



Big league wins, local champs and more in '25.

SPORTS, B1

Wednesday, December 31, 2025 - Thursday, January 1, 2026

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2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

THE STORIES THAT SHAPED SOUTH JERSEY



Local health food chain looks to franchise.

LOCAL, A3



MATTHEW STRABUK, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small Sr. celebrates his acquittal Dec. 18 in his child abuse trial.

From Small’s acquittal to the debate over Wonderland, these were the region’s top stories of 2025

NICHOLAS HUBA | Staff Writer

From the continued debate over the redevelopment of Gillian’s Wonderland in Ocean City to Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small Sr. being found not guilty of child abuse, these were the stories that shaped South Jersey in 2025.

Atlantic City mayor found not guilty

Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small Sr. was found not guilty Dec. 18 of abusing his 17-year-old daughter and later telling her to recant her claims.

“Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, jury!” an emotional Small, 51, shouted as he broke down in tears after the verdict was announced.

This was the third time Small was found innocent in a criminal case. He and five others were acquitted of voter fraud in 2011 tied to his failed bid in the 2009 Democratic mayoral primary. In 2006, a jury acquitted Small of similar charges in Bob Levy’s mayoral campaign.

Small was first charged with endangering the welfare of a child, terroristic threats and aggravated assault April 15, 2024, just weeks after the Atlantic County Prosecutor’s Office executed search warrants at his home.

He was later charged with witness tampering after prosecutors alleged he told his daughter to “twist up” the story of how she got hurt.

In November, city voters reelected Small to another term as mayor.

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New Texas sanctuary to protect endangered cranes.

360, C1

DCA head overseeing Atlantic City to remain



WAYNE PARRY Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — Gov.-elect Mikie Sherrill on Tuesday reappointed Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Jacquelyn Suárez, keeping in place the top executive who had been overseeing Atlantic City under a state takeover that’s expected to be renewed soon.

Suárez, who became community affairs commissioner in September 2023, has overseen Atlantic City under the Municipal Stabilization and Revitalization Act, commonly referred to as the state takeover law.

It was enacted in 2016 at a time when Atlantic City was in dire financial shape. While the city’s outlook has

since improved, state officials say it still needs the sort of close supervision that resulted in it assuming much of the city’s major decision-making power.

The previous takeover law expired Dec. 1 without successor legislation in place. A new takeover law has been

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How to create a simple garden sanctuary for year-round relaxation.

LIVELY, D1

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Weather  
Little snow  
High 35 • Low 27  
FORECAST • A8



\$3.00 / Toms River and north \$3.25 • D • Volume MMXXV, Issue 365 • A Lee Enterprises Newspaper • Copyright 2025

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