

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 26, 2024

Wilmington Charter School repeats as winner of the 2024
Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition

Following five rounds of competition over two days, defending state champion the Charter School of Wilmington repeated by winning the 2024 Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition this past weekend. Wilmington Charter will represent Delaware at the National High School Mock Trial Championship, which this year is being held in Wilmington, Delaware on May 3-4, 2024.

The competition, organized by the Delaware Law-Related Education Center, Inc. (DELREC), was held at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in Wilmington on Feb. 23-24, 2024, followed by an awards ceremony at the Chase Center on the Riverfront.

“We were thrilled to have 22 teams from across the state compete in this year’s competition. One thing we added this year was the chance for our novice teams to be paired with one another in the first round, which brought in 8 novice teams” said DELREC Executive Director Betsy Renzo. “The whole point of the competition is to foster learning through firsthand experience. As DELREC is re-centering its mission on inclusivity and access, this was a step in the right direction. We want all students to feel the empowerment of demanding a courtroom’s attention and the confidence to pursue a career in the law.”

The round-robin style competition ended with Wilmington Charter facing Newark Charter School in the final round, marking Newark Charter’s first time ever making it to the championship round. Rounding out the top five teams this year were Cab Calloway School of the Arts (who won in 2018) taking third place, followed by Archmere Academy in fourth and Tower Hill School in fifth. With its win this year, Wilmington Charter is now tied with St. Mark’s School for the most wins in the Delaware competition’s 33-year history, as both now have 11 titles.

“Because Delaware is hosting the national competition this year, Newark Charter may also have a chance to compete for the national title” said Mock Trial Committee Co-chair Daniel Attaway. Attaway, who also serves as the Host Director for the 2024 national competition, explained that, if there are an odd number of teams, or if a team is needed as the result of an accommodation, then the host state’s second-place team competes to ensure that there are an even number of teams.

This year's competition problem was a criminal case involving the death of an alleged loan shark, who was shot and pushed off the top of a parking garage during a meeting with a client who owed him money. Witness accounts of the crime, however, were contradictory. 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 prosecution, they then had to argue the side of the defense during

the second round. Final verdicts are not rendered in each round – there was no finding of guilt or innocence – instead each team was judged based on their presentation of the case and knowledge of the law.

Students presented opening statements, closing arguments, and questioned other students who played witnesses or experts in the case. All cases were held in actual courtrooms, followed proper legal procedure, and, in many cases, the presiding judge was a current or retired member of the Delaware bench. The presiding officer for the final round this year was Delaware Supreme Court Justice N. Christopher Griffiths, a former mock trial coach who serves as co-chair of the Mock Trial Committee. Scoring judges for the championship round included the Honorable Sherry Fallon of the United States District Court for the District of Delaware; the Honorable Joseph Slights, former vice-Chancellor of the Delaware Court of Chancery (now with Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati); the Honorable Lydia York, Delaware Auditor of Accounts; Kelly Farnan, director at Richards, Layton & Finger, P.A.; and Ben Wallace with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In all, more than 250 students and their teacher-coaches from public, private, and parochial high schools from around Delaware participated in the competition.

“We could not make the competition happen without the support of the Delaware Judiciary, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Delaware Bar, and the Delaware Paralegal's Association. The Judiciary not only graciously allows us to use the Courthouse for the competition, but court staff also generously volunteer to provide security and to help the competition run smoothly. Similarly, over 175 judges, attorneys, and law students volunteered to judge the competition. We truly appreciate the hundreds of hours they donate to make the competition happen,” said Attaway. “I think this competition shows the best of the legal Delaware community.”

At the conclusion of the Delaware competition, the Charter School of Wilmington's novice team won the Delaware Way Award, which is given each year to the team that best exemplifies the ideals of mock trial – civility, justice, and fair play.

Other awards given at the banquet included best attorney, which was won by Aadhi Narayan of Wilmington Charter, best witness, which was won by Cassidy Lawhorn of Newark Charter, and best courtroom sketch artist, which was won by Allison Munson of Newark Charter.

For more information, please contact:

DELREC Executive Director Betsy Renzo at 302 658-5279 x19 or brenzo@delrec.org