



The Delaware County Digest

Your source for the latest news from Delaware County | May 8, 2026

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Delaware County Names Gary Vinnacombe Director of Emergency Services

Delaware County formally introduced Gary Vinnacombe as the Director of Emergency Services at Wednesday's County Council meeting, positioning them to capitalize on the historic investment recently made in Delaware County's emergency telecommunications system.

Vinnacombe, who was appointed in April, has **over 20 years of experience in emergency services leadership**, including extensive work in fire, rescue, and EMS operations, along with organizational management and system development.



"I understand the responsibility that comes with this position, and I am excited about the opportunity to serve a community I love so much," said Vinnacombe. "I am eager to step into this new role to improve coordination, develop our great personnel, and deliver for Delaware County residents when they need us most."

Vinnacombe started his emergency services career as a teenager with Manoa Fire Company in Haverford Township, where he rose to become captain of their EMS service. He has spent his career in a variety of roles throughout the Philadelphia area, including **over a decade as the Deputy Chief of EMS at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital** in Darby. He also spent nearly 20 years as an adjunct faculty member at Delaware County Community College, teaching EMT classes, municipal police academy emergency responder training, and community/healthcare professional CPR training.

He holds a **bachelor's degree in Emergency & Disaster Management** from American Military University and a **Master of Public Administration in Fire and Emergency Services** from Anna Maria College.

“The depth of experience and connections to Delaware County that Mr. Vinnacombe brings to the position made him a standout candidate,” said Delaware County Council Chair Richard Womack. “He is the perfect person to lead our Department of Emergency Services into the future as they continue to implement their new state-of-the-art emergency telecommunications system.”

Earlier this year, Council unveiled Delaware County’s modernized emergency telecommunications system, which was completed multiple weeks ahead of schedule and \$2 million under budget. This gives Delco first responders **99% on-street coverage**, exceeding the industry standard and allowing for connectivity on streets, wooded areas, parks, trails, and more. The new Kenwood radios protect critical communications from intrusions, allow for faster startup times, and improve cross-agency communications. These enhancements have led to an **80% reduction in dropped calls** following the implementation of the Automated Abandoned Callback system.

Delaware County extends its gratitude to Interim Director Ed Beebe, who oversaw DES for the last 18 months.

For more information about Vinnacombe, his team, and the work they do, visit delcopa.gov/emergency-services. More information about the emergency telecommunications modernizations can be found [here](#).



Haverford High School Teacher Leon Smith Honored as National Teacher of the Year



Delaware County Council welcomed National Teacher of the Year Leon Smith to their meeting on Wednesday, presenting him with a resolution recognizing his achievement.

Smith has spent his entire **25-year teaching career at Haverford High School**, where he has taught AP US History, AP African American Studies, coached the freshman boys’ basketball team, and developed a reputation as an elite educator. He is the **first person from the Philadelphia area to win the award**, which has been handed out every year since 1952.

“I’m excited to represent Delaware County and Havertown,” said Smith. “This is my 25th year at Haverford High School. It was my first job, and the community has embraced me, so I’m happy to show the nation what’s happening here.”

The National Teacher of the Year is selected through a rigorous selection process, beginning with nomination and selection as the Pennsylvania State Teacher of the Year. Smith was then selected as one of five finalists by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) National Teacher of the Year selection committee, who he interviewed with in Washington, DC.

The selection committee was impressed throughout the process, lauding his commitment to being a leader, mentor, and ambassador for the teaching profession. **Smith has regularly gone above and beyond in his role**, taking students on a yearly trip to the Pennsylvania State Capitol to engage with policymakers, connect with AP scholars, and gain skills that will help them for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Smith served as the **only Black teacher at Haverford High School for 20 years**, serving as an inspiration and using his identity as a Black educator to enhance the student experience and improve their education. He has used his role to **champion the addition of AP African American Studies to Haverford's curriculum** and teach students how to think critically, have moments of self-discovery, and positively contribute to society. Every year, he teaches his students to reexamine the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision by looking at it from the perspective of the over 100,000 Black teachers and principals who lost their jobs as schools desegregated and the impact that has on the racial makeup of teachers across the United States today. As of 2024, 46% of Pennsylvania school districts have no educators of color and less than 2% of all teachers in the United States are Black men.

As part of his application, he shared his realization that the opportunity to teach at Haverford was a valuable one, as it allows him to share his perspective with students who may never have another Black teacher.

Smith made sure to mention the fact that he is the second straight National Teacher of the Year from Pennsylvania. Last year Ashlie Crosson, an English teacher at Mifflin County High School, won the award, marking the **first time ever the award has been won by teachers from the same state in back-to-back years**.

