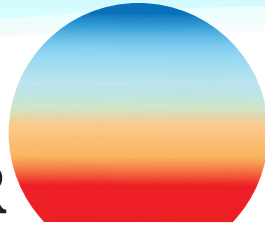


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# GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT

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THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

A monthly companion to the Daily State News

## Dover PD sees rise in shoplifting, overdoses

Homicides increase three-  
fold year over year

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Police Chief Thomas A. Johnson Jr. shared the Dover Police Department's 2024 annual report March 24, announcing an increase in shoplifting, overdoses and homicides.

The numbers, reported during a City Council meeting, included three times the number of homicides in 2024 (six) than 2023 (two).

• See **Report** on page 2

## Dover woman provides books to children in local barbershops

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Charlotte Phillips is a woman who grew up with a love for reading. Her mother read to her constantly, and her grandmother was a librarian.

It was from this love of books that an idea came to be: what if she provided children's books to local barbershops?

Ms. Phillips first read about this idea in an article. She also observed fathers and sons walking on Loockerman Street on the week-ends, coming back from getting haircuts.

"I just thought, oh, this is a great way to promote a love of reading," Ms. Phillips said. "And to engage these owners."

According to Ms. Phillips, reading levels, especially for Black boys, are abysmal in Delaware and the country overall. Not knowing how to read is also directly related to the



Tyisha Grier, right, helped Charlotte Phillips further develop her project with Network Delaware. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI

• See **Books** on page 4

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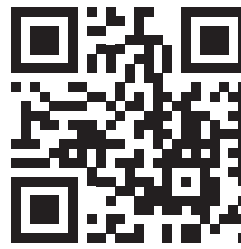
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# COMMUNITY

## Fest for women celebrates local female leadership

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
and Laura Walter  
Daily State News

WYOMING — The W3 What Women Want Fest returned for another year, with a day of fun, relaxation and festivities on March 29.

The 2025 female-centric event, hosted at Wild Quail Golf & Country Club, included vendors, food, a signature cocktail, door prizes and giveaways.

There was also a fashion show presented by Dover's Talbots, with spring and summer pieces modeled by local women. The guests were on their feet during a Zumba demo by the Dover YMCA, while Double Dutch Therapy provided jump roping and hand games.

"We come together weekly and rediscover healing through childhood play," said Denise Taylor of Double Dutch. "It is a sisterhood, which is significant."

Other participants were Easterseals Delaware & Maryland's Eastern Shore, Jessie's Bags, Merle Norman Cosmetics & Day Spa and Sugar Snaps.

VIP guests were treated to a seated lunch and mini-spa experiences — facials and skin care consultations from Merle Norman Cosmetics, a satin hand treatment by Mary Kay, a healing session by intuitive reiki practitioner Melissa Bishop and coffee from Dover's The House of Coffi.

Saturday's event was presented by the Daily State News and sponsored by Easterseals and the Delaware Municipal Electric Corp.

The event program book can be found at [baytobaynews.com/special-section-showcase](http://baytobaynews.com/special-section-showcase), featuring in-depth interviews with notable Delaware women.

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



Double Dutch Therapy shared games and joy at the W3 What Women Want Fest on Saturday, presented by the Daily State News. DAILY STATE NEWS/LAURA WALTER

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### Report

• From page 1

"The motive is somewhere split right down the middle," Chief Johnson noted, adding that three are suspected to be connected to gang activity, one has an unknown motive, one was a domestic situation, and one incident was between two "rivals" but not gang-related.

The agency also reported a 28% rise in shoplifting incidents. Last year, 1,677 such cases were reported, up from 1,308 in 2023. In 2022, 935 instances were recorded.

Chief Johnson noted that shoplifting is common in cities that have many retailers, like Dover does. He added that patrol officers typically immediately apprehend suspects or work closely with business owners to identify them.

Drug overdoses were also more frequent last year than previously.

In 2024, Dover officers responded to 210 overdoses. Once at the scene, naloxone or other lifesaving measures were performed.

This number is higher than 2023 (165) and 2022 (159).

Chief Johnson shared that his agency is working toward a path of recovery and prevention to reduce the impact of overdoses.

"We're finding ourselves working much more with community organizations," he said. "In the meantime, we will do the best that we can to help keep people alive."

Regarding vehicle collisions, Dover officers responded to 2,646 of them in 2024, and three lives were lost in these cases. This compares to 2,288 in 2023, with four deaths.

While these fatalities are still being investigated, negligent driving is often to blame, Chief Johnson said.

"Impaired or distracted driving is still the leading cause of accidents. For anybody listening, leave the cell-phone alone while you're driving, please," he urged.

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



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## Books

• From page 1

school-to-prison pipeline.

“Reading really is a social justice issue, because research shows that if a young person doesn’t know how to read, it frustrates their attempts to complete school successfully,” Ms. Phillips shared.

