

MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

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NCAJ Mock Trial Committee and the Carolina Center for Civic Education

"Investing in our future, creating tomorrow's leaders"

FORMER MOCK TRIAL STUDENT BECOMES A TEACHER COACH!

By Sue H. Johnson

NCAJ Mock Trial Program Administrator

Although many high school “mockers” view the experience as a steppingstone to law school, other students find it invaluable as they pursue a different career path. As Amy Marschall, teacher coach at Raleigh Charter High School (a perennial power at state finals) notes, “Mock trial is wonderful for students, whether they want to pursue law or not, for so many reasons. They develop their writing skills tremendously, because they have a real task to do for a real audience. They develop the ability to create a narrative, and they see that stories can be told very differently, even if the facts are the same. They learn to work on a team where every single person must accept full responsibility for part of the effort, and finally, but not least important, they learn to speak in front of an audience. That is a skill that will serve them well in any profession and in any number of civic activities.” One former “mocker” who can attest to the truth of Amy’s statements is Nermal Patel, who competed at J.H. Rose High School in Greenville. Now part of the “Teach for America” program, Nermal invests in tomorrow’s leaders by coaching the mock trial team at Garinger High School in Charlotte. Nermal describes his love for mock trial:



“Excitement, fear, and fatigue. These are the effects wearing on my body as I pace the lobby of the New Hanover County Courthouse. In just a few minutes, I will be walking into another trial. This will give me another chance to go to the state competition, and will bring my team one step closer to nationals. The entire time, I’m thinking, ‘Why am I worried? This should be a walk in the park. I’ve been doing this for four years; it’s not a big deal.’ On the contrary, this trial made me just as nervous as my very first trial. As I look back on my high school Mock Trial experience, I recall the fun times with great friends, the challenges, and the moments which required leadership.

As I made my way through college, I furthered my Mock Trial career at Wake Forest University as a competitor on the collegiate level. Without the invaluable leadership experience I had in high school, I certainly would not have had the skills or confidence to run for and obtain the office of president of my university’s Mock Trial organization during my senior year. Without the constant praise from my high school teacher and coach, Liza Knight, and the reality checks from my attorney adviser, Jeff Miller, I would have remained a small fish in a big pond. Instead, these leaders helped craft me as a ‘mocker’ and pushed me to new heights, both academically and professionally.

Excitement, fear, and fatigue. I sense it all from my students as I help them get over their early morning pre-trial jitters at the Mecklenburg County Courthouse. As my students practice and perfect their performances for the last time before their first trial, I notice that once again I am also experiencing the same feelings. Except now, my thoughts are, ‘Why am I worried? This should be a walk in the park. I’ve been doing this for eight years; it’s not a big deal.’ I am just as nervous as my students are, but for no good reason. My students’ performance at regionals was spectacular. There were moments during their trials in which I was completely thrilled and awestruck. Now I can say that the experience has come full circle and I know what it is like to coach my own Mock Trial team. Without the leadership qualities I picked up as a high school competitor, I can say without a doubt that my life would be significantly different. I would not have taken the initiative to coach a team, to become a teacher, or to excel at a rigorous university. I may not have even been accepted to the school that I attended without Mock Trial. I attribute many of my victories, both on a large scale and small, to the Mock Trial program. Moving forward, I encourage every coach, every attorney advisor, and every parent to push their students to new levels and make the most of this brilliant program!”

MOCK TRIAL ATTORNEY ADVISORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Patricia Crawford, a student at Carter G. Woodson Charter School in Winston-Salem, competed with her team at the Durham Regional competition. Although the team did not advance to the state finals, Patricia says that her mock trial experiences benefited her in numerous ways:

“This was the second year for most of us to participate in the Mock Trial Competition. When I first started on the mock trial team I was not as comfortable with speaking in front of groups of people. Because of my work with the mock trial team, I have improved in so many of our classes. Specifically, I have improved in Speech and English classes. During our preparations, we did have some problems at the beginning. But as our team came together, things started to get better. We became stronger at arguing our side of the case and were able to be more persuasive in our presentation.

It was hard trying to practice competing by ourselves. Last year we had two teams, which allowed us to have “live” competition at each practice. Unfortunately, we only had one team in the competition this year. With the help of [attorney advisor] Mr. Kenneth Love acting as the opposing side whenever we presented our cases, we were still able to get a vigorous challenge. Mr. Love got us very prepared to go against the other teams at the competition. If you were the team going against Mr. Love, then you would understand that he was hard to beat.



Carter Woodson witness at the Durham Regional competition

I feel that the reason why we were so blessed to have been able to do well in both of our rounds in the competition . . . is because unlike other schools, we were able to have three of the best attorneys to take time out of their schedules to help us transform and become better students. When it came to competition we had the mindset to win both rounds of our competition, and we did our best to achieve this goal. Sadly, we did not make it to the regional finals, but we did place very well. The other teams should be expecting to see us next year because we cannot wait for the challenge. We will WIN next year!!”

To read more about the Carter-Woodson team, check out an article in the Winston-Salem Journal at <http://tinyurl.com/Carter-Woodson>.

Thank you to all of the attorney advisors who invested untold hours in preparing your teams this year; your efforts are much appreciated! If you have not yet had the joy of advising a mock trial team and would like information on volunteering for next year, please contact Program Administrator Sue Johnson at sueheathjohnson@gmail.com.

CALENDAR 2011/2012 MOCK TRIAL SEASON

National Championship-Albuquerque, New Mexico

Wednesday-Sunday, May 2-6, 2012

THANK YOU AGAIN TO OUR COMPETITION SPONSORS!

State Finals: Rudolf Widenhouse & Fialko

Asheville: Melrose, Seago & Lay, P.A.

Charlotte: The Sumwalt Law Firm

Durham: Howard, Stallings, From & Hutson, P.A. *and*
Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Company of North Carolina

Fayetteville: Britton Law, P.A.

Greenville: Hardee & Hardee, LLP

High Point: Crumley Roberts, LLP

Raleigh: Twiggs, Beskind, Strickland & Rabenau, P.A.

Wilmington: Shipman & Wright, LLP

CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW - partnering with NCAJ to host our state final competition!

IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .

Special thanks to Mock Trial Committee Members and Regional Coordinators who agreed to serve for the 2011/2012 season: Paul Goodson (Charlotte Regional Coordinator), Rich Manger and Adrienne Blocker (High Point Regional Coordinators), John H. Anderson, Jr., (Wilmington Regional Coordinator), Russell Johnson (Durham Regional Coordinator), Mark Melrose (Asheville Regional Coordinator), Christine Scheef and Sheila Chavis (Raleigh Regional Coordinators), Philip Entzminger (Greenville Regional Coordinator), John O'Neal, Chris Nichols, Mark Sumwalt, Elizabeth Kuniholm, and Elizabeth Spruill.

Special thanks also to our Site Coordinators who served at Regionals in the 2011/2012 season!

Asheville: Cindy Bryson, Charlotte: Beverly K. Moore, Durham: Patti Clapper, Fayetteville: Elizabeth Owens, Greenville: Dalas Young, Kristen Miller; High Point: Karen Parrish, Raleigh: Lindsey Granados, Wilmington: Brandy Jo Lea .

*****If you are interested in serving on the NCAJ Mock Trial Committee, please contact either Sue Johnson, Program Administrator, at sueheathjohnson@gmail.com, or Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Committee Co-Chairs, at rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com or mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com.***