

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

January 11, 2008

For Immediate Release

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

Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2008 Mock Trial Competition Begins January 29

Mock Trial season begins January 29, with 11 teams from Tulare County high schools competing in the annual event. Schools participating in the 2008 Mock Trial Competition are: Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter High School, Golden West High School (Visalia), Lindsay High School, Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Oroshi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, and Tulare Western High School.

All teams will compete in the first four rounds of the competition in the Tulare County Superior Court on January 29, January 31, February 5, and February 7, 2008. Trials begin each night at 5:30 pm. Semi-finals between the four top-scoring teams will take place on February 14, at the Courthouse at 5:30 p.m. Finals will take place at El Diamante Theatre on February 19 at 5:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend any trial events. Wrapping up the highlights of the season, all teams attend the Mock Trial Awards Banquet on February 26 to celebrate the work all participants have done in making this event a success.

In this year's hypothetical murder case, *People v. Palmer*, the defendant is charged with one count of first degree murder. Prosecution alleges that Alex Palmer, the defendant, was angry with Jes Markson, a

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 2

former employer, believed to have taken Palmer's script to develop a new television show. Prosecution hopes to prove that Palmer confronted Markson, and then shot the victim with an antique gun.

The pre-trial issue involves the admissibility of scientific evidence in a criminal trial. The question is whether Memory Mapping tests meet the Kelly test, which states scientific evidence is reliable if it has been generally accepted by the relevant scientific community. In preparation for the case, students must be familiar with California Penal Codes, jury instructions and six similar California cases.

During the course of this murder trial, students will progress beyond basic skills in reading, speaking, critical thinking and interpersonal interactions. The Mock Trial program develops students' understanding of the link between our Constitution and the legal system. In trying the hypothetical Mock Trial case, students grapple with particularly thorny legal and social issues. While only a small percentage of Mock Trial participants will attend law school, all of them will gain first-hand experience with the court system.

Teams of 10 to 20 students 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, will present the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition. Three local attorneys score the teams on the basis of their analysis and debate of the constitutional issues, the law, and the facts in the case.

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

- more -

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

Page 3

assistance from local attorneys and judges, Robert Dempsie from the District Attorney's Office, and Deputy Court Executive Officer Cynthia Logan.

Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak commends participating schools and students, "Mock Trial is an extremely rigorous competition. We appreciate all the preparation the students put into the event and the support from the many volunteers in the legal community who donate their time and expertise."

In a speech given by Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor at the November National Council for the Social Studies, she stated, "Knowledge of the courts ... is not in the gene pool, and must be handed down. Students need to know how to think critically about their place in the country and the world. Twenty-first century students don't learn by being told, but by being part, and they are critical to the process."

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the state finals in Riverside March 28-30, 2008. Wilmington, Delaware will host the National Mock Trial competition May 8-10, 2008.

For more information, contact Marsha Ingrao at (559) 651-0680 or marshai@tcoe.org.

TCOE

Rel. 02/08