He will spend the next year traveling the country, representing educators, and serving as an ambassador for the teaching profession. He plans to spend his year of service recognizing the pivotal role educators play in shaping the next generation, something he has excelled at in his current role by founding a chapter of Educators Rising at Haverford High School.

"We are so proud to have Leon Smith representing Delaware County by winning this award," said Delaware County Council Chair Richard Womack. "Mr. Smith's dedication to Delco's next generation is admirable and we thank him for his efforts to improve lives and make Delaware County a better place to live."

Council's recognition of Smith's momentous achievement coincides with National Teacher Appreciation Week, which is May 4-8. For more information about 2026 National Teacher of the Year Leon Smith click [here](#).

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Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging Shares Update Amidst Older Americans Month



Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging (COSA) Director Carin Tinney updated County Council on the progress her agency has made in her first year on the job at Wednesday's Council meeting. After her presentation, Council presented her with a resolution recognizing May as Older Americans Month in Delaware County.

"I'm so glad Director Tinney is here," said Delaware County Council member Joanne Phillips. "She has stepped right in and taken

great steps forward, so I'd like to thank her for all her hard work."

Tinney explained that COSA connects and empowers the County's older residents through services that support their health and well-being while being primarily funded by the state lottery and federal dollars.

She began by discussing their Information & Referral Services, which she described as COSA's "front door." In 2025, they fielded **10,429 calls** and **429 emails or walk-ins**, where employees provided objective guidance on a variety of long-term care services and aging-related matters.

Tinney emphasized the importance of these resources, saying they are better than Google because they provide up to date conflict-free information.

While the Information & Referral team is responsible for taking reports of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and abandonment - Protective Services investigates them. Last year they did **1,068 investigations**, which saw roughly 1/3 of the allegations substantiated. Not only does Protective Services do the critical work of investigating, but they also provide interventions to increase safety and mitigate risk for seniors.

Tinney then highlighted COSA's Options Care Management Program, led by Debbie Templeton, which **served 1,399 older adults** in 2025 and is regarded as one of the best in Pennsylvania. The Options Care Management Program manages care for older adults in Delaware County, delivering meals along with providing personal care, emergency response systems, adult day care, and more.

COSA's Caregiver Support Program is something Tinney is particularly proud of, as it provides education, counseling, and support to the often-forgotten group of people caring for older adults. In 2025, they **served 108 caregivers, providing up to \$600 per month for supplies, activities, education, and more**. This includes grandparents raising grandchildren and adult children caring for parents. One of the examples Tinney gave was COSA helping buy a prom dress or a nice pair of sneakers so kids don't feel different because they're being raised by their grandparents.

She also highlighted COSA's eight senior community centers across the county, which saw **1,055 residents** participate in their programs last year. They provide meals, wellness programs, social activities, art, music, trips, education/technology support and more, including classes on everything from the ukelele to tax assistance. These senior centers serve as hubs for health and wellness, preventing Delco residents from prematurely entering nursing homes.

COSA also holds a variety of health and wellness programs, which are focused on fall prevention, chronic disease management, and simple things residents can do on a daily basis to improve their health.

One of COSA's fundamental programs is the Foster Grandparent Program, which connected 40 older volunteers with 53 children in need of emotional support inside and outside the classroom last year despite the potential loss of funding for the program throughout the year. In 2025, **volunteers served for 47,076 hours**, significantly increasing educational outcomes for kids and increasing health/wellness for seniors.

Although last year was a very difficult one for budget stability due to the federal government shutdown, the state budget impasse, and the impending loss of funding in Medicare assessment dollars, Tinney is looking forward to what COSA has on the horizon. They are hosting their annual **Centenarian Luncheon next Thursday, May 14**, co-sponsoring the Delaware County Senior Games with the Parks & Recreation Department **June 1-12**, participating in Senior Citizens Day in August, and will be active at community events throughout the year.

For more information about COSA's programs or upcoming events, visit delcopa.gov/cosa.

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Local High Schools Participate in Delaware County Envirothon at Ridley Creek State Park

Delaware County Conservation District held their annual Delaware County Envirothon last week, offering students from local high schools the chance to test their environmental knowledge against each other.



Envirothon is a program that guides Pennsylvania high school students through a natural resource environmental education program combining classroom learning and outdoor activities. The exposure to nature and how humans impact the natural world provide invaluable lessons for understanding ecosystems and our environment.

Nine teams of five students from four schools (Penncrest, Strath Haven, Sun Valley, and Episcopal Academy) were tested on five different categories,

judged by state agency experts.

The categories are included below and were judged by the agencies listed:

- Wildlife (Pennsylvania Game Commission)
- Aquatic Ecology (Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission)
- Soils (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- Forestry (PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources)
- Current Issues (PA Department of Environmental Protection)

This dynamic event offered students an opportunity to test their knowledge and ask questions to agency staff about the exam, agencies, or careers.

