



Members of the Philly Counts team canvass the Haddington neighborhood of West Philadelphia. —PHOTO COURTESY OF PHILLY COUNTS

## Philly Counts helps boost adult vax rate

**Ayana Jones**  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

The Philly Counts office has been instrumental in helping Philadelphia reach a 77% adult COVID-19 vaccination rate.

During 2021, Philly Counts team knocked on more than 68,000 doors, made 198,295 phone calls and has had more 7,000 conversations with residents about getting the vaccine.

Hassan Freeman, director of Neighborhood Engagement for Philly Counts said their strategy

is to connect directly with the community.

"We don't go to the community and tell them what their needs are," Freeman said. "We ask them what their needs are. We believe that every community has different needs, so a one-sized strategy is a failed strategy."

He said they found a host of barriers in communities that were impacting people's ability to get vaccinated such as vaccine hesitancy, concerns about gun violence and lack of access to pharmacies.

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## Social worker receives top state honor

Lassiter is executive director of Pa. Human Relations Commission

**Ayana Jones**  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Chad Dion Lassiter became emotional when he was selected to receive a top honor from the National Association of Social Workers' Pennsylvania Chapter.

"To be chosen as the (2021) Social Worker of the Year by the National Association of Social Workers PA chapter is humbling because we're talking about just what the past year meant," Lassiter said.

The award honors a member of NASW-PA who exemplifies the best of the profession's values and

achievements through specific accomplishments.

"For me it kind of just validates all of the work that I've been doing as a social worker from the time that I graduated from Johnson C. Smith until now," Lassiter said. "It also speaks back to those naysayers who may say 'he doesn't do social work in the traditional model.'"

"I think that social work is so fluid that it's not a particular one size fits all," he continued. "I've always done social work the way that I think my calling was."

LASSITER » 3A



Chad Dion Lassiter is the executive director of Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. —TRIBUNE PHOTO/ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

# Top local political stories



Mayor Jim Kenney says, "I am heartbroken and outraged that we've lost 500 Philadelphians including many children and teenagers to needless violence this year." —AP PHOTO/MATT ROURKE

## City logs deadliest year; officials face critiques

**Brian Saunders**  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Philadelphia had quite the year. Whether it was community leaders advocating for gun violence changes as the city, saw its deadliest year since 1990 or landmark legislation passed to improve the relationship between police and civilians. In addition, a councilmember was convicted of federal corruption. Here are some of the top local political stories.

### Philly reaches 500 homicides

On Nov. 26, Philadelphia reached 500 homicides tying its deadliest homicide total since 1990 and the most in the city's history.

As nothing substantial was done to help curb the shooting throughout Philadelphia, as of Monday the city has 555 homicides (476 by gunfire) and 1,827 non-fatal shootings this year, according to statistics from the City Controller's office.

### Inquiry: Outlaw OK'd use of tear gas on protesters

During 2020 unrest in Philadelphia following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, a report from City Controller Rebecca Rhynhart revealed Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw approved the deployment of tear gas.

The report faulted city leaders such as Outlaw and Mayor Jim Kenney for failing to prepare for massive unrest adequately.



"We see how things are in the world without a space to talk about the issues that plague our communities and our society," said Cayla Waddington, a 10th-grader at the Mathematics, Civics and Sciences Charter School. —TRIBUNE PHOTO/ABDUL R. SULAYMAN

"The investigation shows that the root cause of the lack of planning was a lack of leadership at the highest levels," Rhynhart said.

### Leaders call for end to state ban on local gun regulations

In February, local leaders gathered after the Olney Transportation Center mass shooting.

Sen. Sharif Street called on the GOP to consider changes to the pre-emption law or take up a series of gun control proposals considered by state Democrats.

Eliminating that law would allow Philadelphia to enact gun laws.

"The Pennsylvania General Assem-

bly has not only refused to enact sensible gun regulations at the state level, but it also continues to block cities from enacting their own local gun laws," Mayor Jim Kenney said.

### Dougherty, Henon convicted on federal charges

Councilmember Bobby Henon and electricians union boss John "Johnny Doc" Dougherty were found guilty of conspiracy.

Dougherty was convicted of eight of the 11 charges he faced and Henon 10 of 18 counts.

POLITICAL » 3A

## PHA looks at its 2021 accomplishments

Agency hopeful Build Back Better will provide aid

**Stephen Williams**  
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

The Philadelphia Housing Authority had several major accomplishments this year, but the top executive said he is most proud of the 6,441 units the agency built or renovated in 2021, along with its partners.

These new units were part of PHA's "six-in-five" plan launched in 2014, which referred to developing or preserving 6,000 units of housing in a five-year period. The progress was delayed for two years, as a result of the pandemic.

"We feel a deep sense of



The Philadelphia Housing Authority has completed the Norris Apartments on 11th Street near Norris and Berks. They replaced the Norris Homes. —SUBMITTED PHOTO

accomplishments in meeting our goals, but we live in a city with such tremendous need that it feels as though our work has really only just begun," said PHA President and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah. "What makes our program so successful is that, in addition

to the construction and neighborhood rebuilding we have done, we have funded and worked with extremely committed non-profit housing organization whose mission matched our own."

According to PHA, a major area for renovation

has been its scattered site inventory, or individual properties that have fallen into disrepair and have been vacant and uninhabitable for decades. Under the plan, PHA renovated 1,745 of these units, many in neighborhoods being gentrified, thereby preserving affordability in some of these communities.

Other major PHA accomplishments are the redevelopment of the former Norris Homes complex near Temple University and the continued revitalization of the Sharswood neighborhood, which includes a \$52 million shopping center and a 98-unit apartment complex. About half of the apartments will include below-market rate units.

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