

## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2014

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Carolina Center for Civic Education*  
"Investing in our future, creating tomorrow's leaders"

### **MOCK TRIAL TEAM ADVISORS REAP BENEFITS!**

*By Sue H. Johnson*

*CCCE Mock Trial Program Coordinator*

For more than a month, students across North Carolina have been exploring the intricacies of our legal system as they delve into our mock trial case. They have been learning about gross negligence, burdens of proof, direct and cross examination, and the federal rules of evidence. This year's case also requires them to understand and explain details of Type I diabetes, spinal cord injuries, and safe business practices to panels of "jurors." In the process, students develop critical reasoning, communication, and presentation skills that will aid them as the future leaders of our country.



Fortunately for them, the students don't have to tackle this daunting task alone. Dedicated adults – teachers and attorney advisors – invest untold hours in mentoring the students. These adults do so for many reasons: they enjoy the students' excitement as they grasp new concepts; they believe in the importance of civic education; they have a child on a school team; or they may have participated in mock trial years (or decades!) ago and want to give back. The benefits to the students are obvious – but what about the benefits to the adults? Do they gain anything personally from coaching these teams?

Yes. In addition to the satisfaction of impacting these students' lives in a positive fashion, attorney coaches reap personal and professional rewards themselves. As Andy McCarthy, teacher- and attorney-coach of the 2014 National High School Mock Trial Champion team, attests in his article in *Northwest Lawyer* magazine, attorney advisors find that mentoring a team enriches their own understanding and practice of the law (read the full article at [http://nwlawyer.wsba.org/nwlawyer/september\\_2014#pg33](http://nwlawyer.wsba.org/nwlawyer/september_2014#pg33)).

*(Note: I had the pleasure of speaking with Andy at the 2014 National Championship in Wisconsin. What a wonderful chance to meet with dozens of dedicated, selfless individuals! We look forward to welcoming the 2015 state championship teams and their coaches to Raleigh in May.).*

As Andy notes, often the best way to test your own understanding of a subject is to try to teach it to others, for then any gaps in your knowledge become clear. By mentoring students, attorneys find that their own case analysis is sharpened. They are reminded to “begin with the end in mind.” They visit anew the importance of persuasively delivering a factual narrative to others who are not familiar with the case. They see once again the power of simplicity and of memorable “themes” to help the jury view the facts as the advocate desires. And the attorney’s knowledge and application of the evidentiary rules is sharpened as she helps the students learn to argue objections.

New lawyers particularly find that mentoring a mock trial team enables them to develop and sharpen their own trial presentation skills. As they help the students practice the important performance aspects – eye contact, pacing and delivery, use of gestures – the young attorney is reminded to employ those techniques in his own presentations. Because attorneys at all levels find themselves in court less frequently than in years past, working with students serves as a hands-on refresher course to keep their own trial skills sharp.

The late Steve Schmidly, long-time attorney advisor at Asheboro High School, also extolled the benefits of mock trial coaching for the attorneys who serve. When I spoke with Steve in November of 2012, he told me, “attorneys gain at least as much from the experience as the students. For one thing, helping the team made me a better trial lawyer. I had to understand the rules of evidence thoroughly myself in order to teach them to the students. And it’s much harder now for young attorneys to gain trial experience, so coaching a mock trial team helps to sharpen their own trial skills. I used to encourage young attorneys in Asheboro to help with the team for that reason.”



Continuing, Steve remarked, “Advising a team helps you to meet people in the community – not just the students, but also their parents, other family members, and friends who come to watch the competitions. Some of my best friends now are parents of kids who were on the mock trial teams. And all of these connections and positive interactions can help you to build your practice; when people need an attorney, they think of you. It’s important in starting out as an attorney to network with people in the community, not just with legal professionals. By helping with a local team, you build a loyal following of people who know and respect you as they see you investing so much time in their children. It even helps improve the overall community’s impression of the legal profession.”

We are very grateful for the hundreds of attorneys in North Carolina who invest in our students by serving as team advisors because they’ve seen the enormous difference it makes. As ADA Darren Allen, advisor for the current NC champion team notes, “Coaching mock trial has been the most rewarding experience of my professional career. I do not think there is any other extracurricular activity that better develops critical thinking skills or hones public speaking talent as mock trial.”

Don't let this amazing opportunity to impact lives pass you by! We always need dedicated, caring attorneys to assist new schools as they start mock trial programs. In particular, schools in **SANFORD** and **GREENSBORO** have asked for assistance in locating a team mentor. No doubt we'll soon need attorney advisors in additional locations as well. For more information or to get involved, please contact CCCE Program Coordinator Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com).

### **THANK YOU TO OUR 2014 – 2015 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSORS!**

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

**SPONSORS ARE NEEDED FOR OUR 2014-15 OUTREACH!** By supporting the Outreach Project, you can help students in under-served parts of North Carolina learn about trial-by-jury while developing crucial academic skills. Contact Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com) or Rebecca Britton at [rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com) to learn how you can get involved.

### **CALENDAR 2014 – 2015 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

Final Registration Deadline and \$175 Team Fee Due	Friday, Dec. 12, 2014
Team Member List, Code of Ethics, Release Forms Due	Friday, Jan. 9, 2015
**Last Day to Withdraw Without Penalty**	Friday, Jan. 9, 2015
Regional Competition	Saturday, Feb. 7, 2015
Widenhouse Award Nomination Materials Due	Weds., Feb. 25, 2015
State Finals Competition	Fri. – Sat., March 6-7, 2015
National Championship, Raleigh, NC	May 14-16, 2015

### **THANK YOU TO OUR 2014 – 2015 COMPETITION SPONSORS and SUPPORTERS!**

**We need new sponsors for three of our regional sites!** For more information, please contact CCCE Vice President Rebecca Britton at [Rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:Rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com).

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

Asheville: **\*\*Sponsor Needed\*\***  
Charlotte: The Sumwalt Law Firm  
Durham: **\*\*Sponsor Needed\*\***  
    Supporter: Durham County Bar Association  
Fayetteville: Britton Law, P.A.  
Greenville: Hardee & Hardee, LLP  
High Point: **\*\*Sponsor Needed\*\***  
Raleigh: Twiggs Strickland & Rabenau, P.A.  
Wilmington: Shipman & Wright, LLP

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

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

**Special thanks to Regional Coordinators who will serve for the 2014-2015 season: **\*\*Coordinator Needed\*\***** (Asheville Regional Coordinator), Frances Knox and Paul Goodson (Charlotte Regional Coordinators), Russell Johnson and Robert Jessup (Durham Regional Coordinators), Philip Entzminger (Greenville Regional Coordinator), Rich Manger (High Point Regional Coordinator), Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados (Raleigh Regional Coordinators), John H. Anderson, Jr., (Wilmington Regional Coordinator).

***Special thanks also to our Site Coordinators who will serve at Regionals in the 2014-2015 season!***  
***Asheville:*** Susan Gaddis, ***Charlotte:*** Beverly K. Moore, ***Durham:*** Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, ***Fayetteville:*** Elizabeth Owens, ***Greenville:*** Jill Gustman; ***High Point:*** Karen Parrish, ***Raleigh:*** Fran LaFrankie and Michelle Keely, ***Wilmington:*** Brandy Jo Lea.

***\*\*If you are interested in learning more about the NAJ 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).***