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Pa. Courts Partner with Walnut Theatre and Girard College to Advance Civics Education

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Today, the Pennsylvania Courts joined with the Walnut Street Theatre Company and Girard College to bring civics education to life for a group of local elementary school students.

At Girard College, more than 150 students in grades K-6 attended a special performance of *Grace for President*, which told the story of a young girl who embarks on a journey to learn about elections, leadership and democracy after discovering that no women have been U.S. presidents.

Commonwealth Court Judge Lori Dumas and Philadelphia Municipal Court Supervising Judge Karen Simmons attended the program as part of the courts' ongoing effort to expand civics education opportunities across Pennsylvania.

"Introducing civics to students in creative and interactive ways is important because it helps them see themselves as future leaders and community members," said Judge Dumas.

"When young people can connect what they learn in the classroom to real-world experiences, it gives them a deeper understanding of how government works and why their voices matter. Today's program shows that civics is not just something in a textbook, but rather something students can live and experience as they grow into active participants in our democracy."

"Programs like today's are a wonderful example of how collaboration can bring civics to life for students," said Judge Simmons.

"By working together with the Walnut Street Theatre and Girard College, we're giving young learners an engaging, hands-on experience that helps them understand democracy and the importance of civic participation. It's exciting to see their curiosity and enthusiasm, and to know that these early experiences can inspire a lifelong interest in leadership and community involvement."

“We are thrilled to be participating with Judge Dumas, Judge Simmons and the Walnut Street Theater,” said Jessica Heintz, elementary and middle school principal at Girard College.

“The programming will allow students to deepen their understanding and knowledge of civics and empower them for participation in the future. At Girard, our students live out the core value of courage, and this is a program that will help them utilize that value in the future.”

Following the show, students participated in a lively Q&A with members of the Walnut Street Theatre production team, deepening their connection to the themes of civic engagement, leadership and responsibility.

The event was part of the courts’ broader civics education outreach – which includes school visits, student contests, community partnerships, classroom resources, etc. To learn more, visit www.pacourts.us/civics-ed.

Founded in 1809, Walnut Street Theatre is the oldest continuously operating theatre in the U.S. and is committed to introducing students to the performing arts and the principles of civic engagement.

Girard College is a private five-day boarding school for academically capable students in grades 1-12 who come from underserved communities. The school was founded by Stephen Girard, a French immigrant and merchant, to provide young people with a quality education through a permanent endowment he established. Girard College, located on a 43-acre campus in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia, opened in 1848.

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