



**THE NORTH CAROLINA ADVOCATES FOR JUSTICE
HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION**

MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

Brought to you by the NCAJ Mock Trial Committee

NOVEMBER 2009

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

MAKING THE CASE FOR MOCK TRIAL



Michelle Robertson

Three students leave their school campus for lunch. Only two would finish the school year.

Running a little late, the driver, the only one with a cell phone, is asked by one of the passengers to text a friend to make an excuse just in case they are late. As the driver is texting and driving, a pedestrian crosses in front of the vehicle. The young driver attempts to avoid the pedestrian and the car flips over. In the blink of an eye, one young high school student is dead. The driver is charged with negligent homicide.

This is the compelling, timely and hopefully engrossing factual scenario for the 2009-2010 High School Mock Trial case which was released on October 9, 2009.

This case has been adapted from a Mock Trial case used several years ago by the Minnesota State Bar and then adapted and used by the Connecticut Consortium for Law and Citizenship Education. A group of NCAJ attorneys volunteered their time and expertise to both update the case, making it timelier for high school students for whom texting is like breathing, and update the law. The case is filled with multi-layered issues of both fact and law for the students to explore and discuss. In addition to teaching students about the law and the positive aspects of the legal profession, this has always been one of the main goals in developing a case for students in the “Mock Trial Universe”.

In years past NCAJ has looked to its members for actual cases in which they have been involved which may be of interest to and important in the life of a high school student. We look for cases which can be used by attorney advisors and teacher advisors as tools for teaching and discussion. We have also used cases from other states which the Mock Trial Committee has found to be particularly appropriate or timely that year. All cases are then modified and simplified or adapted to fit the “Mock Trial Universe”. NCAJ staff has been intimately involved in this process throughout the years. Once a draft is finished, the volunteer committee reworks it, the case is finalized for posting and printing, and the case committee is then available for input and clarifications until competition.

The work is time consuming, at times frustrating, yet always rewarding. NCAJ and the Mock Trial Committee thank all those members who have volunteered their time, cases, and input over the years and we welcome case ideas for the future. Meanwhile, this season students across the state prepare to litigate “State of New Justice v. Jackson.” *Let the games begin!*

***** MANY THANKS TO OUR NCAJ MOCK TRIAL CASE COMMITTEE – GORDON WIDENHOUSE, MICHELLE ROBERTSON, KATY PARKER, & KEN CAMPBELL**

MOCK TRIAL - IT'S NO JOKE



Ryan Chriscoe

Perhaps the term "Mock Trial" is somewhat misleading regarding the way this competition feels to the typical high school participant. The name seems to imply an imaginary nature of the challenges of the competition; however, in the midst of the onslaught of objections, the evasions of steely-eyed witnesses, and the critical jury looking on, the challenges can feel very genuine.

When I participated in the event for the first time during my junior year at Harnett Central High School in 2003, I approached my role as plaintiff as though I really had shouldered the responsibility of helping a bereft family obtain justice. During my senior year, I took it very personally that my "client" had lost her home in a fire because of the actions of a neglectful landlord. Naturally, the proceedings in the courtroom were based entirely on fictional stories, but an onlooker could not discern this by the tears welling up in the witnesses' eyes, or the passion with which the attorneys debated the matter at hand in their closing statements. In the arena of the Mock Trial courtroom, our teams eventually seemed to stop seeking merely high scores from the judges, and started seeking *justice*.

Mock Trial is wonderfully unique in that, while its nature engages the participants' abilities in public speaking, critical analysis, team building and leadership, it does so while emphasizing that these valuable talents can and should be used for a valuable purpose. It both embodies the raw skills that any high school educator seeks to instill, and it demonstrates to the student the ultimate usefulness these skills possess for making a positive impact in the professional world.

Since my participation in Mock Trial, I obtained my first undergraduate degree in psychology from Campbell University in 2008, and have remained at Campbell to complete my second degree in music performance. My hope is ultimately to become a Christian counselor and church musician. I can say without a doubt that my experience in Mock Trial provided me with a sense of my potential that has fueled my academic confidence in college. It also served to enhance at an early age my understanding of ethics that will be priceless in a counseling profession (or any profession in which one interacts with people). Perhaps most importantly, the often overwhelming challenges I encountered in competition (legal jargon and sarcastic witnesses, for example) taught me to temper confidence with humility, which I have found essential for learning anything at all. I can think of no program in which I participated in high school that more broadly stimulates the intellect while simultaneously promoting vision for bringing about positive change.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Click [here](#) to complete and fax in or email our volunteer form to Rebecca Britton.
FAX: (910) 884-3926, E-MAIL: Rebecca.britton@hsbfirm.com

Or contact a coordinator at a site near you to volunteer your time on February 20, 2010, as a judge, scoring juror, or site volunteer!

Judges/scoring jurors

Wilmington:

Ken Campbell krcampbell@att.net

Fayetteville:

Site volunteers

Debi Welsh debi@lawyeraseast.com

Becky Britton Rebecca.britton@hsbfirm.com

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State Final Competition on 3/20/10

Raleigh – Campbell University School of Law

Gordon Widenhouse mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com

WHY COACH A TEAM?



