and the kids in that room, provide an alternative location within that actual space, then yes that's what I stood for."

Buckson said the people growing up in his generation had the same traumas and struggles that students today have, but the lack of discipline today is what's different.

"What's lost is we've lost control," Buckson said, "because we agree to your terms and the words used as if they sound good and I don't think they do." He said several times he was very bothered by Townsend's use of "segregation" in painting the picture of Buckson's goal.

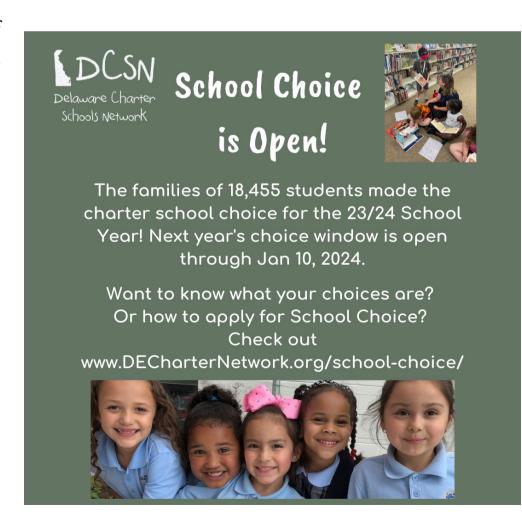
Lawson and Senate Minority Whip Brian Pettyjohn, R-Georgetown, both jumped after the initial debate, seemingly to cool things down and remind the Senate that it's not about who sponsors a bill but that students and schools are safe.

"We should be better than what we're seeing on CNN and MSNBC and Fox with all this argument that's going with elected officials that are supposed to represent the people in their districts, the people in their states, the people in their communities," Pettyjohn said. "This is very frustrating for somebody that respects the process and respects the institution that we've been elected to serve. I wish we could come together."

Lawson said he'd like to see both resolutions laid on the table (not voted on) for the time being. They were not.

Townsend's bill passed 14 "yes" votes, three "no" votes and three not voting. Buckson's bill failed when the Democrats he sought to work with abandoned him. It got six "yes" votes — all of the Republican senators — while all 14 Democrats did not vote. Townsend's SCR 119 now heads to the House for consideration.





# HEALTH (=1:1:1:1:1:1:1:1:1:1) REMINDE







photo link: Bayhealth



#### BY KATIE KAZIMIR

The positive vibe inside Great Stuff Savvy Resale & Home store is palpable the moment you walk into this upscale thrift store. In addition to its attractively displayed designer clothing, accessories and house accents, there's almost always a happy buzz of volunteers, staff and shoppers.

Great Stuff's impact is much wider. Its profits — \$170,000 last year — have been a major source of funds for the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition programs since the store opened in 2010. This year 1,140 Delaware women are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer and 60 are expected to die because of it.

"We needed a way to raise money year-round," said Katelyn Bender, the coalition's communications director. "October is a very popular month to support DBCC but then partnerships tend to slow down."

For many of the volunteers and shoppers, the store is more than a conduit to a stylish bargain. "The 'great stuff' isn't just the clothing and accessories. It's the people," said breast cancer survivor Jeannine Herrmann of North Wilmington. Herrmann started working at Great Stuff in 2018 after the death of her mom, whom for years she'd been bringing to the store to shop.

"She would have a seat by one of the dressing rooms and the volunteers would fawn all over her and make her feel so special," Herrmann said.

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While the shop has two paid managers, the rest of its staff are volunteers, many of whom either had breast or another type of cancer, or were close to someone who did. Many become volunteers after first becoming friendly with the staff, like Herrmann.

"I already felt like I was part of the family before volunteering," said Herrmann, who was diagnosed with breast cancer when she was 33. She's now in her 70s.

On Friday, at least a dozen people — volunteers, staff and shoppers — happily milled about. Galina Chadwick of Wilmington was hunting for vintage treasures, as she regularly does, particularly purses and jewelry.

"Great Stuff has really couture stuff you can't get anywhere else, unless you're in Paris, Rome or New York," Chadwick said.

She often donates items to Great Stuff while purchasing new stuff from the thrift store. Her favorite find so far has been a classic two-piece Chanel suit. Chadwick said Great Stuff Savvy fills needs other than fulfilling the thrill of thrifting.

"It's environmentally friendly — extending the life of something instead of going out and buying something new," she said.

