



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

MAY 2016

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### **MOCK TRIAL STUDENT EARNS MOREHEAD-CAIN SCHOLARSHIP!**

By Tyla Gomez

JH Rose High School, Greenville, N.C.



*Editor's note: While most students who participate in mock trial do not intend to pursue law as a career, they all benefit tremendously from the skills that mock trial develops – analytical reasoning, persuasive communication, teamwork, leadership—and the increased self-confidence that results. As an added bonus, these skills often lead to college scholarships. Keep reading to learn about another very accomplished young woman who attributes much of her success to mock trial.*

I pride myself with being involved in numerous extracurricular activities because they all teach me something new, but the one that has taught me the most is mock trial. I became involved with mock trial my sophomore year after repeatedly not getting cast in school plays. I came into the program thinking that I wasn't good at anything, but the program quickly changed my perception of myself.

My first year of doing mock trial ignited a spark of persistence within me. As a sophomore taking my first AP class and desperately trying to understand chemistry, mock trial just seemed like a burden. But it was a burden that I was determined to endure. During that first year I learned the importance of hard work and determination. This lesson has followed me through high school and has become a very important component of my leadership. The next mock trial season, I worked even harder and it served me well. My team won our regional and competed at states.

Everything I learned from mock trial can be summed into one word: confidence. Mock trial taught me to be confident above all else, not just in mock trial, but in life. The confidence that's needed to successfully



complete a mock trial round translates into everyday situations. For instance, making objections during a round translates into me not having fear to raise my voice when I see injustices in everyday life. Arguing a point during a round translates to me being firm in my beliefs and sticking to the facts when I debate someone. Showing deference to the judge while still being assertive translates to me respecting others but not wavering on what I believe. Giving a closing statement at the end of the round translates into me putting aside my fear of failure in order to get the job done.



The skills that I've gained through mock trial helped me tremendously with the Morehead-Cain Application process. With every interview, I was asked questions that completely baffled me, some that I had never had even thought of, so I had to think on my feet. The most peculiar question that I was asked was during my final interview: "What is the truth?" Everyone knows the standard dictionary definition of what the truth is, but I knew my interviewer wasn't asking me for a standard definition. He wanted to know my perception of the truth and how I interpreted it. I could not have answered the question properly if I hadn't participated in mock trial. (Granted, I probably would not have even been asked the question if I hadn't participated in mock trial, since this question was asked as a follow-up after I gave an overview of what mock

trial consists of.). While being an attorney in mock trial, I've had to look at the case from many different angles and determine what exactly is the truth. I can honestly say that I have not been able to discover the truth with any mock trial case, simply because it is not there. Everything presented in the case packet is from the perspective of one of the parties involved; therefore it is inherently biased. The truth, however, is unbiased. The truth is unchanging no matter which way you put it. The truth is concrete. The truth cannot be manipulated. Mock Trial helped me understand that fact.

Sometimes in our legal system, the truth is bent every which way until you can't even recognize it from complete fiction. I'll admit, twisting the truth is a fun thing to do during a mock trial round, but in real life it isn't all fun and games; lives are on the line. This is why I plan to study either political science or public policy next year at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I intend on going to law school after that and then becoming a defense attorney. Protecting the rights of the accused is something that I am passionate about, and mock trial helped me find this passion. I would much rather a guilty person walk the streets than an innocent person rot in a jail. Later in my life, I plan to run for public office to push for reforms to our legal system that will make it more just.

Mock trial has shaped who I am. For that I am extremely thankful for all of the volunteers who help to make it possible. I'm also thankful for all of my mock trial coaches; they've sacrificed so much of their time helping me and my team prepare. One coach in particular stands out to me, Mrs. Liza Knight. It is because of her that I even applied for the Morehead after not receiving my school's nomination. She believed in me at a time when I was ready to give up. She saw something in me, and I will always be grateful for having had the privilege of being taught by her.

Mock trial is a wonderful program, and I would encourage everyone to get involved. It teaches so much about public speaking, critical thinking, and confidence, and it makes a profound positive difference in the lives of young people. Although, I am disappointed that I have finished my final season of high school mock trial, I am excited to continue doing it at a collegiate level! I offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has made this program possible.

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*Congratulations to Tyla and to all of the other seniors soon to embark upon the next exciting phase of your lives. We are proud of you and wish you well in all your future endeavors!*

## **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**

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, Katy Parker, Christine Scheef, Brooke Schmidly, Mark Sumwalt; Chris Nichols (ex officio) and Brad Bannon (ex officio).***

### ***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).***