



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

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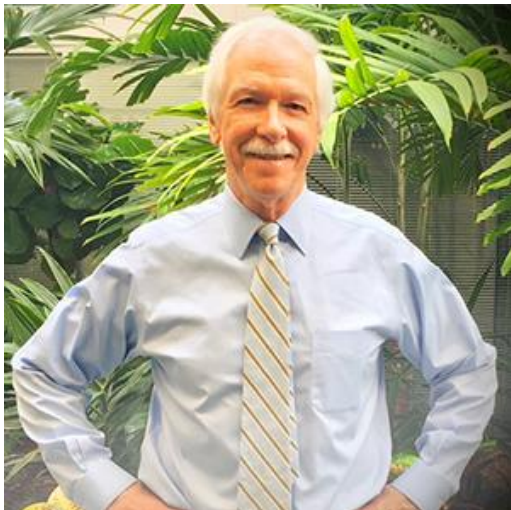
*Carolina Center for Civic Education*

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

### **25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON: WHO'D A THUNK IT?**

*By Rich Manger*

*CCCE Board Secretary*



In 1993, I am on the Public Education Committee of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers, now NCAJ. Our NCATL Public Education Vice President is Gordon Widenhouse. One of the Academy staff assigned to work with us is a dynamic young woman named Erin Reynolds. Erin is committed to NCATL's goal of educating the public about the right to trial by jury and its crucial role, with the participation of an informed citizenry, in protecting the rights of all of our citizens, no matter their stations in life.

In 1993, a small organization named CRADLE has an office at the Wake Forest University School of Law. It is dedicated to educating students about the Constitution of the United States, including the role of trial by jury.

In 1993, the two women running CRADLE face a dilemma. They have developed a high school mock trial program that they are operating with the help of volunteer law students from Wake Law. Teams are competing to win a state championship and then represent North Carolina in a national trial competition. But the competition is in jeopardy: law students' participation is irregular due to scheduling and travel difficulties, and the organization is small, lacking adequate resources to run a successful event. Disaster is fast descending upon the competition.

Enter Erin. CRADLE contacts NCATL to see if we have any interest in helping them organize and run the trial competition. Erin immediately recognizes that this high school program has the potential to be the best and most substantive way to teach young people about the nature and value of our constitutional rights. She recognizes the ability to excite students to learn about the judicial system while engaged in a competitive and creative academic exercise. She lays out the potential to our NCATL VP, and current President of CCCE, Mr. Widenhouse.

Gordon, a highly respected trial lawyer, teacher, and authority on evidence and trial procedure, recognizes the potential to make a meaningful impact on the education of our young people while engendering deep respect and appreciation for our jury system. He brings the question to the Public Education Committee. We are all in.

That first year, I preside over the semi-final and championship rounds of the regional competition at Wake Forest Law School. The winning team will advance as one of 6 regional winners to Raleigh for the state championship. Then on to the nationals.

I arrive and get a copy of the case materials, rules of evidence and rules of procedure. I meet a young man who is the law student adviser to the Salem Academy team, some kid named Chris Nichols. More about him later... or in other NCAJ communications, walls of honor, etc.

First trial: Two teams tee off against each other. One is the Salem Academy team. Their lead trial lawyer is a junior, Brooke Schmidly. To my delight, both teams conduct a spirited trial. They know their material and handle their examinations and arguments very well. Salem Academy wins and moves on to the regional championship round.

Second trial: Providence High School, Charlotte, versus Salem Academy, Winston-Salem.

Buckle in, brother. You are in for a Class 5 rapids run as presiding judge.

These two teams go at it. Aggressive. Prepared. Tactically sound. They know their stuff! These are real teams, working as teams, helping each other as I watch co-counsel on each team whispering suggestions and passing notes to their examining co-counsel as both strive for the advantage in trial. Their witnesses are prepared and strong.

The memory I most clearly recall twenty five years later is Brooke Schmidly and an equally competitive and talented young woman from Providence High going toe-to-toe on exams, cross exams, objections and arguments. This is a prize fight between 16 year old warriors, using their wits, preparedness and ingenuity within the rules and facts they have been given.

This extremely well-fought trial is won by Salem Academy in a close vote. On to the state championship.

