

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2004 Mock Trial Competition

Opening rounds are January 20, 22, 27 and 29; Semi-finals on February 3; Finals held February 10

Twelve teams from 12 Tulare County high schools will compete in the first four rounds of the Mock Trial Competition in the Tulare County Superior Court on January 20, 22, 27 and 29. Trials begin each night at 5:15 p.m. The four teams with the highest power scores will compete at the Courthouse in a semi-final event February 3 at 5:15 p.m. Semi-final winners will go on to compete in the final event, February 10 at the Rotary Theatre. The Mock Trial event culminates with the Award Banquet hosted at the Holiday Inn for all participating students, parents, coaches, and attorneys. Generous contributions from attorneys, coaches, parents, Kiwanis organizations, and Ag in the Classroom make it possible for students to attend the banquet at no charge. This evening's entertainment features a video presentation highlighting clips from all five evenings of Mock Trial competitions as well as interviews of students, coaches, community members, and attorneys produced by the Media Production Class at Exeter High School.

There will be a parent orientation from 4:45-5:15 p.m. on January 20 and January 22. Parents will be encouraged to ask questions about the event, the new judging rubric, Mock Trial and Tulare County courtroom protocols, and the awards banquet.

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The 23rd Annual California Mock Trial hypothetical case, *People v. Casco*, addresses credit card theft, a serious matter facing young people today. The pretrial motion in this case features an argument on the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution. The Fourth Amendment protects individuals from national government intrusions by prohibiting unreasonable searches and seizures. The Fourteenth Amendment protects individuals from intrusion by state governments as well. The pretrial motion challenges whether or not the evidence of money in the defendant's bag is admissible as evidence in this case. The students will address two key issues: was there a search, and if so, was it reasonable? The judge's ruling on this motion has a direct bearing on the admissibility of evidence.

Few young people understand the routine of the criminal justice system, and Mock Trial is designed to instruct students concerning the workings of our legal institutions. As students prepare both sides of this trial of Grand Theft, Theft, and Receiving Stolen Property, they will develop an understanding of the pertinent legal and factual issues. The 10-to 20-member Mock Trial teams are composed of students who take on all of the roles in any courtroom drama: lawyers, witnesses, court clerks, and bailiffs. The teams study the case, conduct legal research, and receive guidance from volunteer attorneys about courtroom procedure and trial preparation. All teams must present before actual attorneys or judges based on identical hypothetical case materials. Irrespective of the outcome of the trial, three additional volunteer attorneys score the teams on the basis of their analysis and debate of the constitutional issues, the law, and the facts in the case.

The Mock Trial Program is sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and co-sponsored by the California Department of Education, the State Bar of California, the Young Lawyers' Association and the Daily Journal Corporation. The Tulare County Office of Education coordinates the program locally, with assistance from local attorneys and judges.

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"The Mock Trial Competition provides students a great opportunity to sharpen their research, critical thinking and presentation skills, while getting a glimpse into the complex world of law. I look forward to attending the finals every year and encourage anyone who can find the time to do the same. It's very entertaining," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak.

The schools participating in the 2004 Tulare County Mock Trial competition are: Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School, Exeter High School, Farmersville High School, Golden West High School, Lindsay High School, Monache High School, Orosi High School, Redwood High School, Strathmore High School, Tulare Western High School, and Tulare Union High School.

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the state finals at the Orange County Courthouse from April 2 - April 4, 2004. The National Mock Trial competition will take place in Orlando, Florida, from May 7 - May 9, 2004. Last year California placed fourth in the National Mock Trial competition.

For more information about the Tulare County Office of Education and its programs, visit our website at www.tcoe.org or call Public Information Officer, Pamela Kunze, at 559.733.6606. For additional information about the Mock Trial competition, contact Marsha Ingrao at 559.651.0680.

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