Therefore, Ms. Phillips said she wanted to do anything she could to inspire a love of reading.

She partnered with the Central Delaware NAACP’s Education Committee, led by Dr. Terri Hodges. The committee donates books to the initiative, funds it, and goes out in groups to hand out the books.

It is one of the committee’s staple programs.

At first, this initiative started by members of the committee walking up and down Loockerman and just visiting barbershops. Committee members would talk to the barbershop owners and give books away.



Jakkari Hinton of CombDE in off of State St.



Mike Walters of Supreme Hair Design, located at 1016 Lafferty Lane. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHARLOTTE PHILLIPS

One of the shop owners even began doing reading nights at the shop. He would buy pizza and gather the kids and their parents.

“It was a ton of fun,” Ms. Phillips recalled.

The project grew when Ms. Phillips partnered with Network Delaware, a nonprofit organization based in Wilmington. Tyeisha Grier, Network Delaware’s partnership director, first introduced Ms. Phillips to the organization. The two met from joining the central Delaware branch of the NAACP in the



Abbe Watson of Groom Kings on Loockerman St. receives “Glory.”



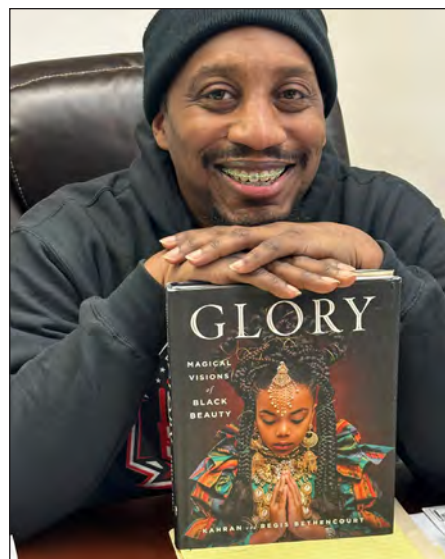
Rob Clark of Mane Attraction on Forest St. poses with a copy of “Glory.”

summer of 2020.

Ms. Grier encouraged Ms. Phillips to go through the organization’s Change Agent Training. The two of them would meet one-on-one, virtually, to set action plans and timelines for Ms. Phillips’ project.

“What we do is we teach people how to get engaged with their community, how to connect, start projects, and see their projects into fruition,” Ms. Grier explained.

Ms. Phillips added that Ms. Grier really encouraged her to look for part-



Donnell Fears of Donnell’s Salon for Men & Women, located at 32 Loockerman St.

nerships. As a result of this, she has become a Read Aloud Delaware volunteer, where she reads to kids at the Bayhealth Childcare Center once a week.

She has also partnered with the Friends of the Library in Dover, both of which she has been able to obtain books from.

The books that the Central Delaware NAACP’s Education Committee give away are often by Black authors and feature Black characters.

“I just believe representation is really important,” Ms. Phillips said.

She shared that she has heard from college-aged kids about how much they wish books with representation like that had been available when they were little.

“There are so many more books by Black authors with Black characters being published now,” she added.

One of the first books handed out was “Sulwe” by Lupita Nyong’o. The story follows a young girl with dark skin who wishes to be lighter. Ultimately, she learns to love herself and be comfortable in her own skin.

“It’s just a beautiful, beautiful book,” said Ms. Phillips.

Ms. Phillips also makes sure to have Spanish language books available. Other books she loves getting are Pete the Cat picture books.

“Kids love Pete the Cat!” she laughed.

One of the challenges of the initiative, said Ms. Phillips, is that the committee has been completely dependent on donations for books, of which they are just about out. She added that she would love to do more, such as after school tutoring, but her and her partners just do not have the capacity.

“But I’m very grateful for what we can do,” she said.

To learn more about the Central Delaware NAACP’s Education Committee or to donate books, email them at [naacp2028books@gmail.com](mailto:naacp2028books@gmail.com).

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



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## COMMUNITY

# Future of ice skating in Kent remains uncertain

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Despite support from Mayor Robin Christiansen and Sen. Dave Lawson, R-Marydel, the future of ice skating in Kent County remains uncertain, with money being the main issue.

During a press conference outside of City Hall on March 18, Sen. Lawson told a crowd of young hockey players and their families that he would not let up until there is an ice rink for them to skate on. Members of the Raptors, Generals, Harrington Havoc, and Delmarva Warriors Ice Hockey were all in attendance.

“It’s been a hard slog so far,” said Sen. Lawson. “Unfortunately, this effort is moving at the speed of government.”

Sen. Lawson encouraged the crowd to know their legislators and contact them about the need for a new ice rink in Kent County.

“You got to put the heat on. You got to put the pressure on, to make sure that this happens,” he added.

The proposed venue would be located in Dover’s Shutte Park. Although having one location picked out is helpful, there is still much to think about before the proposed plan can come into fruition.

