

Washington Twp. wins thriller, earns return trip to state final

SPORTS, 1C

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Gov. Mikie Sherrill speaks to reporters on May 5 in Newark. YANNICK PETERHANS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

Sherrill reflects on first 10 months, talks NJ's future

Katie Sobko NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

On a recent Thursday, Gov. Mikie Sherrill spent her time on the go. A groundbreaking for a bridge in Bayonne, an economic development meeting in Trenton with a business looking to expand in the state, a meeting with the Norwegian ambassador and the standard phone calls to candidates that won during the midterm elections.

All that on top of the regular internal meetings, but that's kind of Sherrill's whole shtick. Calm in the storm, no matter what the storm may be. She navigated an internal investigation and the departure of her lieutenant governor, provided some transparency on the noncitizen voter registration issues and led the state through natural disasters while crafting a budget and hosting the entire world for a soccer tournament.

She's a lifelong public servant, first in the U.S. Navy, then in the U.S. Attorney's Office. She served in Congress from 2019 up until being elected governor of the Garden State last year and she doesn't intend to stop.

She hit the ground running, signing executive orders literally during her inauguration back in January. Now about 10 months into her term, Sherrill says that she plans to keep governing the way she has been during an exclusive conversation with the USA TODAY Network New Jersey.

"We had an affordability agenda that I started to implement not just on day one, but on hour one with freezing rate hikes and the executive orders to expand power generation to lower costS in the long term," she said. "We're continuing to immediately move on key issues. I think what was really clear to me when I ran was that people in New Jersey were ready for change."

The refrain of "Trenton is broken" was repeated constantly to Sherrill as she geared up for her gubernatorial run, a mindset that she found "so incredibly frustrating" that she felt she had to step in because in her opinion a "well-run government can be life changing for people."

That's why she sums up her tenure so far with a pretty straightforward three-word phrase.

"Getting stuff done," Sherrill said. "We just refused to accept no for an answer and we have the best public servants in Trenton of anywhere in the nation."

Rowan University professor and New Jersey political analyst Ben Dworkin said that just building a team can be a huge challenge for a new governor and then working to "get your priorities implemented throughout state government, which is not a small enterprise."

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Maple Shade is 'Xavier Strong'

Neighbors display blue lights to honor local boy's legacy

Jim Walsh
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

Homes and businesses throughout Maple Shade are lighting the darkness with blue lights, a tribute to a 12-year-old boy who died almost six months after a baseball injury.

Xavier Taylor, 12, reportedly suffered cardiac arrest on May 26 after being hit in the neck during warm-ups at a local baseball field.

The Maple Shade youth was hospitalized after the accident and died on Nov. 18, according to a statement from the All Things Foundation, a nonprofit founded by the boy's parents.

Maple Shade officials invited the town's residents and businesses to honor Xavier's memory with blue lights through Nov. 27, which would have been the boy's 13th birthday.

A "Xavier Strong" movement immediately after the accident used blue lights to show support for the boy and his family. For example, the Ben Franklin Bridge between Camden and Philadelphia at one point shone with blue lighting, matching the color of Xavier's uniform with the Royals.

In addition, youth baseball teams across the country posed with bats and helmets in X formations. Families planted lawn signs to show their support.

The family foundation's announcement expressed gratitude for the "Xavier Strong" support.

"To every person who prayed, to every family who left a porch light on, to every child who placed a baseball bat outside their front door, to every church, every friend, every stranger, every believer who stood with the Taylor family, thank you," it said.

The Maple Shade Youth Baseball Association echoed the family's view in a Facebook post.

"Xavier was one of our own, and this loss will forever leave a hole in our baseball community," said the post.

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Give A Christmas applications close Nov. 27

Risha Inaganti
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

With the holidays just around the corner, gift buying is in full swing.

Yet for many families, the financial strain can overshadow the joy of giving.

To ease that burden, the Burlington County Times and NJ211 have partnered on Give A Christmas, an annual fundraiser that helps families in need this holiday season.

Since its creation in 1968, Give A Christmas has raised over $3.3 million for families throughout the county.

Last year, community members raised over $67,000. Gift cards were distributed to 547 Burlington County households, assisting 1,417 children.

Interested in applying for Give A Christmas assistance? Applications close Nov. 27.

Who can apply for assistance?

Give A Christmas assistance is available to Burlington County residents.

Eligible families with children under18 can apply. Each eligible child, up to four per household, will receive a $50 Amazon e-gift card.

How to apply for Give A Christmas

To apply to Give A Christmas, text "GAC" to 898-211.

You will receive screening questions and a link to the online application.

Families applying should have photo identification, birth certificate copies for each eligible child, proof of income and address.

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Two baseball bats (bottom left) form an X and blue lights shine on the porch of a Maple Shade home on Nov. 19. They honor 12-year-old Xavier Taylor, a township boy who died one day earlier from injuries sustained in an accident during a baseball practice in May. JIM WALSH/COURIER-POST

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