Rebecca Britton

I would have to bring a fresh writing pad and pen into the courtroom for each trial. I started doing that after the first mock trial season I coached, because it was hard for me to keep my mouth shut otherwise. The problem is that after weeks/months of working with your kids and mentoring them and coaching them, you suddenly have to sit back behind the bar and watch them do it. It is out of your hands and into theirs. You cannot say a thing to them until the trial is over. You cannot stop what they are doing and have a teaching moment. You have to let go and let them fly. So I resorted to taking notes. I even had to sit further back in the gallery of the court room because my kids swore to me they could hear me writing. (I'm sure they couldn't, but that's what they told me anyway).

After the morning trial finished and we wolfed down lunch before the next round, we would go over all of my notes. Things like: “Shannon, what are you thinking???” conjured up loud laughter and some very entertaining explanations. Things like: “Naomi, those are awesome tears!” and “Excellent answers on cross” (underlined multiple times) would bring a blush and a big grin. Then items like: “This is important to know for the next round” would get a hush and total attention.

I’m not sure what was more exciting for me on those days of competition, seeing the kids fly with what they had learned, or seeing their parents’ looks of wonderment over what they just saw their kids do. Coaching a mock trial team is a tremendously rewarding experience. If you are thinking about doing it, go ahead and take the plunge. As an attorney advisor, you get to play a small part in placing some of the building blocks that are the foundation for each student’s future, and you get to see some of the transformation each student experiences on their journey to adulthood and deciding who and what they want to be. You have a real opportunity to make a difference not only in the lives and education of the students you interact with, but to give a totally new and positive perspective on the legal profession, and to have some fun at the same time.

Would you like to coach a team? Contact Rebecca Britton at Rebecca.britton@hsbfirm.com or at (910) 864-6888, or one of the regional coordinators listed above.

We currently have a team in Fayetteville/Hope Mills and in Wake Forest that needs an attorney advisor.

***How about sponsoring a Regional Competition! We have 1 region left –Asheville.** For \$3,500 your firm can sponsor a regional competition. Sponsorship covers most costs of operating the regional competition and sponsors are noted and recognized at the regional event and in our newsletter, brochures and programs.*

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:** Paul Goodson and Jackie Smith (Charlotte Regional Coordinators), Rich Manger, Adrienne Blocker and Celeste Harris (High Point Regional Coordinators), Ken Campbell and Andy McVey (Wilmington Regional Coordinators), Russell Johnson, Carlos Mahoney and Katy Parker (Durham Regional Coordinators), Mark Melrose (Asheville Regional Coordinator), Michelle Robertson, John O’Neal, Chris Nichols, Mark Sumwalt, Elizabeth Kuniholm and Steve Schmidley. Committee Co-Chairs: Gordon Widenhouse (State Finals Coordinator) and Rebecca Britton (Fayetteville Regional Coordinator)*

***Special thanks also to members of the Legal Assistant’s Division who have agreed to serve as site coordinators!** Asheville: Debbie Dante, Susan Gaddis and Cindy Bryson, Charlotte: Beverly King, Durham: Patti Clapper, Fayetteville: Diane Long, Beth Owens, Faith Adams; High Point: Karen Parrish, Wilmington: Debi Welsh.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our 2009/2010 Mock Trial case has been released! You can find it at www.ncaj.com, public info, mock trial.

Mock Trial 2009/2010 Calendar:

Case Release: 10/9/09

Teacher training: Raleigh 10/17/09, Greensboro 10/24/09

Registration deadline: 12/11/09

Payment/Rosters deadline: 1/13/10

REGIONAL COMPETITIONS: 2/20/10

STATE FINAL COMPETITION: 3/20/10

Thank you to the following sponsors/contributors to the Mock Trial Program:

The Florence L. Rogers Charitable Trust

THANK YOU TO SHIPMAN & WRIGHT, LLP FOR SPONSORING OUR WILMINGTON REGIONAL COMPETITION!!

Regional Sponsors for 09/10 season:

Charlotte: The Sumwalt Law Firm

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

High Point: Crumley Roberts, LLP

Durham: Glenn, Mills, Fisher & Mahoney, P.A.

Wilmington: Shipman & Wright, LLP

State Finals: Rudolf, Widenhouse & Fialko

**Sponsorships are available for Wilmington and Asheville. For information, call or e-mail Rebecca Britton at (910) 864-6888, rebecca.britton@hsbfirm.com.

Individual Pledges: Doug & Peggy Abrams, Mike Anderson, Brad Bannon, Don Beskind, Janet Ward Black, Steve Bowden, Cliff Britt, Becky Britton, Wade Byrd, Heidi Chapman, Joe Cheshire, John Cox, Burton Craige, Kathleen Glancy, Gary Jackson, Lucy Inman, David Kirby, Albert Kirby, Liz Kuniholm, Carlos Mahoney, Andy McVey, Mark Melrose, Phillip Miller, Chuck Monnett, Chris Nichols, Annemarie Pantazis, Katy Parker, Spencer Parris, Doug Parsons, Karen Rabenau, Lloyd Smith, Adam Stein, Don Strickland, Mark Sumwalt, Hank Teich, Hoyt Tessener, Howard Twiggs, Bob Whitely, Elise Whitley, James Williams, Tricia and Tacker LeCarpentier.

Thomas, Ferguson & Mullins, LLP, Durham, NC – Sponsors of our teacher training workshops held in Raleigh and Greensboro

Mark Valentine – The Visual Advantage, Raleigh, NC: Donating regional competition signs, and signs and exhibits for state finals

Larry Wolfe - Wolfe Audiovisual Productions , Fayetteville, NC – Donating audiovisual services for promotional videos and filming teacher training workshop and Championship round at State Finals.

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