I learn during team introductions when I ask about the not-so-common name Schmidly that Brooke is the daughter of a Wake Law School classmate and friend of mine from Asheboro, Steve Schmidly. When I get back in the office on Monday, I call Steve. I tell him what I have just witnessed. He will be a fool if his daughter decides to become a lawyer and wants to return to Asheboro to practice and he does not hire her. Steve was no fool.



The next year, NCATL assumes all responsibility for the statewide competition. We strive every year going forward to expand and enrich our program to reach more students and provide the best educational experience we can, coupled with the enjoyment of hard teamwork. Now we have teams from all walks of high school educational life: public, private, charter and homeschool. We have schools with multiple teams, schools that build on the experience of their predecessors. Yet we still delight in the enrollment of brand new teams excited to participate in such a vigorous and insightful activity. We continue in our commitment to all of you and your successors.

I have been a regional coordinator from 1994 on. I continue as the High Point Regional Coordinator and on the executive committee of CCCE. Every year, I am re-vitalized by the experience of seeing teams compete. Every year, the volunteer judges and lawyers, the hundreds who over the years have given of

their time on Saturdays to preside and score, tell me of their exhilaration in witnessing the ingenuity and hard work of our teams. Every year, the students renew our faith in our country's future. No one leaves these trials pessimistic.

Every year, I also see the fine work and dedication of the teacher and attorney advisors who work so hard with the students to bring out their best, to develop their confidence, to work together as teams through the hardships and the glory. Every year, my belief in the strength of our program is reinforced.

Steve Schmidly went on to organize the Asheboro High School teams through the 90's and first decade of the 2000's. Asheboro became a dynasty during that time, uniting students, parents, school and legal communities. He was eventually joined by his daughter, Brooke, who coached and is now on the Board of Directors of CCCE. She also judges when called upon.

The NCAJ High School Mock Trial Competition has been so successful that we were asked twice in the last 12 years to take on the monumental task of hosting the National High School Mock Trial Competition. We rose to the challenge. We will continue to rise to the challenge.

Allen Bailey, one of the founders and former presidents of NCAJ, once said that he wanted to see the mock trial competition in every high school in North Carolina. So do we. Mission impossible? Maybe. But we keep striving, and we hope enriching, to bring the best experience possible to all our students. We want the mock trial experience to be the most personally rewarding educational experience that students can have. So join us if you can, helping to pass on to future mockers the opportunities and rewards that so many have experienced in mock trial.

*Editor's note: Want information on how you can be involved in impacting students in such significant ways? Contact CCCE State Coordinator Sue Johnson at [SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com](mailto:SueHeathJohnson@gmail.com).*

## **CENTRAL CAROLINA HOMESCHOOLERS ADVANCE TO NATIONALS!**

*By Sue H. Johnson  
CCCE State Coordinator*



On **Friday, March 10, 2017**, ten outstanding North Carolina mock trial teams converged upon Campbell Law School in Raleigh, our state finals host for the eighth time. Before engaging in their own legal battles, the students met with Justice Paul M. Newby, former Justice Robert H. Edmunds, and Danny Moody in the North Carolina Supreme Court. There, they learned about appellate advocacy, the history of the Court, the rule of law, and the making of legal precedent in North Carolina.

Returning to Campbell Law, students were greeted by Campbell Law Assistant Dean Megan West Sherron. After partaking of food and fellowship at the evening reception, the students were inspired by the words of N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein as well as NCAJ President Bill Powers and CCCE Board Member Brooke Schmidly. In addition, Maggie Lanier, of Central Carolina Homeschoolers team “Bonhoeffer,” was recognized as the recipient of the “M. Gordon Widenhouse Jr. Award for Visionary Leadership” (see next article).

On **Saturday, March 11**, the students displayed impressive legal knowledge and convincing witness portrayals as they advocated on each side of the civil case *Gabriel Torres v. Arcadia Police Department*. Distinguished jurists presided over the rounds: Justice Newby; Court of Appeals Judges Phillip Berger, Jr., Rick Elmore, and Lucy Inman; Superior Court Judges G. Bryan Collins, Jr., Paul C. Ridgeway and Mary Ann Tally; and District Court Judge Keith Gregory. At the end of the two preliminary rounds, ten students earned “Best Attorney” and “Best Witness” awards. All then waited with hearts pounding for the announcement of the two finalists: Central Carolina Homeschoolers “Lewis” (State Champions in 2013, 2014, and 2016) and J.H. Rose High School “Green” (perennial powerhouse from Greenville, NC).

