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## March/April 2024 Mock Trial News

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**Central Carolina Homeschoolers Win  
2024 State Championship!**



“Driven by despair.”

With these three words, the prosecution in the case of State v. Fran Lewis began its opening statement and the Final Round of the 32nd Annual High School Mock Trial State Championship, sponsored by [Settlement Planning Services](#). The event was held at [Campbell University’s Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law](#).

The round was one for the ages. Team Veritas of the Central Carolina Homeschoolers (CCH) argued the State’s case, with 2023 State Champion J.H. Rose High School representing Fran Lewis. Chief Justice Paul Newby of the North Carolina Supreme Court presided.

About two and half hours after kicking off the round, District Court Judge S. Quon Bridges opened the juror critiques by sharing his own despair at having to choose a winner between the two teams. Ultimately, the CCH team prevailed, with Haley Kramer named the Best Attorney in the Final Round, and Grace O’Brien the Best Witness.

Judge Bridges was joined on the Final Round scoring panel by Marcia Armstrong, Immediate Past President of the N.C. State Bar; A. Todd Brown, current president of the N.C. State Bar; Burton Craige, Past President of the N.C. Advocates for Justice; and James “Jimbo” Perry, Executive Director of the Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism.

Randolph County District Court Judge Darren Allen, one of the CCH team coaches, described the round as “one of the best I’ve ever seen. I love to see a good clean round, no gamesmanship, no frivolous cheating allegations—just two awesome teams at the top of their games!”

Liza Knight, longtime teacher advisor from J.H. Rose High School, agreed. “It was such a privilege to participate in that round. You could see in both teams that effort to step up their game as the round went on.”

Nine regional champions and three at-large teams competed at Campbell’s Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law School on Friday, March 15, and Saturday, March 16. In winning the competition, the Central Carolina Homeschoolers team earned the right to represent North Carolina at the [National High School Mock Trial Competition](#) in Wilmington, Delaware in May.

Many thanks to the more than 100 legal professionals, including judges, attorneys, paralegals, and legal assistants, who volunteered their time to make the State Finals Competition possible.



J.H. Rose High School mock trial team, State Runner-Up in the 2024 N.C. High School Mock Trial Competition



NCMTP President with Final Round Best Attorney Haley Kramer and Final Round Best Witness Grace O'Brien

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**Congratulations to Courtroom Artist  
State Champion Erica Oliver!**

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Courtroom Artist State Champion Erica Oliver's winning artwork.

Erica Oliver of Terry Sanford High School was named the N.C. Mock Trial Program's 2024 State Champion Courtroom Artist on Saturday, March 16. Cornelia Knight of Covenant Day School was the runner-up. Both students earned the right to compete at the State Finals after winning their regional competitions on February 3.

Ms. Oliver will now represent North Carolina at the National High School Mock Trial Championship, which also sponsors a Courtroom Artist competition. The National Championship will be held in Wilmington, Delaware in May.

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## **NCMTP Hosts Largest Regional Competition in Program History**

The State Finals followed the largest regional competition that NCMTP has ever hosted, with 100 teams competing in nine regions across the state. More than 500 judges, attorneys, paralegals, and legal assistants volunteered to support the regional competitions, as presiding judges, scoring jurors, and site volunteers. The following are the regional champions, who competed at State Finals, and runners-up, three of whom competed at State Finals as At-Large teams, based on the strength of their regional

competition performance.

**Fayetteville:** Chapel Hill High School Gold (Letter C)

Runner-up: Raleigh Charter High School Khaki (Letter G) (At-Large State Finals Competitor)

**Gastonia:** Charlotte Country Day Green (Letter H)

Runner-up: Gray Stone Day School Garnet (Letter B) (At-Large State Finals Competitor)

**Hendersonville:** AC Reynolds High School (Letter C)

Runner-up: Classical Scholars Gold (Letter E) (At-Large State Finals)

**Hickory:** Chapel Hill High School Black (Letter G)

Runner-up: Covenant Day School (Letter L)

**Hillsborough:** Unity Mock Trial (Letter I)

Runner-up: Carrboro High School Purple (Letter F)

**High Point:** Central Carolina Homeschoolers Veritas (Letter G)

Runner-Up: Millenium Charter Academy (Letter F)

**Raleigh:** Broughton High School Purple (Letter J)

Runner-up: Green Hope High School (Letter K)

**Salisbury:** Kairos Christian Classical (Letter A)

Runner-up: Gray Stone Day School (Letter I)

**Wilmington:** J.H. Rose High School Green (Letter A)

Runner-up: Village Christian Academy Purple (Letter G)

### **Courtroom Artist Winners**

**Fayetteville:** Erica Oliver, Terry Sanford High

**Gastonia:** Grace Park, Ardrey Kell High

**Hickory:** Cornelia Knight, Covenant Day

**Hillsborough:** Charlotte Johnson, Carrboro High

**Salisbury:** Ariana Fletcher, Davie County High

**Wilmington:** Scarlett Ranstad, Village Christian Academy

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**Haley Kramer of Central Carolina Homeschoolers**

