

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

January 25, 2016

For Immediate Release

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

Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2016 Mock Trial Competition Begins January 26

Preliminary rounds: January 26 & 28, and February 2 & 4

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

Semi-finals: February 11, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

Finals: February 18, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., El Diamante High School Theater, Visalia

The public is invited to watch 11 Tulare County high school teams compete in the annual Tulare County Mock Trial Competition beginning January 26. 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, presents 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 26 & 28, and February 2 & 4** (preliminary rounds); and **February 11** (semi-final round). Trials begin each night at 5:00 p.m. **The finals will take**

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

place at El Diamante Theater (5100 W. Whitendale Ave., Visalia) on February 18 at 5:00 p.m.

Members of the public, parents, students and teachers are welcome to attend any of the trials.

The teams competing in the 2016 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition represent Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter Union High School, Golden West High School (Visalia), Mission Oak High School (Tulare), Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, and University Preparatory High School (Visalia).

For 2016, Mock Trial student participants throughout California will be preparing the fictitious case *People v. Hayes*, which involves the trial of Jamie Hayes, a student and member of the track team at Central Coast University (CCU). Hayes faces a felony charge of murder for the homicide of Lee Valdez, a campus security guard. Hayes is raising the affirmative defense of “defense of another” in order to claim the homicide was justifiable. The prosecution alleges that Hayes struck Valdez in the head with a baseball bat while Valdez was lawfully restraining fellow CCU teammate Casey Barns, a suspect in recent vehicle thefts. The incident occurred near the track team’s off-campus house (on university-owned land policed by campus security). The prosecution argues that due to a history of conflict between campus security and the track team, Hayes had shown hostility against campus security and particularly Officer Valdez, and that Hayes was very active in a group against police brutality.

A pretrial issue involves the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and concerns a statement made by Hayes during interrogation that Valdez “got what he deserved.” The prosecution will argue that Hayes’s statement was voluntary and should be included in the prosecution’s evidence against Hayes, since the circumstances of the interrogation were constitutional. The defense will counter-argue that

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

the circumstances of the interrogation were harsh enough to make Hayes's statement involuntary and therefore impermissible in the prosecution's case-in-chief.

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."

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 annual state finals March 18-20.

For more information, contact Scott Pierce at the Tulare County Office of Education at (559) 651-3014.

TCOE