Manager Trish Cullen and Assistant Manager Lorena Hendrickson are the only two paid staff members and both say they love coming to work every day. About 50 volunteers rotate shifts, some working in the retail storefront and others handling the intake of donated items in the back. The managers and volunteers often come to know the shoppers, many of whom stop in at least once a week or more often when they have the chance.

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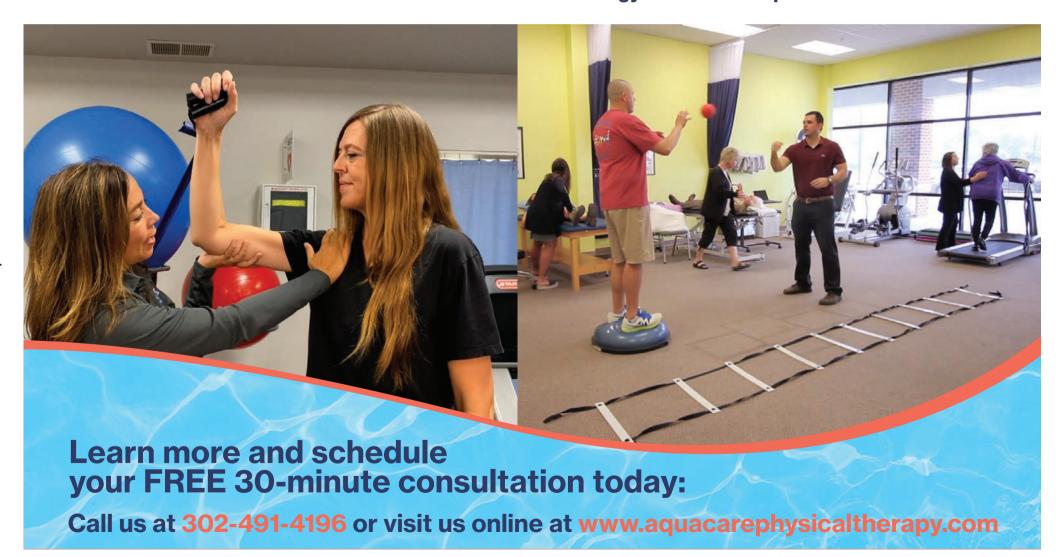
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Herrmann began volunteering after being diagnosed with breast cancer as a single mom with two young boys.

"Could I tell you what type of breast cancer I had or what stage I was diagnosed? No. I was in shock," Herrmann said. "At that time 33-year-olds weren't common with breast cancer."

Herrmann now works at Great Stuff to support the Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition, which offers a variety of programs and services for women and men diagnosed with breast cancer at any age. Young Survivors in Action specifically supports those diagnosed at a young age like Herrmann so they can share experiences and receive support relative to their life stages and future planning.

Herrmann values the relationships she's made through Great Stuff. "It's a sisterhood," she said. "Our customers feel the same way. They're part of us."

Shoppers come looking for deals on high-end fashion and housewares, but leave with supportive new friends who often will recruit them to work at the store. Herrmann said.

### **Great Stuff style hunters**

Those who enter the store are met with a small selection of housewares at the front, jewelry in cases to the left, accessories and dressing rooms lining the back wall, and a colorful array of designer fashions filling the bulk of the space, merchandised as if they were in a major department store.

Chadwick said she has a routine when she arrives at Great Stuff Savvy. First, she hits up the jewelry counter, "because that's what I collect," she said. "Then I move





to purses, bags and shoes. Then I do clothes last," Chadwick detailed.

Expect to be doted over while visiting Great Stuff Savvy. The volunteers are happy to serve as quasi personal shoppers, assisting clientele in the hunt for the perfect outfit, accessories and home furnishings. Most items are priced at about a third of what they would have cost if bought new — though a rack of clothing by the dressing room featured finds for only \$3.

"You might find a \$500 designer blazer for \$100," said the coalition's Bender.

In the back room are stations for incoming donations to be sorted, with only the finest items selected for resale. Great Stuff accepts donations of "high end, gently loved clothing in excellent condition," in addition to "small lamps, art, decor, home accents and little unique home furnishings." Merchandise that is not suited for Great Stuff Savvy is bagged and donated to shelters or other area thrift stores.

For a look inside Great Stuff Savvy, go to their Instagram page, where a new video with the latest donations and deals is featured every Saturday.

One of Herrmann's closest friendships formed through Great Stuff is with shopper-turned-volunteer Carolyn Mills of Bear. Mills began volunteering a year ago, and lost her husband of 43 years in December after he had a long battle with multiple melanoma cancer.

"I wanted to do some volunteering somewhere local that would benefit that 'C' word," she said.

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