

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Delaware Judiciary celebrates 20 years of *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* performances  
at county courthouses**

This past week the Delaware Judiciary marked the 20<sup>th</sup> year of staging live performances of the holiday classic *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* for elementary school students across the state.

As has been tradition, three performances were staged at the Sussex County Courthouse in its historic courtroom 1, three performances were staged at the Kent County Courthouse in its historic courtroom 1 and six performances over two days were staged at the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center in courtroom 7E.

In all, more than 1,500 elementary students in grades 3, 4 and 5 sat in on one of the 12 shows between Dec. 10 and Dec. 13, 2024. Each performance, which reenacts the courtroom scene from the 1947 Oscar-winning holiday movie, takes place in an actual Delaware courtroom with an actual Delaware judge, or retired judge, presiding over a competency hearing for a man who believes he is the real Santa Claus.

Delaware attorneys play the attorneys, court security play the bailiffs and court staff and other members of the Delaware Bar fill out the other roles, along with a child actor who plays a pivotal role in the case.

The idea for these performances originated with Eileen Herrmann, the wife of now-retired attorney Richard Herrmann, who said it would be fun if the play could be staged in an actual courtroom after she and her husband saw a stage performance of *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*. Attorney Herrmann, who specialized in intellectual property matters, then set about getting permission from the Delaware Courts and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox (who held the copyright on *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*) to stage performances in Delaware courthouses. The first took place in December 2004, not long after the brand-new courthouse in Wilmington – now known as the Leonard L. Williams Justice Center – opened.

Herrmann, who returned to play the role of the psychologist at the show in the Kent County Courthouse this year, said he is pleased to see that the Delaware Courts and Family Court Judge James McGiffin (who currently plays the role of Kris Kringle) have kept the tradition going. “Every time I think about it, I believe starting *Miracle* was the most rewarding part of my career, as simple as that may sound,” Herrmann said. The show has now reached more than 30,000 children over the past two decades.

“The *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street* program brings children into the courthouse for a positive experience,” said Judge McGiffin. “They see real lawyers and judges at work. They are exposed to a part of their government, that can often be feared as intimidating, in a friendly way. Add to that the magic of the holidays, and it is a great opportunity for learning and fun.”

It is also a wonderful holiday tradition for the courts and the legal community to kick off the holiday season, with the sounds of children singing “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer” echoing through court hallways at the conclusion of every performance.

This year in addition to Judge McGiffin reprising his role as Santa Claus, Family Court Judge Peter Jones, retired Superior Court Judge William Witham, Family Court Commissioner Danielle Blount and Family Court Chief Judge Michael K. Newell each took turns as “the judge” in the performances.

Attorney Elizabeth Soucek, attorney Tetra Shockley, Justice of the Peace Court Judge Bobby Hoof and Public Defender Page Chapman, meanwhile each took turns playing the prosecutor.

Attorney M. Jane Brady, who has been a part of every show since it started, played Santa’s attorney at all performances. When it started in 2004, Brady was the Attorney General for the state of Delaware and she played the prosecutor in the show. Later when she joined the bench as a Superior Court judge, she played the judge and after she stepped down from the bench to return to private practice, she took on the role of defense attorney.

Rounding out the cast, the role of R.H. Macy was portrayed in turn by attorney Kathi Karsnitz, attorney David Bever and Pamela Brown. Attorney Rob Gibbs and Public Defender Victoria Lodge, along with Herrmann, played they psychologist and Sean O’Sullivan, the Delaware Judiciary’s Chief of Community Relations, portrayed the Postmaster General.

The prosecutor’s daughter was portrayed by Maggie Nagle in Sussex, Natalie Cross in Dover, and Kaci Garber in Wilmington.

The Delaware Judiciary also thanks Susan Hadley, the records manager at the Wilmington law firm Morris James, along with members of the Capitol Police, courts staff and other volunteers that provided logistical support make Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street a success.