



SAN DIEGO LAWYERS GIVE BACK AT 2020 MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION

By Julie Houth

Second place winner Francis Parker School

San Diego County high school students who are part of their school's mock trial teams participated in the Constitutional Rights Foundation's (CRF) annual Mock Trial Competition Program from February 5 to 22, 2020. The San Diego County Bar Association (SDCBA) and the San Diego Superior Court helped to coordinate this program approximately 14 years ago and the program is funded by donations made to the San Diego Justice Foundation.

This year's competition was the largest to date. There were 32 high schools from throughout San Diego County. The program welcomed attorney volunteers to participate as attorney scorers. The time commitment for each trial was approximately three hours in addition to the time necessary to review the competition materials prior to the competition. More than 275 attorney volunteers were needed to score the mock trials. Attorney scorers sat in the jury box while the student teams presented their cases to a state or federal judge. Attorney scorers were given a set of criteria for rating the teams numerically, which included the quality of the students' presentations, their grasp of the law and court procedures, and their understanding of the case itself.

Attorneys also volunteered as judges, advisors or coaches to student teams. Warren Den, a 2020 Director on SDCBA's Board of Directors, has been the attorney coach for the Academy of Our Lady of Peace for the past two seasons. He provided some insight on his experience as an attorney coach:

"Our team has a total of two attorneys coaching in addition to two teacher coaches. The teacher coaches are responsible for the logistical issues of recruiting

students for the team, scheduling the practices, and communicating with the administration and the parents. The attorney coaches are responsible for instructing the team members on all aspects of conducting a trial and all relevant aspects of the law that are contained in the Mock Trial Competition packet.

The team met twice a week since the fall. Shortly after practices begin, auditions were held to determine assigned roles. More experienced members of the team were encouraged to audition for attorney roles. In addition to the biweekly practices, the team engaged in several live scrimmages throughout the season.

I consider it a tremendous honor and privilege to be permitted to coach these high school students. I am constantly impressed by the team's commitment and dedication to improvement. Their enthusiasm and energy are infectious. Further, their support and encouragement for one another could sorely be mirrored and modeled in real-world legal workplaces. In addition, the significance of competing with an all-female mock trial team is not lost on the competition or myself.

I would encourage any attorney who is on the fence to take the plunge and pick a high school team to coach. You will not regret the decision."

The competition provided an excellent opportunity to educate students about the importance of the justice system, and participation is as rewarding for the attorney volunteer as it is for the students. 🙌



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