



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

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*Carolina Center for Civic Education*

**"Investing in our future, creating tomorrow's leaders"**

### **25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON: MOCK TRIAL IMPACTS STUDENTS' LIVES**

*By Troy Homesley*

*CCCE Mock Trial Alumnus*



When I was a freshman at Mooresville High School, I heard that our school was beginning a mock trial program. I didn't know one thing about mock trial, but I knew I hoped to be a lawyer one day. So, I went out for the team and started learning the basics of trial. Most folks don't believe me, but I always say that it took me years just to figure out what exactly a cross-examination was. From this slow beginning, the training ultimately paid off. During my junior year, we reached the regional finals. During my senior year, we had the opportunity to compete at state finals. I was fortunate to be

surrounded by wonderful teammates and a devoted coach, Ronnie Crisco. Many members of our team subsequently decided to attend law school, and several of them will soon be lawyers. I have no doubt that our collective experiences as mock trial participants informed and inspired our decisions to pursue the legal profession.

It is difficult to precisely value the effect that this opportunity had on me personally—but I know the impact was momentous. Through my experience with the North Carolina high school mock trial program, I learned both hard and soft skills. I learned to work as a member of a team, I came to understand the time and devotion required to excel in the simultaneously academic and practical legal field, and I came to appreciate the delicate balance between communication, simplicity, and detail that is required to serve as a trial lawyer. The program gave me confidence in my ability to speak in front of groups, argue fairly for my positions, and communicate my thoughts clearly and logically. I also gained crucial soft skills. I learned the importance of working diligently and preparing thoroughly for trials and beyond. I became skilled in the practice of documenting information that would be valuable during trial. I was also challenged to think creatively about the factual circumstances presented by the fact pattern.

Fortunately, the benefits of attaining these skills extend far beyond the confines of the courtroom. I believe that these skills of perseverance, diligence, creativity, communication, and preparation served me well as I entered my undergraduate studies. I also have no doubt that these skills helped to carry me through my high school years, and ultimately impacted my future opportunities. Today, as a third-year law student, the circumstances may have changed, but the skills gained from my high school mock trial experience remain readily applicable. This fall, I will begin working in New York City at the law firm Cravath, Swaine & Moore, where I hope to continue my pursuit of becoming a trial lawyer.

Since high school, I have been involved in some sort of mock trial program nearly continuously. As an undergraduate student at the University of North Carolina, I competed as a member of the Carolina Mock Trial team. As a law student at the University of North Carolina, I have competed as a member of the Broun National Trial team. Last summer, I worked at a law firm where I was assigned to a trial team that prepared for a lengthy trial. It seems I cannot get away from the excitement and sleepless nights that trials (whether real or mock) bring—and I can't complain.

*Editor's note: The CCCE is grateful for the many generous individuals coached teams this year. Your investment of time and talents makes a difference! Want more information on how you can be involved? Contact CCCE State Coordinator Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com). You'll be glad you did!*

## **REGIONAL CHAMPIONS ADVANCE TO STATE FINALS!**

By Sue H. Johnson  
CCCE State Coordinator



On Saturday, February 4, 2017, nearly 700 high school students excitedly entered courthouses across North Carolina to present the case of *Gabriel Torres v. Arcadia Police Department* in our 25<sup>th</sup> annual NCAJ High School Mock Trial competition. From Asheville to Wilmington, students ardently argued whether APD officer Max Carter used excessive force against Gabriel in an incident at Arcadia High School. After three intense rounds, the following teams earned the right to compete at State Finals, hosted by Campbell Law School in Raleigh on March 10 – 11:

<b>Asheville Regional Champion:</b>	T.C. Roberson High School
<b>Fayetteville Regional Champion:</b>	Village Christian Academy Purple
<b>Gastonia Regional Champion:</b>	Gaston Christian School White
<b>Greenville Regional Champion:</b>	J.H. Rose High School Green
<b>High Point Regional Champion:</b>	Uwharrie Charter Academy Birds of Prey
<b>Pittsboro Regional Champion:</b>	East Chapel Hill High School Black
<b>Raleigh Regional Champion:</b>	HARC Blue
<b>Salisbury Regional Champion:</b>	Central Carolina Homeschoolers Lewis
<b>Wilmington Regional Champion:</b>	Wake Classical
<b>At-Large Team:</b>	Chapel Hill High School Black

**THANK YOU** to the many legal professionals who volunteered their time as presiding judges, scoring jurors, and site volunteers at the Regional competitions. Altogether, **16 judges, 340 attorneys, 105 paralegals, and 25 law or pre-law students** volunteered their time to make the Regional competitions a success. We could not have done it without you!