According to Sen. Lawson, Dover city officials will have to look at studies regarding water, sewer, and electricity. The building plan would also have to pass Dover’s planning and zoning regulations.

Finding the money to fund the venue is also an issue. Sen. Lawson shared that a single sheet of ice would cost up to \$10 million dollars, with a double sheet costing between 18 and 20 million.

As a result of these roadblocks, a potential fall opening of the building will not happen.

“I can’t promise you ice by October. That window has come and gone,” Sen. Lawson said.

The need for a new skating center came after the Delaware State Fair announced it would be closing the Centre Ice Rink in Harrington on May



The Raptors Ice Hockey team were one of several teams at the press conference. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI

18, 2025. With a fall season no longer happening, this could be a whole year where players in Kent and Sussex County do not have a place to skate.

Julia Shultz, a mom from Harrington who attended the press conference, shared that one year in a kids’ life is so different from an adults’ life. One year without hockey would make it so that some kids never play again.

“If we don’t have ice next year, this team, this family, doesn’t exist anymore,” said Ms. Shultz.

Many in the crowd pleaded with Danny Aguilar, the general manager of the Delaware State Fair who was also in attendance, for one more year at the Centre Ice Rink.

Mr. Aguilar stated that he fully supports a new facility being built in Dover, but that the Centre Ice Rink will still close in May.

“The pressure forward is what we

need,” Sen. Lawson agreed. “Looking backward is not the way forward.”

Next week, there will be bond committee meetings within the General Assembly, where funds for a new ice rink facility could potentially be secured.

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



Danny Aguilar, Rep. Shannon Morris, Sen. Dave Lawson, architect Eric Milberger, and Mayor Robin Christiansen attend the press conference. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI



Young hockey players say “Hockey!” while getting their picture taken. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI



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## GOVERNMENT

# Dover panel takes step to cheaper energy bills

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — The Council Committee of the Whole unanimously approved an energy efficiency program March 25, to be implemented in fiscal year 2026.

Efficiency Smart, offered by the Delaware Electric Municipal Corp., is designed to aid residents and businesses to save on energy consumption, resulting in lower bills.

“The purpose of the Efficiency Smart program, the No. 1 thing, is it’s the most affordable way to meet power supply needs,” Scott Lynch, the corporation’s vice president of asset development, explained to the committee Tuesday.

The city rejoined DEMEC in May 2024. Other Efficiency Smart communities include Clayton, Lewes, Middletown, Milford, Newark, New Castle, Seaford and Smyrna.

Under the three-year plan, it’s estimated that Dover’s energy cost will be \$18.49 per megawatt-hour, with a \$5.49 demand cost for kilowatt-hour per month. On the other hand, the estimat-

ed 2026 market prices would be \$55.60 and \$10.67.

This means the Efficiency Smart savings would be 67% for energy cost and 49% for demand cost.

Paul Waddell, the city’s electric director, said the operations budget would cover the program at no additional cost to residents and businesses.

“You can see that, (if) everything goes well, and they meet their guarantee, we’re more than making our money back,” he noted.

The total estimated monthly cost to the city would be \$49,352. According to Tom Coyle, the director of account management for Efficiency Smart, this would be an avoided cost of \$4,514,876 and a 154% return on investment over the three years.

He also explained that Efficiency Smart aims for customer satisfaction and engagement, plus economic development, using tools like surveys and client meetings.

“One of the things we ask is, how do you feel about the utility? Do you feel better, worse or the same?” he explained,

adding that, in past questionnaires, over 80% of respondents said they feel better.

“In the four or five years we’ve done the program, no one has ever said they feel worse,” he continued.

Another goal of Efficiency Smart is to keep businesses local.

“If we can help be a tool in the toolkit that helps a community bring a new business into town, that’s fantastic,” he said. However, “our biggest focus is probably on helping businesses stay open.”

All participants can receive account management and consultations to identify opportunities to save money. And there are services for residential customers, as well, such as appliance recycling.

Councilwoman Tricia Arndt asked how this initiative differs from others, such as Energize Delaware or the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Mr. Lynch responded that those efforts do not work exactly how Efficiency Smart does.

“For instance, Energize Delaware is a program that exists, but it’s not necessarily going out and seeking that interaction with customers,” he said.

Councilwoman Arndt added that the presentation convinced her to support the proposal.

“I was skeptical at first because it seems expensive and duplicative of other services,” she said. “But you’ve won me over, if this is a benefit to our customers. And hearing that local governments are continuing to renew their contracts, that speaks well about the program.”

Councilman Fred Neil agreed, saying, “We now have a major renaissance going on in the downtown area. There’s no question about it, in my mind, that this is going to help the Downtown Dover Partnership and the master plan to attract businesses who will have a chance to come in at a lower rate.”

Next, the full City Council will review the Committee of the Whole’s report on this project ahead of its next meeting. Pending any significant concerns, it is likely to be approved into the city’s fiscal year 2026 budget.

*Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).*

# Dover officials mull water/wastewater rate increase

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — City Council’s Committee of the Whole voted unanimously March 18 to consider an increase in the price for water and wastewater service.

The consideration comes after a study conducted by NewGen Strategies & Solutions, as well as the city’s Department of Water and Wastewater.

It found that Dover must alter its water and wastewater

rate if it wants to be fiscally responsible and maintain functioning infrastructure. Also cited were increases in costs for materials and improvement projects.

If approved, the new rates would be implemented in July.

Currently, residential customers who use at least 4,000 gallons of water a month pay \$55.32 each month. With the rate increase, it would go up to \$59.90 monthly.

Rates would also increase

annually, though by less and less each year — between \$4.38 in 2026 and \$1.35 in 2030.

“These rates reflect the cost of doing business,” Mayor Robin Christiansen said at Tuesday’s meeting. “They’re not designed to be punitive against our customers.”

Councilwoman Tricia Arndt agreed.

“This is the proof, this is the data, that this is what we do to keep the city running,” she said.

The capital city has the second-lowest water/wastewater rate of surrounding municipalities. Only Milford is slightly less, at \$48.67 per month.

“It’s probably still going to be very competitive,” Councilman Fred Neil said. “That would help us not to raise our property rate.”

Meanwhile, Councilman Roy Sudler Jr., though supportive of the rate increase, said he would like a program that educates residents about their utility bills, teaching

them how to break them down and see what they are paying for.

Councilman Andre Bogerty concurred, saying, “Let’s give our constituents a true example. ... This is what your bill is going to look like.”

The proposal will now be brought to city manager Dave Hugg for review, as well as be part of the full City Council’s upcoming budget hearings for fiscal year 2026.

*Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).*



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## NEWS

# What would it take to bring tiny houses to Kent County?

## Regulations lacking on possible residency solution

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Constructing tiny homes in Kent County has been a challenge, due to a lack of regulations for them and a small amount of interest.

A tiny home is defined as one that is less than 400 square feet. They are not simply campers, mobile homes or manufactured residencies, and they can be built upon wheels, foundations or platforms.

In Delaware, putting up a tiny home, or a community of them, is difficult because there are no ordinances regarding where or how to do so.

“We need a proof of concept here in Delaware to say, ‘Hey, this works,’” said Dr. Michele Williams, executive director of the Fuller Center for Housing of Delaware, a habi-

tation advocacy group. “(Tiny homes are) not a solution, but ... a piece to the puzzle.”

Dr. Williams — aka “Dr. Tiny” since she has a Ph.D. in public policy and focuses on tiny houses — supports such homes because of their affordability. Buying a tiny home costs about \$100,000, and renting one can be achieved for less than \$1,000.

“We need to have housing options near where people work, learn, pray and play, at a price that their salary allows them to afford,” she said.

Tiny houses have been used across the country as a solution to homelessness, as well as housing during disaster relief, since they only take about three months to build.

Sarah Kiefer, the director of planning services for Kent County, added that there had been early talks of possibly constructing a tiny-home community in Dover because of its notable homeless population.

However, there are difficulties to these initiatives.



Tiny homes take only three months before a tiny home is finished. PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. MICHELE WILLIAMS

“Finding land in the right place isn’t always easy,” she said. “And finding the right properties is also a challenge.”

Ms. Kiefer added that there was another inquiry for such a neighborhood on a 20-acre property south of Frederica. But it was outside the county’s growth zone — or the area where officials have determined that development should be encouraged, partially because the infrastructure there allows access to water, sewer and transportation.

“Outside of our growth zone, our regulations are designed to make development really difficult,” Ms. Kiefer explained, noting that there are thousands of acres inside the development zone that could house tiny homes, but she has not heard more after that initial proposal.

And, as far as regulating these small abodes, she said they could

work as part of the county’s standards for manufactured-home communities, subdivisions and planned-unit developments.

Dr. Williams added that moving a tiny-house community through a planning and zoning committee can be tough throughout the state, since there is no one ordinance describing what one of those neighborhoods could look like.

“That’s the hard part because then, you have people fighting over density and zoning,” she said. “Sometimes, the people in planning and zoning will just say no because they don’t know what to do.”

Perhaps that’s why only 20% of U.S. counties have legalized tiny houses.

“It’s an uphill battle, no matter where you go,” Dr. Williams said.

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



Tiny homes are sought after because of their affordability and quickness to build. PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. MICHELE WILLIAMS



# The Airlifter



# Flying with Space Available

By Airman 1st Class  
Liberty Matthews  
436th Airlift Wing

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. – In a world of commercial airlines, why not fly military style for a fraction of the cost? Active duty, reserve, guard, disabled veterans, retirees and their dependents have the privilege to hop from base to base all around the world with Space Available.

