

Tulare County Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

January 18, 2019

For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2019 Mock Trial Competition begins next week

Preliminary rounds: January 22, 24, 29, 31

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

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

Finals: February 12, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., TCOE Conference Center, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia

The public is invited to watch 16 Tulare County high school teams compete in the annual Tulare County Mock Trial Competition beginning January 22. 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. “Through its research, collaboration and public speaking activities, the Mock Trial Competition is helping students gain skills that will serve them well in college and career,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire.

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 building (third floor). Open to the public, the **trial dates are: January 22, 24, 29, and 31** (preliminary rounds) and **February 5** (semi-final round). Trials begin each night at 5:00 p.m. **The finals will take place at the Tulare County Office of Education Redwood Conference Center (6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia) on**

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February 12 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 2019 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition represent Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter Union High School, Granite Hills High School (Porterville), Lindsay High School, 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, University Preparatory High School (Visalia) and Woodlake High School.

For 2019, Mock Trial student participants throughout California will be preparing the fictitious case *People v. Klein* – the case in the trial of Reagan Klein, a young adult resident of the fictional town of East Flamingo, California. Reagan is charged with two felony counts: making a false report of an emergency (in this case, commonly referred to as “swatting”) and making a criminal threat.

The prosecution alleges that Reagan threatened a coworker, Sawyer Smith, via a social media post on the popular picture-sharing app NowPic. The prosecution argues that Reagan had animosity against Sawyer because Sawyer had become a rising social-media influencer but moreover because Sawyer was responsible for Reagan being fired from the restaurant where they both worked. Reagan and two other coworkers, Cameron Holmes and Marlow Patterson, engaged in a “catfishing” prank against Sawyer, in which they created a fictitious romantic interest for Sawyer named Hayden Carlton. As revenge for the catfishing, Sawyer became responsible for Reagan’s firing, which caused Reagan to post a threatening message as Hayden Carlton that included the words “You deserve to die . . . Watch your back, I’m coming for you.”

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The prosecution will argue that during the evening of the same day as the threat, Reagan made a false “text-a-tip” to the police requesting police respond to a “hostage situation” at Sawyer’s residence. A SWAT team responded to the call, and Sawyer was seriously injured. An expert witness in linguistics will argue that the characteristics of the text-a-tip closely matched Reagan’s typical texts.

The defense argues that though Reagan and the others did perpetrate the catfishing prank, Reagan neither threatened Sawyer nor made the false “swatting” text to the police. The defense further argues that Reagan did not make the false “text-a-tip” report to the police, since the mobile phone used belonged to a coworker, Cameron, and since evidence shows that Cameron had equal access to the mobile phone at the time that the text was sent. An expert witness in linguistics for the defense will argue that using alternative methods of text analysis demonstrates that Cameron, not Reagan, is actually more likely to have sent the text.

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 16-18 at the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana.

For more information, contact Kate Stover at the Tulare County Office of Education at (559) 741-0809.

TCOE