



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2016

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### **CENTRAL CAROLINA HOMESCHOOLERS EARN THIRD STATE CHAMPIONSHIP!**

*By Sue H. Johnson*

*CCCE Program Coordinator*



On **Friday, March 11, 2016** the eight Regional mock trial champions converged upon Campbell Law School in Raleigh, our state finals host for the seventh time. Before engaging in their own legal battles, the students toured the North Carolina Supreme Court, where they learned about appellate advocacy and the making of legal precedent in North Carolina. Danny Moody, former historian of the Supreme Court, highlighted several cases dealing with slavery, voting rights, and the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment before Justice Robert H. Edmunds, Jr. and CCCE President Gordon Widenhouse next led an informative session on the Rule of Law and election of NC Supreme Court Justices.

Returning to Campbell Law, the students were greeted by Campbell Law Assistant Dean Megan West Sherron and CCCE Secretary Rich Manger. After enjoying a music video case parody (created by one competing team), the students toured the law school before partaking of food and fellowship at the evening reception. Julia Perkins of Chapel Hill High School was recognized as the recipient of the "M. Gordon Widenhouse Award for Visionary Leadership" (see next article). Finally, students and supporters were inspired by Spencer Parris and Duke law student Evan Glasner, who detailed their work in securing

freedom for Howard Dudley. Mr. Dudley was recently released after serving 23 years in prison when wrongfully convicted of sexually assaulting his 9-year-old daughter in 1992.

On **Saturday, March 12**, the students displayed impressive legal knowledge and convincing witness portrayals as they advocated once on each side of the criminal case *State of Utopia v. Grayson Zayne*. Distinguished jurists presided over the rounds: Justice Robert H. Edmunds, Jr.; Appellate Judges Richard Dietz, Chris Dillon, Rick Elmore, Lucy Inman, and John Tyson; Superior Court Judges Paul Ridgeway and Mary Ann Tally, and District Court Judge Keith Gregory. At the end of the two preliminary rounds, eight students earned “Best Attorney” and “Best Witness” awards. All waited with hearts pounding for the announcement of the two finalists: Central Carolina Homeschoolers “Veritas” (the 2013-2014 State Champions) and Gaston Christian School “Red” (the 2012 and 2015 State Champions).

As the Honorable Judge Lucy N. Inman presided over the championship round, the students argued the case with passion and professionalism before the prestigious jury panel of Janet Ward Black, J. Bryan Boyd, Burton Craige, Marshall Hurley, and Marilyn Forbes Phillips. In the end, **Central Carolina Homeschoolers “Veritas”** earned the right to represent North Carolina at the National High School Mock Trial Championship in Boise, Idaho on May 12 – 14. Congratulations to our State Champs and to all eight regional champions for their accomplishments this year! (*For complete results and a list of all judge/jurors, visit [ncmocktrial.org](http://ncmocktrial.org) and look under “latest news” in the right-hand column.*)

***THANK YOU*** to the **STATE FINALS HOST, CAMPBELL LAW SCHOOL; STATE FINALS SPONSOR, RUDOLF WIDENHOUSE; and the many legal professionals who volunteered their time as presiding judges, scoring jurors, and site volunteers at the State Finals competition! Nearly forty judges and attorneys and a dozen other individuals devoted their Saturday to serving at state finals. Their willingness to invest in the students is greatly appreciated!**

## **CHAPEL HILL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WINS WIDENHOUSE AWARD!**

By Sue H. Johnson

CCCE Mock Trial Program Coordinator



At the State Finals evening reception on Friday, March 11, **Julia Perkins** of Chapel Hill High School received the “M. Gordon Widenhouse Jr. Award for Inspirational Team Leadership.” This award was established to honor the visionary leadership of M. Gordon Widenhouse, who has been instrumental in creating and sustaining the North Carolina Advocates for Justice High School Mock Trial Program, now in its twenty-fourth year. The award is open only to seniors who are recommended by a team advisor. It seeks to recognize an individual who may not be the “star” of the team; rather, the student may be the “glue” who holds the team together through practices and competition.

Chapel Hill High School attorney advisor **Mark Kleinschmidt** explains why he nominated Julia for the award: “After joining the team during her first-year, Julia quickly became central to CHHS’s ability to even field a team. She... worked hard to make sure members were notified about when case materials became available, when and where practices would be held, and how team selection would occur. By Julia’s senior year, she was the glue that kept the team together, focused and prepared to compete at the highest level.

“The importance of Julia’s leadership cannot be overstated. In fact, without her I am not sure CHHS would have been able to field any team this year and certainly wouldn’t have been able to run two teams who both went undefeated until the final round of their regional competition.... The most significant

contribution Julia has made won't be noticed until after she graduates. That contribution is one that now lives in the spirit, the discipline, and the excitement of the remaining team members. Julia had a way of making every teammate better. She offered high quality, empathetic feedback. She was not just liked by her teammates, she inspired them. . . . The CHHS Mock Trial Team will miss Julia when she graduates in June, but she has left an indelible mark on the future of the squad. I am so proud of her and what she has accomplished."