At the 436th Aerial Port Squadron Passenger Terminal, Space A is for overseas travel on the C-5M Super Galaxy and the C-17 Globemaster III, at a low cost. Department of Defense employees can travel to a large number of locations in the United States or overseas for vacations, holidays or just to visit family.

“Space A is a congressionally mandated program,” said Amanda Asprion, 436th Aerial Port Squadron Passenger Terminal lead passenger operations specialist. “[It’s] where you get to utilize the extra leftover space on mil-

itary aircraft to travel around the world.”

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**Category I** is for emergency leave and travel in connection with serious illness, death or impending death of a member of the immediate family as determined by DoDI 1327.06 and military service regulations.

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**Category III** is for military members’ ordinary leave, dependents, house hunting permissive temporary duty travel and foreign exchange service members on permanent duty with the DoD.

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permissive TDY (non-house hunting), students, dependents, post-deployment/mobilization respite absence & others.

**Category VI** is for retirees, dependents, reservists, reserve officers’ training corps, nuclear propulsion officer candidates, Civil Engineer Corps, veterans with a permanent service-connected disability rated as total and surviving spouses of service members who died in active duty, inactive duty training or annual training status.

The Passenger Terminal and Space A operating instructions align with the Transportation Security Administration’s guidance on baggage checks and screening policies. However, Space A allows for two bags at 70 pounds each per passenger, unlike the 50-pound limit on commercial airlines.

While commercial airlines may be more reliable, it is possible for Space A flights to be canceled or pushed



Airmen from the 512th Maintenance and Aircraft Maintenance Squadrons and 712th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron climb onto a waiting bus at the Passenger Terminal at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, March 8, 2025. At the 436th Aerial Port Squadron Passenger Terminal, active duty, reserve, guard, disabled veterans, retirees and their dependents can travel overseas on the C-5M Super Galaxy and the C-17 Globemaster III, at a low cost. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Liberty Matthews)

to a later time. When a delay or cancellation does occur, Asprion explained, those passengers are moved to the next flight and put at a higher priority so they can have a seat even if there are already passengers set for the next flight.

For any questions or concerns, Senior Airman Ashley Spoon-Roth, 436th Aerial Port Squadron Passenger Terminal passenger service agent, encouraged DoD members to call the service desk.

“It makes it a lot easier to be able to explain it over the phone,” said Spoon-Roth. “If you have questions on how it works, don’t be afraid to ask us. We tend to get a lot of people that are hesitant to call and ask their questions and they become anxious about flying through us. To take some of that fear away would be a little bit of a relief because it makes the travel process easier in the long term.”

“The priority is always the mission,” said Master Sgt. Heather

Pagan, 436th APS Passenger Terminal section chief. “If we have space left on the aircraft, that space is going to waste. So, to better utilize taxpayer dollars, the resources that we have at our disposal, we fill those spaces with our Space A’s.”

To contact the Passenger Terminal, call (302) 677-4088 and (302) 677-2854 for current flight schedules. Their website is [www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site](http://www.amc.af.mil/AMC-Travel-Site).



# 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron feeds the force

By Jeremy Larlee  
512th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. -- Citizen Airmen from the 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron fed 280 people during the March Madness 2025 readiness exercise Feb. 27 to March 2 at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

The 512th MAS team arrived at the Patterson Dining facility at 4 a.m. each day to prepare 1500 box lunches of turkey subs and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The reservists then delivered the meals to various

locations across base in support of exercise players.

Tech Sgt. Jaylen Spence, 512th MAS dining facility supervisor, said the cold weather and some communication issues were challenging, but he was happy with how everything turned out.

"It's been a lot of hard work and pressure, but it's been worth it," he said. "To see everybody come together and have a successful exercise was the best part for me."

Anthony Velazquez, 512th Inspector General director of exercises, said planning for the



Tech. Sgt. Jaylen Spence (left) and Senior Airman Kimberly Campos Jimenez, 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron, make turkey subs for box lunches for March Madness 2025 exercise participants on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, Feb. 27, 2025. The 512th MAS arrived at 4 a.m. each day to prepare food for 280 exercise players. (U.S. Air Force photo by Jeremy Larlee)

meals has been ongoing since the fall and sustenance played a key part in the exercise.

"The food helped out a lot with keeping mo-

rale up," he said. "Exercises, much like a deployment, can be very difficult and sometimes a meal is the highlight of your day."

Tech. Sgt. Tammy Mendoza, 512th MAS team lead and wing fitness program manager, said she was proud of how her team performed.

"They showed great work ethic throughout the exercise," she said. "There were some early days, but they put the mission first and got it done."

Mendoza said she believed the most challenging aspect was delivering the food to exercise participants.

"It was very difficult, because there were a lot of moving pieces and a lot of exercise players that had to be

in multiple locations," she said. "It was by no means perfect, and we definitely learned some things that we can improve on for the next exercise."