### **CASE BALANCE: THE STREAK CONTINUES!**

*By Sue H. Johnson  
CCCE State Coordinator*

Eighty-three teams took part in our nine regional competitions on February 4th. Because we know that students and teachers invest untold hours in their case preparations, we strive to provide them with cases



that are educational, balanced, and thought-provoking. This year's original civil case dealt with issues such as bullying, acceptance of differences, school safety and discipline, and reasonable versus excessive force. The students' hard work paid off in performances that were compelling and believable – many of our judges were astonished that the students were still in high school!

Since 2012-13 we have tracked the outcomes at Regionals to measure case balance. Our cases have proved to be well-balanced, making the outcome of each trial dependent upon the students' own skills rather than upon the "luck of the draw." We are happy to report that our 2016-17 case was balanced as well. Across all preliminary rounds statewide, the prosecution won 48.2% and the defense won 51.8% of the trials (40 trials to 43 trials).

All of us at the CCCE want to provide our students with the best possible educational and competition experience. We are pleased we have once again delivered a case that was enjoyable and fair to both sides.



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## **CALENDAR 2016 – 2017 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

Widenhouse Award Nomination Materials Due  
State Finals Competition  
National Championship, Hartford, CT  
Summer Camp, Chapel Hill, NC

Weds., Feb. 22, 2017  
Fri. – Sat., March 10-11, 2017  
May 11-13, 2017  
July 26 – 29, 2017

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 COMPETITION SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!**

State Finals: Rudolf Widenhouse  
Asheville: Melrose Law, PLLC  
    *Supporters:* 28<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Bar Association & Asheville Area Paralegal Assn.  
Fayetteville: Britton Law, P.A.  
    *Supporter:* Cumberland County Bar Association  
Gastonia: The Sumwalt Law Firm  
Greenville: Hardee & Hardee, LLP  
High Point: Manger Law Firm  
Pittsboro: Glenn Mills Fisher & Mahoney, P.A.  
    *Supporter:* Durham County Bar Association  
Raleigh: Twiggs Strickland & Rabenau, and Maurer Law, Co-Sponsors  
Salisbury: Rowan County Bar Association  
Wilmington: Shipman & Wright

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

## **THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSOR!**

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

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

***Special thanks to our 2016-17 Regional Coordinators and CCCE Board Members:*** Asheville Regional Coordinator Mark Melrose, Fayetteville Regional Coordinator Rebecca Britton, Gastonia Regional Coordinators Holden Clark and Daniel O'Shea, Greenville Regional Coordinators Jeffrey Cannon and Phil Entzminger, High Point Regional Coordinator Rich Manger, Pittsboro Regional Coordinators Liz Barber and Robert Jessup, Raleigh Regional Coordinators Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados, Salisbury Regional Coordinator Darrin Jordan, Wilmington Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr.; and ***CCCE Board Members*** Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Rich Manger, Bradley Bannon, Adrienne Blocker, Christine Scheef, Brooke Schmidly, Mark Sumwalt; Bill Powers (*ex officio*) and David Henson (*ex officio*).

### ***Special thanks also to our 2016-17 Site Coordinators:***

***Asheville:*** Brett Pinkston, ***Fayetteville:*** Tanja Shurling and Karen Kueny, ***Gastonia:*** Beverly K. Moore, ***Greenville:*** Jessi Cannon, ***High Point:*** Rose Pratt and Jane Goeke, ***Pittsboro:*** Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, ***Raleigh:*** Michelle Keely and Sandra Strickland, ***Salisbury:*** Emily Applewhite, and ***Wilmington:*** Brandy Jo Lea.

***\*\*If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the NCAJ High School Mock Trial program, please contact Sue Johnson, State 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).***