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POP MART, PROVIDED

This image provided by Pop Mart shows the Labubu “Rock the Universe” model.

Furry little monster collectibles (and their replicas) lighting up boardwalks this summer

JOHN RUSSO
Staff Writer

Gabrielle Murray likes to keep up with trends.

While swiping through videos on TikTok, she noticed people posting about these 6-inch plush toys with pointy teeth. It turns out, her 7-year-old niece, Aria, was asking for one.

A family trip to the Ocean City Boardwalk resulted in Aria getting her first Labubu, a Chinese collectible that is all the rage. Unfortunately, the toy monster she got from a Boardwalk vendor was fake.

So Murray turned to a coworker

with a budding collection for advice. Not only did Aria get the real thing that she adores, but Murray jumped aboard the Labubu train as well.

“I think they’re cute,” said Murray, 30, of Folsom. “I like that it’s something I can connect with my niece on. It’s a cute fashion accessory. My 2½-year-old daughter has no idea what’s going on with them, but she likes to play with them, too.”

Labubu is a line of collectible plush toys that are sold exclusively through the online store Pop Mart. There are over 300 different monsters, ranging from the 6-inch bag clips, which are the most popular, to

giant-sized ones.

They are sold in blind-box packaging, so the identity of the Labubu is hidden from the buyer until they open it, hoping to get their favorite creature or that elusive “secret” character, a 1-in-72 chance.

Blind boxes go for about \$30 each on Pop Mart, and sets of six (one of each character from a set, plus a chance at the secret monster) go for about \$180. But the challenge is being able to buy these when new releases hit on Pop Mart. They can sell out in seconds.

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ELECTION 2025

Sherrill has ground to make up in campaign

JULIA TERRUSO
The Philadelphia Inquirer

U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill dominated the New Jersey gubernatorial primary, but she trailed in some heavily Black and Hispanic areas, where there were also signs that once-mighty Democratic Party machines could be losing their grip.

Taken together, that raises some question of how effectively Democrats can turn out voters for her in an off-year election, even in a state where Democrats have the registration advantage and disapproval with President Donald Trump should give her an edge.



Sherrill

“That could be a vulnerability if she fails to energize those voters,” said Alyssa Maurice, head of research and polling at Stockton University’s Center for Public Policy. “We already know Republicans have been peeling away at Hispanic and Black voters. That’s something her campaign will have to watch. She didn’t win Camden, Newark, some of those urban centers.”

Primary results don’t tell much about general elections, as the pool of people voting changes and expands, and a Rutgers poll released last week shows Sherrill strongly leading GOP nominee Jack Ciattarelli among the very groups she trailed with in the primary election. Independent voters who cannot vote in the primary become a key target and are not reflected in the primary results.

But as attention shifts to the general election matchup with Ciattarelli, who cruised to the nomination in the GOP primary, the results offer some clues for what she might need to do to secure a win in November.

An Inquirer analysis of municipal-level primary results shows that Sherrill tended to perform best in older and more heavily white and Asian parts of New Jersey. She also performed best in wealthier areas in the state.

Her performance was weaker in boroughs, towns, and cities with higher shares of Black and Hispanic, lower-income, and younger residents.

Sherrill’s campaign said in a statement that she is building “the coalition it takes to win in November.”

“Throughout the campaign, Mikie has partnered directly with Black and Latino communities, listening to their concerns and bringing future legislative partners into these conversations to ensure productive work begins immediately,” said campaign spokesperson Sean Higgins.

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\$7 million in federal funds coming to Woodbine airport

BILL BARLOW
Staff Writer

WOODBINE — Shortly after takeoff, a white and red Cessna 150 banks and drops quickly, skimming above the grass before the pilot pulls into a steep climb, the plane now towing a brightly colored banner.

It’s a dramatic moment in an otherwise quiet August morning at a mostly quiet airport.

Aside from the banner planes taking off to bring advertisements to beachgoers and a black vulture gliding by, nothing else seems to be happening on the runway or in the other buildings arrayed along one side of the airport.

A significant federal investment in the works may mean dramatic change at the otherwise sleepy local airport.

Mayor William Pikolycky learned of plans for a \$6.9 million grant for the airport through the Federal Aviation Administration, earmarked by U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd. Another \$583,526 will go toward hangar renovations.

Pikolycky cited groundwork laid through



Simeone

“Moreover, USDA-RD funding also paid for the preparation of detailed plans and specifications to substantially recondition and replace hangars with 21st century design considerations and a new terminal building,” reads a statement from Pikolycky.

Van Drew’s office confirmed the funding and said it will mean big changes at the airport.

“These funds will completely transform the Woodbine Airport, giving modernized amenities to the existing businesses and creating expanded hangar space for new

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BILL BARLOW, STAFF WRITER

The Woodbine Airport is in line for a \$6.9 million grant through the FAA, borough officials have learned, to include a new terminal building. Officials say some of the structures date to World War II, when Navy pilots trained at the airport.