In total, the 512th MAS team prepared 1,500 box lunches. It was the last unit training assembly in the 512th Airlift Wing for Spence, and he said it was the perfect way for him to go out.

"I have had a great four years here, and I'm going to miss it" he said. "Taking care of people is what drives me. I'm proud of what my team accomplished during this exercise."

# Candice Dunning USO 2024 Volunteer of the Year



Michael Emmert, USO senior managing director, presents the 2024 USO Janice K. Emmert Volunteer of the Year Award to Candace Dunning, USO Delaware volunteer, at the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, March 11, 2025. Dunning received the award for the combined 1500 hours of service between her and her husband. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Liberty Matthews)



Candace Dunning, center, USO Delaware Volunteer of the Year, poses for a photo with USO leadership and volunteers at the Air Mobility Command Museum at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, March 11, 2025. Dunning received the Janice K. Emmert Volunteer of the Year Award for the combined 1500 hours of service between her and her husband. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Liberty Matthews)



# Reservists practice combat capabilities during March Madness 2025 exercise

**By Jeremy Larlee**  
512th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

**DOVER** AIR FORCE BASE, Del. -- Citizen Airmen from the 512th Airlift Wing sharpened their combat capabilities during the March Madness 2025 exercise Feb. 27 to March 2 at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

The readiness exercise is a biennial requirement, and this one was planned on an accelerated timeline, said Master Sgt. Elrico Edwards, 512th AW Inspector General exercise planner.

“We had to plan this in six months instead of the year we usually have,” he said. “To do this in half the time and have the results we had, really exceeded most of our expectations.”

Once players processed through a personnel deployment function line, the majority were assigned to two different operating areas on base. The first area was near and around the flightline. The second area was at the Tactics and Leadership Nexus training area where the mock deployers established a bare base. In total, exercise participants

responded to more than 90 exercise scenarios. Some of these injects included the simulated loss of power and chemical attacks.

Roughly 280 players and 60 evaluators were involved in the event. Anthony Velazquez, 512th IG director of exercises, said a common theme he saw during the exercise was the positive attitude of everybody involved.

“Everybody came together and tried to build this and make it the best version possible,” he said. “I was very proud to be part of this.”

Edwards said what he saw during the exercise increased his appreciation of the Liberty Wing’s warrior ethos.

“If things go wrong, I’m very comfortable with our ability to protect our assets and get out of Dodge if needed,” he said. “The exercise proved we are very capable.”

The four-day exercise ended with a burger burn where Col. Eric J. Rivero, 512th AW commander, praised the reservists on their accomplishments.

“You guys have really hit it out of the park,”



Members of the 512th Airlift Wing simulate casualty recovery during a wing-wide exercise at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, March 1, 2025. During the multi-day exercise, Airmen from across the base demonstrated the wing’s ability to deploy forces capable of conducting mission essential operations. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Alexis Morris)

he said. “What you have done by focusing on the mission and readiness has laid the groundwork for what we need to do

and continue to do in the future.”

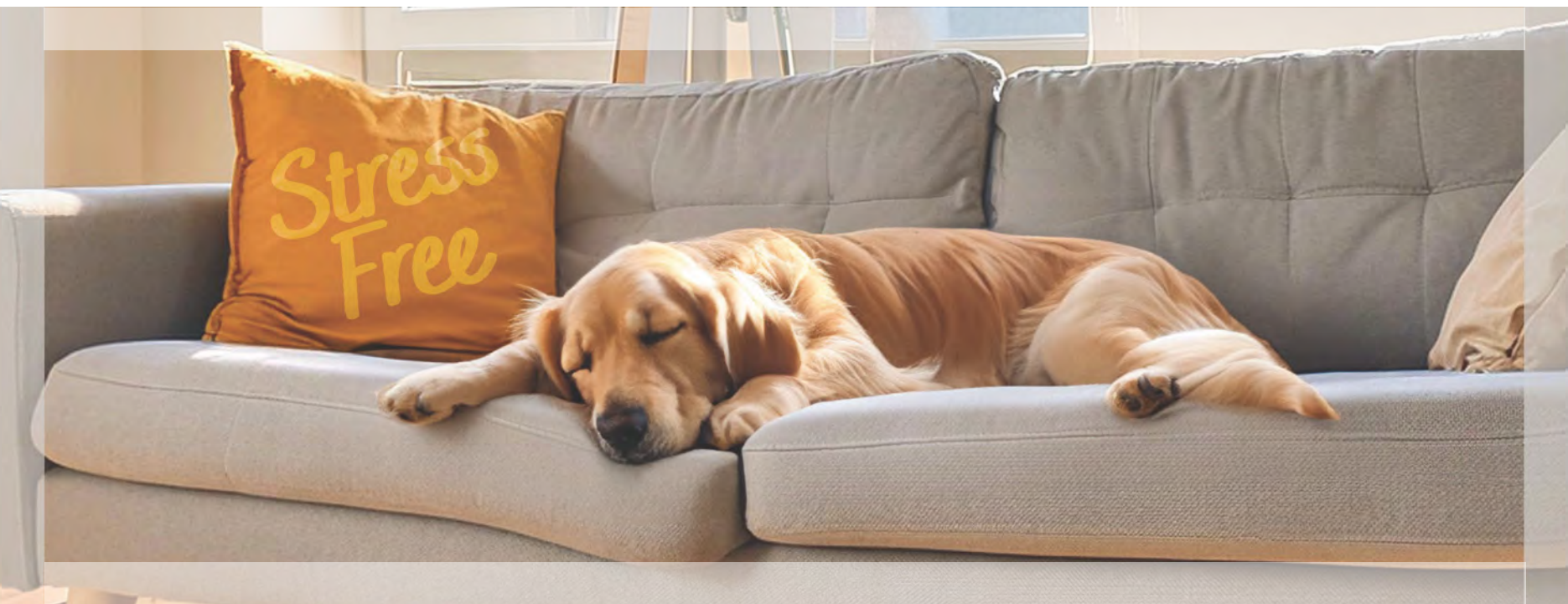
The IG team and the evaluators met March 6 to analyze best practices

