

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:

2017 Mock Trial Competition Begins today

Preliminary rounds: January 24, 26 & 31, and February 2

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

Semi-finals: February 9, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

Finals: February 16, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., TCOE Conference Center, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia

The public is invited to watch nine 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, 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 24, 26 & 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 the**

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Tulare County Office of Education Redwood Conference Center (6200 S. Mooney Blvd., 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.

The teams competing in the 2017 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition represent Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter Union High School, Mission Oak High School (Tulare), Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Western High School, and University Preparatory High School (Visalia).

For 2017, Mock Trial student participants throughout California will be preparing the fictitious case entitled *People v. Awbrey* – the trial of Cameron Awbrey, a restaurant owner, who is being charged with human trafficking and false imprisonment of Lin Stark, an immigrant from the country of Tanterra.

The prosecution alleges that Cameron targeted Lin to cook at the Taste of Tanterra Restaurant, with the intent to obtain forced labor by depriving Lin of personal liberty. The prosecution will argue that Cameron lured Lin with false promises of good pay, free room and board, and the prospect of bringing Lin's family to the U.S. Once Lin began working, Cameron forced Lin to work long hours for little pay and to suffer poor living conditions. The prosecution further alleges that Lin was afraid to leave the building and on one occasion was physically locked in the apartment with no way to leave.

The defense will argue that Cameron is a hardworking, novice business owner with a deep connection to Tanterra and its people. Although Lin worked slowly, Cameron wanted to make sure Lin was able to stay in the U.S. legally by maintaining a work visa. The defense will further argue Cameron did not deprive Lin of personal liberty, and that Lin had a key to the apartment and was free to leave at any time. Defense

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witnesses will testify that Cameron treated Lin like family and generously provided free room and board. A defense expert in human trafficking will testify that Lin does not exhibit the signs of a person who has been trafficked.

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 24-26 in Riverside.

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

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