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Legal professionals needed for Contra Costa County High School Mock Trial

Submitted by Jonathan Lance

Bay Area soon-to-be, practicing, and retired law professionals are invited to provide assistance to their future colleagues at the upcoming 40th Annual Contra Costa County High School Mock Trial Program, held live and virtually on seven weekday early evenings, during January and February. Last year, close to 80 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys and sworn judges, as well as third-year law students, volunteered their time with the mock trial competitions.

Coordinated by the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE), the annual mock trial competition is a hands-on educational program created to help high school students acquire a working knowledge of our judicial system, develop analytical abilities and communication skills, and gain an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as participating members of our society.

This year's case, *People v. Croddy*, is the trial of Lee Croddy, the host of a popular YouTube channel called *The Right Choice of News (RCN)*, who has been charged with two counts: (1) aiding and abetting in the commission of first-degree burglary by another, and (2) accessory after the fact. This case will also feature a pre-trial argument on the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and as set forth in *Miranda v. Arizona*.

"It is always so impressive to see the students prosecute and defend so professionally in the courtroom," Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey said. "It is even more impressive that these students are still excited to compete in a virtual courtroom. No doubt, a lot of time has been spent preparing for their time in court. In addition, the attorneys and judges serving as volunteers are always in awe of what they have witnessed in the Mock Trial courtroom."

Teams of high school students work with teachers and volunteer coaches to prepare their version of the criminal case from both the prosecution and defense perspectives. Students assume the roles of pre-trial and trial attorneys, witnesses, clerks, bailiffs, artists, and court journalists. Judges and attorneys score their performance and provide immediate feedback. Winning teams advance through seven rounds of competition. The county's champion advances to the state finals. This year, there will be 18 Mock Trial teams competing, including teams from Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte high schools.

Via Zoom meetings, volunteers will view and score two competing schools that argue the case in their assigned court. Each night will begin with a 15-minute rules and regulations training, then the volunteers will go into their assigned Zoom "courtrooms" to serve as Mock Trial judge and scorers.

Interested volunteers can learn more by visiting the CCCOE's Mock Trial website (https://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/programs/for_parents_students/academic_events/mock_trial/volunteers), or contacting Jonathan Lance at (925) 942-3429.

Schedule for 2021 Contra Costa County High School Mock Trials:

Preliminaries: Jan. 26, 28; Feb. 2, 4 - 5 to 8 p.m. (Eight competitions each night)

Quarterfinals: Feb. 9, 5 to 8 p.m. (Four competitions)

Semifinals: Feb. 11, 5 to 8 p.m. (Two competitions)

Final and Consolation: Feb. 16, 5 to 8 p.m. (Two competitions)

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