and identify the challenging areas.

“It was a steep learning curve in some spots,” said Velazquez. “But,

the lessons learned from this exercise gives us a great opportunity to improve and make things better going forward.”





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# EDUCATION

## DSU celebrates new academic buildings

Facilities will house early childhood studies, ag science

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Delaware State University on March 27 celebrated two academic sites currently in progress, the first built on campus in a decade.

Once complete, the buildings will house the College of Agriculture, Science and Technology and the Early Childhood Innovation Center.

Special guests in attendance at the celebration ceremony included Delaware State University President Tony Allen, Speaker of the House Melissa Minor-Brown, D-New Castle, Sen. Trey Paradee, D-Dover, Dr. Cherese Winstead, Chairman Leroy

Tice and more.

“We believe this is a moment for this university that it deserves,” said Dr. Allen. “We need our living and learning spaces to match our quality of education.”

Dr. Winstead, the dean of the College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, said the new agriculture building was a long time coming.

“We have been envisioning what this building will be for over a decade,” she said.

Dr. Winstead also expressed her excitement at Delaware State University’s College of Agriculture, Science and Technology being a blueprint for the United States Department of Agriculture, with the department looking at how agriculture is impacted by emerging technologies.

As soon as students walk inside



DSU President Dr. Tony Allen led the celebration for the construction of the two new buildings. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI



The progress on the new College of Agriculture, Science and Technology building so far. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI

the building, said Dr. Winstead, they will see agriculture.

Speaker Minor-Brown spoke of the uncertainty of the time and the Trump administration’s efforts to get rid of the Department of Education.

“The federal government can’t take away the illustrious history of Delaware State University,” she declared. “DSU is looking to the future, producing the next generation of innovative food scientists and educators in our state.”

Sen. Paradee started his speech with appreciation for his alma mater, stating that it is a great day to be a Hornet.

“We gather here today to celebrate the opportunities for learning and advancement that these buildings will certainly deliver,” he added.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for

the new agriculture building is slated to take place in the fall, while the nearly complete Early Childhood Innovation Center is expected to open this spring.

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



Dean Cherese Winstead introduces Amber Fitch, a student at DSU majoring in agriculture and pre-veterinary science. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/KAITLYN CUPELLI



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# BUSINESS

## Dover baker turns middle school dream into reality

By Kaitlyn Cupelli  
Daily State News

DOVER — Bryla Carlisle — aka “Miss Suga” — started her home-based bakery, SugarSnaps, in 2018.

But she cooked up the idea much earlier.

Soon after she contributed cupcakes to a potluck for her sixth grade class, she realized she wanted to be a baker.

Two years later, she was tasked with developing a business model in an eighth grade course. So, she created one for a bakery she hoped to one day own.

“The seed was planted then, and now, all these years later, here we are,” Ms. Carlisle said.

The name “SugarSnaps” came from her passion for baking (“sugar”) and how she uses poetry as an outlet to express herself (“snaps”).

Clearly, the catchy title stuck, as the entrepreneur still has her first business card.

But her vision has changed. While she originally saw herself working out of a grand, storefront bakery and dessert theater, she now enjoys making customized treats and teaching baking classes.

“As time has evolved, and I’ve stepped into the cake world, I real-

ized that I don’t want a place where it’s just quick access. I love doing my pop-ups, and I love doing my sales,” Ms. Carlisle explained.

Last week, she had the chance to instruct a baking class for middle schoolers, which “lit her up” inside. She also once hosted a class for 100 personnel at Dover Air Force Base.

The 2018 Delaware Technical Community College graduate took her first cake-decorating class through the school’s Culinary Arts program but was discouraged at the time.

“My teacher was amazing. I loved what I did, but I was so hard on myself,” she recalled.

