

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Salesianum wins 2025 Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition**

*The win marks the first time Salesianum has won the statewide competition*

In a close match, Salesianum School won its first Delaware High School Mock Trial Competition against Wilmington Friends School, capping the two-day competition at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center this weekend.

Not only did Saturday's victory mark the first time that Salesianum has won the state title, it was also the first time in the 34-year-old competition's history that Salesianum made it to the final round. With the win, Salesianum will represent Delaware at the National High School Mock Trial Championship, which will be held May 7-10, 2025 in Phoenix, Arizona. Rounding out the top five were Newark Charter School in third place, Charter School of Wilmington in fourth place, and Tower Hill School in fifth place.

More than 230 students, divided into 18 student teams – from public, private, charter and parochial schools from across the state – participated in the five-round contest held Feb. 28 and March 1, 2025. The round-robin style competition is designed to introduce students to the legal world, by working with a teacher coach and an attorney coach (or coaches) to prepare a case, learn trial rules and courtroom protocol.

“This competition has now been around long enough that we have seen student participants go on to law school, have a career in the law, and even come back to coach their alma maters,” said Betsy Renzo, Executive Director of the Delaware Law Related Education Center (DELREC) that organizes the competition. She added that participating in mock trial also provides lifelong benefits even to those who do not decide to go to law school. “The student participants learn transferable skills, such as public speaking, critical thinking, constructing a logical argument, and teamwork. The students' commitment, at a time when there are so many distractions at our fingertips, is truly commendable. I'm incredibly proud of each and every student that chose to compete this year,” she said.

Delaware Supreme Court Justice N. Christopher Griffiths, who has worked with the mock trial program for more than 15 years, said he was “impressed, as always, by the level of skill shown by the competitors and their poise in the courtroom.”

More than 180 members of the Delaware Bench and Bar volunteered as attorney coaches or judges. At the competition, the judges (who often are state or federal judges) do not determine who “won” the case but instead evaluate the students on their knowledge of the law and the case, their courtroom conduct and how well they argue in the courtroom. Awards are given for things like best attorney and best witness. There are also separate competitions for student courtroom sketch artists, and student court journalists. The runner-up in the courtroom artist competition

was Eloise Ramon of Mt. Pleasant High School and the winner was Tatiana Hynansky of the Tower Hill School. The runner-up of the courtroom journalist competition was Maci Reno of Newark Charter School and the winner was Lucy Tollett of Cape Henlopen High School.

The case given to students this year was a civil matter, revolving around a fictitious incident at the DECO food court in Wilmington. A security guard, Tyler Jessup, used a stun gun against an individual who worked in the building, during a confrontation over the person parked in someone else's reserved parking spot. The person who was hit with the stun gun was taken to the hospital for a fractured hip, and sued the food court operators for hiring Jessup, alleging they failed to properly train Jessup and conduct a proper background check.

During the competition, schools alternate between arguing the plaintiff's side of the case and the defendant's side over four rounds. The two highest scoring teams then meet in the fifth and final round before a high-profile panel of judges. This year Delaware Superior Court President Judge Jan R. Jurden presided over the final round, marking her final time wearing the black robe as she announced her retirement from the bench late last year. At the end of the trial, Justice Griffiths thanked President Judge Jurden for her 24 years of service to the Courts to a standing ovation from the teams and spectators. And just before President Judge Jurden stepped down from the bench for the final time, 11 of her former clerks walked into the courtroom, surprising her and presenting her with roses.

Other members of the 2025 final round judging panel included DELREC's Renzo, Court of Common Pleas Judge Monica A. Horton, Assistant U.S. Attorney Tiana Sampson, and Paige Chapman of the Delaware Office of Defense Services.

DELREC thanked Colonial Parking, who provided discounted parking at the courthouse, the Delaware Judiciary, who allowed the competition to use courtrooms at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center for two days, along with the Administrative Office of the Courts, courthouse staff, and Delaware Capitol Police and members of the Delaware Bar who helped the competition run smoothly. "We absolutely couldn't do it without all their help," said DELREC Board President Daniel Attaway "This is a team sport, both in the courtroom and behind the scenes."

If you are a teacher or a student or school administrator and would like more information about Mock Trial, please contact DELREC Executive Director Betsy Renzo at [Brenzo@delrec.org](mailto:Brenzo@delrec.org).