As Judge Inman presided over the championship round, the students argued the case with passion and professionalism before the prestigious jury panel of Janet Ward Black, J. Bryan Boyd, S. Quon Bridges, Darrin Jordan, and Marilyn Forbes Phillips. In the end, **Central Carolina Homeschoolers “Lewis”** earned the right to represent North Carolina at the National High School Mock Trial Championship in Hartford, Connecticut on May 11 – 13.



Reflecting on their experiences this year, the CCHS students expressed appreciation for relationships they have built while taking part in the mock trial program. As Emily Polson explains, “Our team members work hard individually, but they also work hard together. I always have a teammate ready to listen to my examination for the hundredth time, or help me think through potentially objectionable material.” Allyn Sims agrees: “The fact that we get to share so much life together...and work for common goals together...brings us close and makes this whole experience worthwhile and fun.”

Co-Captain Caitlin Kelly adds, “I have been increasingly impressed and inspired each year by the talent of the regional-winning teams at States. The well-prepared, polished teams that we faced made the weekend exponentially more challenging and fun....We are thrilled to have the opportunity to represent North Carolina in Connecticut this May!”

Congratulations to our State Champs and to all ten state finals teams for their accomplishments this year! (For complete results, visit [ncmocktrial.org](http://ncmocktrial.org) and look under “latest news” in the right-hand column).

## **WIDENHOUSE AWARD WINNER INSPIRES HER TEAMMATES!**

By Sue H. Johnson

CCCE State Coordinator



At the State Finals evening reception on Friday, March 10, **Margaret “Maggie” Lanier** of the Central Carolina “Bonhoeffer” team received the “M. Gordon Widenhouse Jr. Award for Inspirational Team Leadership.” This award was established to honor the visionary leadership of Gordon Widenhouse, who has been instrumental in creating and sustaining the North Carolina Advocates for Justice High School Mock Trial Program, now in its twenty-fifth year. The award is open only to seniors who are recommended by a team advisor. It seeks to recognize an individual who may not be the “star” of the team; rather, the student may be the “glue” who holds the team together through practices and competition.

Central Carolina Homeschoolers attorney advisor **Darren Allen** explains why he nominated Maggie for the award: “Mock trial gives students an opportunity to realize that there is nothing they cannot overcome....it takes a tremendous amount of courage for anyone...to stand up in front of a crowd and speak in a competitive environment. They have to draw from an even deeper well of courage when they must overcome natural speaking limitations. Even though Maggie has a...speech impediment that prevents her from pronouncing ‘r’ sounds, she never let her obstacles define her, or even slow her down. She persisted in spite of them, and inspired her teammates in the process.

“The heart of leadership is service toward others. It’s about the impact that you leave on your teammates. Maggie’s teammates were inspired by her never-give-up attitude...her incredible work ethic...and her personal devotion to her teammates.”

In her application essay, **Maggie** describes the impact of her mock trial experience on her growth as a leader. “Ultimately, leadership is not about the glorious crowning acts. It’s about keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it...It’s about laying the groundwork for others’ success, and then standing back and letting them shine’ (Hadfield, Chris).

“Confidence plays a key role in mock trial but for a leader it’s of extra importance...The leader sets the tone...the pace...the mood. Many times this year I chose to be confident not because I felt it but because my team needed me to be....A leader is not one who desires to be the one shining but the one who builds his team to stand on their own, to be able to shine when he’s gone.”

After the Award reception, Maggie expressed her surprise and gratitude for this recognition: “I am honestly shocked to have received the Widenhouse Award. There are so many teams in NC and they all have so much talent; I am so honored and blessed to have been chosen.”

We know that Maggie is one of many students across North Carolina who possesses increased self-confidence, greater critical thinking abilities, and new leadership skills because of their participation in mock trial. We extend a hearty congratulations and best wishes to Maggie and all of the other graduating seniors, and we look forward to hearing about your future accomplishments!

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

National Championship, Hartford, CT  
Summer Camp, Chapel Hill, NC

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!  
**NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR** – also hosting rounds at 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).***