

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Wilmington Charter School wins the 2023
Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition**

After two years of conducting the competition online due to the pandemic, the Delaware High School Mock Trial competition returned to the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington on Feb. 24 and 25, 2023 for an in-person competition. After five rounds of competition, the Charter School of Wilmington emerged as the winner.

Wilmington Charter triumphed in the final round against Wilmington Friends School, the defending champions from 2022 and 2021, in a proceeding before U.S. Third District Court of Appeals Judge Tamika Montgomery-Reeves, who until earlier this month had been a Delaware Supreme Court Justice.

In a first for the competition, that marked its 32nd anniversary this year, the final judging panel was comprised of all female members of the Delaware Bench and Bar. In addition to Presiding Judge Montgomery-Reeves, the panel of scoring judges included U.S. District Court Judge Maryellen Noreika, Delaware Superior Court President Judge Jan R. Jurden, Delaware State Court Administrator Gayle P. Lafferty, and Delaware State Senator Kyle Gay.

“After two years of holding the competition online out of necessity to protect the safety of all the participants, we were thrilled to be able to return to an in-person competition in the courthouse,” said competition co-chair Daniel Attaway. “There is just something special about holding the competition in the courthouse and I am certain it was far more satisfying for all the student participants.”

Rounding out the top five schools, Cape Henelopin placed third, Archmere Academy placed fourth, and Tower Hill placed fifth.

In all, 18 teams from public, private, parochial and charter schools throughout Delaware took part in this year’s two-day event, sponsored by the Delaware Law Related Education Center, Inc. (DELREC). The participants included 217 students, 52 coaches, and 118 Delaware Bench and Bar members, who served as presiding judges or scoring judges.

Students on each team spent two days arguing a simulated civil case that involved allegations of the wrongful death of a sports drink company executive.

Teams took turns arguing each side of the case during the competition. For example, if on the first round, students argued the side of the plaintiff, then they had to argue the side of the defense during the second round. Final verdicts are not rendered in each round – there was no ruling in favor of the plaintiff or the defense – 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 other students who played witnesses or experts in the case.

At the conclusion of the Delaware competition, at an awards banquet at the Chase Center on the Riverfront, a team of students from Cape Henlopen High School and Salesianum School – who volunteered to form a pick-up team to fill in for a school that dropped out at the last minute – won the Delaware Way Award. Their willingness to form a team that had never practiced together before the competition allowed all teams to compete in every round, rather than having one team sit out each of the four rounds because there was an uneven number of teams. The Delaware Way award is given each year to the team that the best exemplifies the ideals of mock trial – civility, justice, and fair play.

Other awards given at the banquet included best courtroom sketch artist, which was won by Jace Walker of Archmere Academy and best court journalist, which was won by Aurey Pachuta of Ursuline.

Mock Trial Co-Chair N. Christopher Griffiths, presented the awards at the ceremony and thanked the Delaware Supreme Court for its support, along with the Delaware Administrative Office of the Courts for providing assistance during the two-day event. He also expressed 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.

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