## Named 2024 Widenhouse Award Winner



From left: NCMTP Board member Brenee Orozco, NCMTP President Rebecca Britton, and 2024 Widenhouse Award Winner Haley Kramer

The M. Gordon Widenhouse Jr. Award for Inspirational Team Leadership is presented annually to the high school senior who holds his or her mock trial team together throughout practices and competitions. This year's winner, Haley Kramer of the Central Carolina Homeschoolers, certainly exemplifies that spirit. In his nomination letter, Haley's coach described her as "leading with kindness." After serving as team captain for two years and facing a time crunch this season, Haley initially decided to step away from mock trial. However, observing one scrimmage convinced her to jump back in so that she could be there to help and support her fellow mockers. As her coach wrote, Haley's "joyful spirit was so contagious that not long after Haley joined ... four more students jump[ed] on as well."

Congratulations to Haley on her accomplishments and the outstanding leadership she has offered to the Central Carolina Homeschoolers mock trial teams!

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## Mark Kleinschmidt Recognized with Schmidly Award



2024 Steve Schmidly Coaching Award Winner Mark Kleinschmidt and NCMTP Vice President Brooke Schmidly

At the State Finals Awards Reception, NCMTP Vice President Brooke Schmidly proudly presented the Steve Schmidly Coaching Award, named after Brooke's late father, to Mark Kleinschmidt. Mark is a longtime coach of the Chapel Hill High School mock trial teams.

The NCMTP Board of Directors established the Steve Schmidly Coaching Award in 2022 to recognize lawyers, coaches, teachers, or administrators who have been instrumental to the NCMTP and their students. Steve coached the Asheboro High School teams for more than 10 years and brought a passion and spirit of selflessness to the young people he coached.

Mark is a worthy recipient of this honor. He initially coached teams starting in 1995 as a



high school social studies teacher. Mark went to law school but returned to coaching after graduation, and he has now coached teams for 20 consecutive years. In most years, he coaches two teams. Both of teams Mark coached this year competed at State Finals.

The students on Mark's team sang his praises. One student commented, "What I appreciated most was the independence he encouraged in us: he was happy to provide feedback—which he did and always helpfully—but never tried to write our materials for us. It was empowering to see the faith he had in our team to argue and think for ourselves." Another student added, "He created a very welcoming environment where no question was stupid and where you could experiment and try something new."

Mark has supported the NCMTP itself, both in facilitating the use of the Orange County Courthouse for regional competitions and frequently volunteering his time to teach at the NCMTP summer camps.

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## **A Huge Thanks to the 2023-24 Competition Sponsors and Supporters**

This program would not be possible without the hard work and financial support of so many people and organizations! Thank you to all of those who volunteered for the Regional and State Finals competitions, as well as the following:

### **Founding Sponsor:**



### **State Finals Presenting Sponsor:**



**Regional Sponsors:**

**Fayetteville:** Maginnis Howard (*formerly Britton Law*)

**Gastonia:** Demayo Law Offices, LLP

**Hendersonville:** Henderson County

**Hickory:** Orndoff Law Firm and The Law Offices of Jason E. Taylor

**High Point:** High Point Bar Association

**Hillsborough:** Patterson Harkavy LLP and Mills & Mahoney, PA

**Raleigh:** Settlement Planning Services, LLC, and Maginnis Howard

**Salisbury:** Rowan County Bar Association

**Wilmington:** Shipman & Wright, LLP

**NCMTP Regional and Site Coordinators:**

The below group of attorneys and paralegals generously volunteer their time to make the mock trial regional competitions run smoothly each year. Learn more about all our coordinators at [ncmocktrial.org/supporters](http://ncmocktrial.org/supporters). We thank both our new coordinators and long-time coordinators very much:

**Fayetteville:** Regional Coordinators Brenee Orozco & Rebecca Britton and Site Coordinator Tanja Shurling

**Gastonia:** Regional Coordinator Rachel Mosser and Site Coordinator Annie Gray

**Hendersonville:** Regional Coordinator Mary Ann Hollocker and Site Coordinator Melanie Rittersdorf

**High Point:** Regional Coordinators Eric Richardson & Rich Manger and Site Coordinator Grace Lay

**Hillsborough:** Regional Coordinators Drew Haywood & Rebecca Ugolick and Site Coordinator Patti Clapper

**Raleigh:** Regional Coordinator Kathryn Martin and Site Coordinator Amanda Miller

**Salisbury:** Regional Coordinators John Basinger & Darrin Jordan and Site Coordinators Alicia Coggins & Connie Cassatt

**Wilmington:** Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr., and Site Coordinator Catherine Holland

And a very special thank you to State Finals Site Coordinator Tanja Shurling, who devoted

countless hours to ensuring a smooth event!



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