

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

January 18, 2012

For Immediate Release

Contact: Rob Herman
Public Information Officer
(559) 733-6606 – office
(559) 303-8568 – cell

Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2012 Mock Trial Competition Begins January 24

Preliminary rounds: January 24, 26 & 31, and February 2; Semifinals: February 9; and Finals: February 16

The public is invited to watch 13 Tulare County high school teams compete in the annual Tulare County Mock Trial Competition beginning January 24. The Mock Trial teams are comprised of 10 to 20 students who take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court clerks and bailiffs. All teams must make their presentations based on identical hypothetical case materials. Each team, coached by local attorneys and school personnel, present the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition. “The Mock Trial Competition is as exciting to watch as any courtroom drama,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Our students do an incredible amount of preparation to understand the case law affecting their trial before taking on the roles of attorneys, witnesses and clerks. They do a masterful job of conducting themselves in court.”

All teams will present their cases before actual judges and attorneys, with three attorneys scoring each trial. The first four rounds and the semi-final round will take place in the Tulare County Superior Court (third floor). Open to the public, the **trial dates are: January 24, 26 and 31, and February 2** (preliminary rounds); and **February 9** (semi-final round). Trials begin each night at 5:00 p.m. The finals will take place at El Diamante Theatre (5100 W. Whitendale Ave., Visalia) on February 16 at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public, parents, students and teachers are welcome to attend any of the trials.

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

This year's case is entitled *People v. Buschell*. In it, Ryan Buschell is charged with murder and with violating the California Concealed Carry Statute. The prosecution alleges that Ryan Buschell murdered friend and fellow Wheeler University student, Becca Abeles. The prosecution argues that a disagreement between Ryan and Becca led Becca to produce evidence that Ryan had violated the strict honor code at Wheeler. Exposure of this evidence would jeopardize Ryan's chance of inheriting \$20 million.

The defense argues that Ryan and Becca have been friends since childhood, and that Ryan would never harm Becca. The defense argues that they had resolved their disagreement just prior to the homicide. The defense also argues that eyewitness testimony will show that Ryan has an alibi and was not at the campsite where Becca's body was found. The defense further argues that the forensic evidence regarding the knife and fibers is speculative and inconclusive.

The teams competing in the 2012 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition are: Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter High School, Golden West High School (Visalia), Lindsay High School, Mission Oak High School (Tulare), Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School - Varsity (Visalia), Redwood High School - Junior Varsity (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, and Woodlake High School. Buchanan High School from Clovis will also participate to create an even-number of teams.

The Tulare County Office of Education would like to thank the many legal community volunteers who donate their time and expertise to make this competition possible. "Mock Trial is an extremely valuable competition," says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. "We applaud the teachers and attorney-coaches for investing many hours in preparing their students for this event – giving them a glimpse into the workings of our judicial system."

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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.

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the 31st annual state finals in Sacramento March 23-25. Albuquerque, New Mexico will be the host city of the National Mock Trial competition May 4-7, 2012.

For more information, contact Marsha Ingrao at 651-0680 or marshai@tcoe.org .

TCOE

Rel. 1/2012