Congratulations to Penncrest Gold, who came in first place to continue their Envirothon winning streak, followed by Penncrest Red in second, and the Strath Haven Biltmore Bandits in third! Penncrest Gold moves on to the statewide Pennsylvania Envirothon, which will be held at Camp Mount Luther in Mifflinburg on May 20.

For more information about Envirothon, visit <https://www.envirothonpa.org/>.

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The Foundation for Delaware County Raises over \$2.4 Million for Local Non-Profits During 3rd Annual Delco Gives



More than 12,500 Delaware County residents came together to raise **over \$2.4 million** for local non-profit organizations during this year's Delco Gives, shattering records for number of donors and amount of money raised.

The Foundation for Delaware County announced the totals at Thursday night's Closing Celebration at WSFS Bank Sportsplex in Chester. The Closing

Celebration was a family-friendly celebration of Delco's non-profit community with food, drinks, games, and live entertainment.

Delco Gives kicked off at Dining Under the Stars in Media on Wednesday evening, which included performances from local groups including the Sprawlers, a band based out of Media. Throughout the day on Thursday, The Foundation held tailgates in Brookhaven, Media, Newtown Square, Villanova, and Glen Mills promoting the event.

This annual event is a meaningful opportunity for everyone in Delaware County to support the non-profit organizations that serve as the backbone of our community by providing essential services in education, housing, healthcare, the arts, environmental protection, food access, youth development, animal welfare, support for seniors and veterans, and more.

For more information about Delco Gives and how to get involved, visit DelcoGives.org.

Take Part, Spread the Word, Stay Connected



LIHEAP Deadline is TODAY, Friday, May 8

The deadline to apply for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is today, Friday, May 8. **Through LIHEAP, residents can receive a cash grant between \$200 and \$1,000 to help pay their heating bill.** The amount depends on household income, size, and fuel type. The grant is a one-time payment that will be sent directly to your utility provider to be credited on your bill. To learn more and apply, click [here](#).



PA CareerLink to Host Young Adult Job Fair at Springfield YMCA on Tuesday, May 12

Pennsylvania CareerLink is hosting a Young Adult Career Fair for Delco residents Tuesday, May 12 from 1-4 PM at the Springfield YMCA (194 West Sproul Road, Springfield, PA 19064). Residents looking for a summer job or their first job after high school or college are encouraged to attend and connect with local employers. Attendees are encouraged to bring their resumes and be job ready. The event is accessible via public transit. Walk-ins are welcome, but if residents would like to attend, they can register [here](#). For more information, visit [PACareerLinkDelco.org](#).



Delaware County to Host PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club in Newtown Square May 14-17

Delaware County is hosting the 108th PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club in Newtown Square Thursday May 14-Sunday May 17. The event is Delco's chance to see the world's best golfers in our backyard and showcase our beautiful county. While tickets for the public are sold out, Delco veterans are encouraged to register for special tickets that allow them to participate in Armed Forces Day celebrations on Saturday, May 16 by clicking [here](#). To learn about road closures and potential disruptions due to the event, visit the PGA Championship [website](#).

Delaware County Providing \$1,000 Credit Towards Summer Camps for Unemployed Caregivers

The Delaware County Workforce Development Board is providing a \$1,000 credit for unemployed caregivers to send children to seven summer camps across the County. Camps include:



- Boys & Girls Club of Chester
- Chef Dad's Table at the Center for Learning
- YMCA's of Lansdowne, Ridley, and Springfield
- Delaware County Community College Kid's Camp
- Upper Chichester Township Summer Camp

Camps fill up fast, so we encourage residents to apply as soon as possible. For more information, please visit PACareerLinkDelco.org.



Delaware County Department of Military & Veterans Affairs to Hold Veteran Resource Fair on Saturday, June 6 in Sharon Hill

The Delaware County Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is hosting their Veteran Resource Fair on **Saturday, June 6 from 11 AM to 3 PM** at First African Baptist Church (901 Clifton Avenue, Sharon Hill, PA 19079). Local veterans are encouraged to come and connect with local organizations providing VA benefits/services, employment assistance, housing resources, health/wellness, education/training, and more. For more information, visit delcopa.gov/department-military-and-veterans-affairs or call 610-891-4645.



Delaware County Solid Waste Authority to Host Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event on Saturday, June 13 in Upper Chichester

The Delaware County Solid Waste Authority is hosting a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event on **Saturday, June 13 from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM** at the Upper Chichester Municipal Building (8500 Furey Road, Upper Chichester, PA 19014). Registration is required and can be done at delcohhw.eventbrite.com.



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