

MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

*Brought to you by the NCAJ Mock Trial Committee
and the Carolina Center for Civic Education*

JULY 2010

“Investing in our future, creating tomorrow’s leaders”

Reflections on High School Mock Trial competition ... by a team Mom

By Susan Zacek

My son has participated in competitive Mock Trials for the past three years, in a North Carolina public charter high school. We recently returned from the National trials in Philadelphia, a delegation of nine students, two coaches and nine parents. As exciting (and exhausting) as it was for me, I cannot begin to imagine what my son and his teammates experienced. It seems like an emotional and energetic roller coaster – on a ride that lasted more than six months this year, and ended just in time for final exams.

Mock Trial is an incredible program for high school students. There is fun in the drama and debate of the basic case ... and then there is the competitive drive! Throughout this extended season, I have seen:

excitement when the cases were first made available (beginning of the year, and anew for nationals)

enthusiasm as witness and attorney roles were determined

conviction as a strategy for both defense and prosecution developed

frustration when the attorneys and witnesses couldn't quite come together

triumph when the attorneys and witnesses totally worked together

jubilation when the themes WORKED from open to close, and everything in between

exhaustion when mock trial was the priority ... but regular classwork demanded even more time

the thrill of victory when each open/direct/cross/close was delivered flawlessly, in competition.

More than that, though, I witnessed a group of teen agers become a team, and my son grow into a stronger leader. Make no mistake: mock trial is a serious commitment for these students. They know it will consume at least four months of their time, regardless to what sports and other academic endeavors they have also committed. For our team, this included Student Council, Optimists' International Oratorical contests, Quiz Bowl, ACT/PSAT/SAT exams, golf, cross-country, swimming, soccer and track.

Just after the winter break, our academic advisor left the school, and the team. With only weeks before the regional competition, a new academic advisor stepped in, but with no experience in Mock Trial. The students pulled together and disciplined themselves and each other, to work hard and keep polishing their presentations. Following their success at

Regionals, they redoubled their efforts to prepare for state competition. The teens had become a very tight team ... and the result was a hard-fought and well-deserved victory at the Campbell School of Law. As sweet as that winning announcement was, there was also the realization that they had **another** five weeks of hard labor ahead to prepare the NEW case for national competition.

I think the two weeks of waiting between the state trials and the publication of the national case was tough for the team. Two weeks was enough to break the team momentum, but not really enough time for everyone to relax and rejuvenate. The case was published a few hours earlier than promised, on March 30, and allowed exactly (only) five weeks to prepare before arrival in Philadelphia. And one day before spring break. Once school was back in session, the team reunited, and the hours grew longer. The countdown to Philly loomed large. I watched my son stumble into the house after long days at school, and practically collapse on his bed. I can't imagine the mental energy needed to get through six classes, high school athletics, and several hours of trial preparation each day, but I know that every student on the team persevered.

Finally, it was time to pack our bags and travel to Philadelphia.

After two long days and four very competitive trials, our team joined 43 others on the grassy area outside the historic Philadelphia City Hall. I don't think any of our delegation was expecting to hear our state chosen for the final round, but there was still great anticipation and more than a little hope. When the announcement was made that Minnesota and Illinois would go on, some of our students raced to get into the courtroom to watch, live.

Shortly after the final trial ended, the awards banquet was scheduled to begin. Our team gathered together, one last time, as the NC state delegation. Everyone celebrated when our lead attorney was honored with one of four Excellence in Mock Trial awards, for earning the judges' award for best attorney ("advocate", in the commonwealth of PA) in **three** of four trials. Sadly, we did not rank in the top 10 state teams, but the teens were ready to enjoy the dance afterward, celebrating the end of a long weekend and year, in which they had given their all. The next morning, when the scoresheets were finally released, work began on NEXT year's strategy for a full year's competition. If commitment is any indication, this will be a formidable team!

(INSERT PICTURE OF SUSAN AND ELDON ZACEK)

CALENDAR SET FOR 2010/2011 MOCK TRIAL SEASON

COMPETITION CASE PUBLISHED:	Friday, September 24, 2010
TEACHER/ADVISOR TRAINING SESSION	TBA
FINAL REGISTRATION DEADLINE	Friday, November 19, 2010
REGISTRATION FEE/ROSTERS DUE	Friday, January 7, 2011
LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW	Friday, January 14, 2011
REGIONAL COMPETITION DATE	SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2011
STATE FINALS COMPETITION DATE	FRI/SAT, MARCH 4 & 5, 2011
NATIONAL COMPETITION DATE	THURS/SAT, MAY 4-7, 2011

TWO MORE REGIONAL SITES RETURN THIS YEAR, MAKING 8!

The NCAJ Mock Trial Committee and Carolina Center for Civic Education Board met on June 11, 2010. At this meeting the competition calendar was set and it was determined that additional regions would be needed in the coming year to accommodate the numbers of teams registering for the mock trial program. **GREENVILLE** and **RALEIGH** have been added back to the competition sites.....

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

***If you are interested in serving on the NCAJ Mock Trial Committee, please contact either Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Committee Co-Chairs, at Rebecca.britton@hsbfirm.com or mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com.*

***If you would like to coach a team, let us know and we'll connect you with a high school in your area!*

***If you wish to make a contribution to the mock trial program, or if your firm is interested in sponsoring a regional competition during the 2010/11 season, please contact us at the e-mails above.*

For more information on the NCAJ High School Mock Trial Program, visit the NCAJ website at www.ncaj.com, click on public information and mock trial.

Special thanks to Mock Trial Committee Members and Regional Coordinators who have agreed to serve for the 2010/2011 season: Paul Goodson (Charlotte Regional Coordinator), Rich Manger and Adrienne Blocker (High Point Regional Coordinators), Ken Campbell (Wilmington Regional Coordinator), Russell Johnson (Durham Regional Coordinators), Mark Melrose (Asheville Regional Coordinator), Michelle Robertson, John O'Neal, John H. Anderson, Jr., Chris Nichols, Mark Sumwalt, Elizabeth Kuniholm and Phillip Etzmingler.

Special thanks also to our Site Coordinators who have agreed to serve in the 2010/2011 season!

Asheville: Cindy Bryson, **Charlotte:** Beverly King, **Durham:** Patti Clapper, **Fayetteville:** **Greenville:** Debi Welsh; **High Point:** Karen Parrish, **Wilmington:** Brandy Balderson.

Thank you to the following who have already stepped up to sponsor regional competitions and state finals for the Mock Trial Program during the 2010/2011 season!

Asheville:

Charlotte: The Sumwalt Law Firm

Durham:

Fayetteville: Hutchens, Senter & Britton, P.A.

Greenville:

High Point:

Raleigh:

Wilmington: Shipman & Wright, LLP

State Finals: Rudolf, Widenhouse & Fialko

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