FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Cape Henlopen High School wins the 2020 Delaware
High School Mock Trial Competition

Cape Henlopen High School won the 29th annual Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition that was held on February 21 and 22, 2020, at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington. This marks the first time Cape Henlopen has won the statewide competition, and also marks the first time a school from Sussex County has prevailed and the first time a non-specialized public school has won.

The team from Cape Henlopen went up against St. Elizabeth High School in the final round. Cape Henlopen students will now go on to represent Delaware in the National High School Mock Trial Championship in Evansville, Indiana on May 8 and 9, 2020.

In all, 26 teams from public, private, parochial and charter schools throughout Delaware took part in this year's two-day mock trial competition that involved more than 320 students, 31 teacher/coaches and 47 attorney advisors. The annual statewide competition is sponsored by the Delaware Law Related Education Center (DELREC), and more than 200 members of Delaware's legal community – including attorneys, paralegals, judges, and court staff – donated their time as judges, bailiffs and volunteers for the competition.

Students on each team spent two days arguing a simulated criminal case involving a surprise death during a rodeo competition. In the case, the defendant had been accused of severing the hack rein of Billie Joe Murray, hiding the cut under some tape. When the deceased competed in bronco riding, the hack rein separated, causing the deceased to be thrown. Billie Jo suffered massive head injuries and died as a result. Student teams took turns arguing each side of the case during the competition. For example if on the first round, the students argued the side of the prosecution, they had to argue the side of the defense during the second round. Final verdicts were not rendered in each competition case – no one "wins" or "loses" the case in that way – instead each team was judged based on their presentation of the case and knowledge of the law.

Student teams presented opening statements, closing arguments, and questioned "witnesses."

The Co-Chairs of this year's Mock Trial Committee were Daniel Attaway, Esq. and Christopher Griffiths, Esq. Chief Magistrate Alan Davis of the Justice of the Peace Court presided over the final round this year, and the final round scoring judges included: Chief Judge of the District of Delaware U.S. Bankruptcy Court Christopher Sontchi; Delaware Chief Deputy Attorney General Alexander Mackler; Delaware State University General Counsel Cleon L.

Cauley Sr.; former Delaware Attorney General and retired Superior Court Judge M. Jane Brady and Garrett Moritz, a partner at the law firm of Ross Aronstam and Moritz.

The other schools that finished in the top five places in the 2020 completion, in order, after Cape Henlopen and St. Elizabeth were Salesianum School, Wilmington Friends School and Wilmington Christian School.

At the awards banquet after the competition, student Madeline Betts of Cape Henlopen was named most effective attorney and Tanner Dade of Cape Henlopen was named most effective witness. Student Lauren Wilson of Archmere Academy, meanwhile, won the student courtroom sketch artist contest.

Organizers would like to thank the Delaware Supreme Court for its support, along with the Delaware Administrative Office of the Courts, Capitol Police, bailiffs, and security officers at the Leonard Williams Justice Center for providing assistance during the two-day event. Other sponsors included Grotto Pizza and the Delaware Bar Foundation, which donated lunch for the students and Reliable of Wilmington that provided document services. Organizers also expressed their deep appreciation to the Delaware Bench and Bar, and the Delaware Paralegal Association, for providing many of the volunteers that helped organize and operate the competition.

For more information, please contact:
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Attached photo (Courtesy of the Delaware Administrative Office of the Courts):

Photo Caption 1: Winning courtroom sketch by student Lauren Wilson of Archmere Academy.

Photo Caption 2: Competition Co-Chair Christopher Griffiths (center) prepares to toss a coin to determine which team will take which side of the case in the final round of the 2020 Delaware High School Mock Trial competition. St. Elizabeth student Claudia Offutt (left) and Cape Henlopen student Morgan Whittam look on.