In her application essay, **Julia** describes the impact of her mock trial experience on her growth as a leader. "Through spending half of my seasons on the team participating and half leading, I've found that the two experiences differ quite a bit. . . . Captains take on. . . the duties of coordinating meeting times, planning with the attorney advisor, motivating the group, and teaching the ways of mock trial to newer members—which may be the toughest task of all. . . . Describing the multitudinous facets of mock trial forced me to boil down each task to its essential purpose and helped me improve my own skills, too.

"For me, one of the hardest parts of leading mock trial was wielding authority. Sometimes, instructing a room full of my peers to finish their lines of questioning and statements by a certain deadline made me feel more like a teacher than a fellow high schooler. In order to motivate [others], I thought about what motivated me. I learned never to underestimate the motivational power of enthusiasm, a little fear, and a box of cookies.

"I've learned plenty of things from mock trial, many applicable beyond the courtroom. First and foremost, preparation is key. . . . Attorneys need to understand objections and their exceptions forwards and backwards before the judge asks for an explanation during the trial. A successful witness must be able to use the character's circumstances and motivations to contextualize the opposing counsel's questions on a cross examination. . . . In life, things happen that we don't expect, and we react as best we can. Mock trial lets us practice reacting while maintaining focus on the overarching goal.

"The competition also highlights the importance of presentation. Public speaking is daunting but essential, and mock trial helps to develop that ability. Practicing communicating in a direct, concise way and using proper body language and eye contact to get your point across has already served me well in other, non-court-related situations.

"The team aspect of mock trial is unique in that a lot of the prep work must be done individually, but the team must also work together in order for everyone to accomplish a larger goal. On competition day, it is everyone's effort individually and collectively that brings the whole team to success.

"I am immensely proud of the dedicated effort from everyone [on our teams]. But after we've had our day in court, it's not the awards and points and evaluations that last. What we remember about mock trial is the practices that devolve into telling terrible yet hilarious law jokes, shaking hands with the other team right after each trial and making a few new friends, and celebrating and commiserating the next day as we replayed every moment of the trials. Mock trial has helped make me who I am today."

We know that Julia is one of many students across North Carolina who possesses increased self-confidence, greater critical thinking abilities, and new leadership skills because of their participation in mock trial. We extend a hearty congratulations and best wishes to Julia and all of the other graduating seniors, and we look forward to hearing about your future accomplishments!

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2015 – 2016 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSOR!**

**Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Company of North Carolina**

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2015 – 2016 COMPETITION SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!**

### **State Finals: Rudolf Widenhouse & Fialko**

Asheville: Melrose Law, PLLC

Supporters: 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Bar Association *and* Asheville Area Paralegal Association

Charlotte: The Sumwalt Law Firm

Durham:

Supporter: Durham County Bar Association

Fayetteville: Britton Law, P.A.

Supporter: Cumberland County Bar Association

Greenville: Hardee & Hardee, LLP

High Point: Manger Law Firm

Raleigh: Leone Noble & Seate *and* Twiggs Strickland & Rabenau, Co-Sponsors

Wilmington: Shipman & Wright

**CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW** - partnering with CCCE to host our State Finals!

## **CALENDAR 2015 – 2016 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

National Championship, Boise, ID

May 12 - 14, 2016

Summer Camp

July 27 - 30, 2016

### ***IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .***

***Special thanks to our 2015-16 Regional Coordinators and CCCE Board Members: Asheville Regional Coordinators Mark Melrose and Marion Parsons-Groat, Charlotte Regional Coordinator Jennifer Errington, Durham Regional Coordinators Russell Johnson and Robert Jessup, Fayetteville Regional Coordinator Rebecca Britton, Greenville Regional Coordinator Phillip Entzminger, High Point Regional Coordinator Rich Manger, Raleigh Regional Coordinators Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados, Wilmington Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr.; and CCCE Board Members Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Rich Manger, Adrienne Blocker, Chris Nichols, Katy Parker, Christine Scheef, and Brooke Schmidly.***

### ***Special thanks also to our 2015-16 Site Coordinators:***

***Asheville:*** Victoria Townley, ***Charlotte:*** Beverly K. Moore, ***Durham:*** Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, ***Fayetteville:*** Elizabeth Owens, ***Greenville:*** Kristin Byrum; ***High Point:*** Adrienne Blocker, ***Raleigh:*** Michelle Keely and Sandra Strickland, ***Wilmington:*** Brandy Jo Lea and Christi Wert.

***\*\*If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the NCAJ High School Mock Trial program, please contact Sue Johnson, Program Coordinator, at [sueheathjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:sueheathjohnson@gmail.com), or Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Mock Trial Committee Co-Chairs, at [rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com) or [mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com](mailto:mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com).***