She vowed to no longer take on cake decorating. In her bakery, there would be only cupcakes and pies, she believed back then.

However, a few months later, while working at the Dover Mall, she told a co-worker with an upcoming birthday that she was a baker.

“I had never sold a cake before. I didn’t even have the supplies,” Ms. Carlisle said.

Nevertheless, the cake she made for him was a four-layer, one-tier strawberry version. Though there was an issue transporting it, which resulted in the bottom layer coming off, the taste was appreciated by her colleague.

“He was like, ‘This is the best strawberry cake I ever had,’ and that’s all I needed,” she said.

Ms. Carlisle’s instructional offerings started in 2022. She also has events such as “#SipwithSuga,” “Sweet Suga Saturday” and bake sales, where she sells cake slices, banana pudding, pretzel salad jars and sweet potato cheesecake.

Looking ahead, Ms. Carlisle said



Bryla Carlisle displays a candy hearts cake she made for Valentine’s Day. PHOTO COURTESY OF BRYLA CARLISLE



Bryla Carlisle’s SugarSnaps menu includes birthday and wedding cakes. PHOTO COURTESY OF BRYLA CARLISLE

she is hoping to expand her enterprise by opening a cake studio in Dover.

“My main goal is that everyone who encounters me, they always leave me — whether it’s through tasting or direct interaction — feel-

ing sweeter and more joyous than they began,” she continued.

For information, visit [sugarsnaps-llc.com](https://sugarsnaps-llc.com).

Staff writer Kaitlyn Cupelli can be reached at [kcupelli@iniusa.org](mailto:kcupelli@iniusa.org).



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# Special dedication highlights Vietnam Veterans Day

A California woman's dedication to a fallen soldier highlighted a National Vietnam War Veterans Day event Saturday at the Kent County Veterans Memorial Park, Dover. A newly-placed brick honors James Moreland who went missing after a 1968 battle in Lang Vei and years later was identified as a casualty.

Kathy Strong told those gathered the story of how she had Sgt. Moreland in her thoughts and prayers since

she was a 12-year-old in 1972. The connection was a bracelet she received as a Christmas gift.

What makes the story unique is that Ms. Strong never knew Sgt. Moreland, but she wore the bracelet for 38 years, vowing to keep it on until he was welcomed home.

See more photos and a story about Ms. Strong at [BaytoBayNews.com](http://BaytoBayNews.com).

(Middle) Kathy Strong shares a photo of Sgt. James Moreland, who served with the Green Berets in Vietnam, at Kent County Veterans Memorial Park in Dover. (Bottom left) Kathy Strong, left, and Judy Campbell place a wreath at the Gold Star Mothers and Families monument. (Bottom middle) Kathy Strong shows a silver bracelet that is a replica of one she wore in honor of Sgt. Moreland. (Bottom right) Paul Davis, representing the state chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America, carries a wreath to place at the Vietnam War memorial. (Top right) Kathy Strong, of California, touches roses left at a memorial brick for Sgt. Moreland. She has now placed bricks in the soldier's honor in 45 states. GREATER DOVER INDEPENDENT/ANDREW WEST







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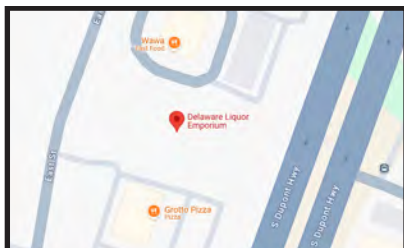


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**MAKER'S  
MARK**

**\$26.99/750ml**  
**\$48.99/1.75L**

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**SEAGRAMS 7**

**\$19.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**SEAGRAMS VO**

**\$21.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**JOHNNIE  
WALKER RED**

**\$31.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**JAMESON  
IRISH WHISKEY**

**\$49.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**DEWAR'S  
WHITE LABEL**

**\$36.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**JACK  
DANIELS**

**\$44.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**FIREBALL**

**\$13.99/750ml**  
**\$22.99/1.75L**

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**LUKSUSOWA**

**\$21.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**ABSOLUT  
VODKA**

**\$28.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**KETEL ONE  
VODKA**

**\$33.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**GREY GOOSE  
VODKA**

**\$44.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**SMIRNOFF  
VODKA**

**\$18.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**SVEDKA  
VODKA**

**\$18.99**  
/1.75L

Must present this ad.  
Expires 5/15/25.



**CORONA**

**24 Loose Bottles**  
**\$31.99**

Must present this ad. Expires 5/15/25.



**MICHELOB  
ULTRA**

**24 Loose Bottles**  
**\$26.99**

Must present this ad. Expires 5/15/25.



**YUENGLING**

**24 Loose Cans**  
**\$19.99**

Must present this ad. Expires 5/15/25.



Prices subject to change. Pictures may vary slightly from actual sale product. Cannot be combined with sale items or other specials.