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## Acalanes and Miramonte Mock Trial teams take second and third in academic event

Submitted by Jonathan Lance



Miramonte Mock Trial team members and coaches, Michael Arkelian and Luke Ellis, on a Zoom call. Staff advisors Ms. Porter and Mr. Compton, as well as a few team members, are not pictured.

Eighteen teams from 19 Contra Costa County high schools competed in the annual Mock Trial competition, with California High beating Acalanes Feb. 16, taking the championship in the final round of Mock Trials. The match was judged and scored by former judge and current Contra Costa County District Attorney Diana Becton, along with five Bay Area attorneys, serving as Mock Trial scorers. Miramonte High ranked third after defeating Hercules High during the same evening's consolation match, which was judged and scored by Contra Costa County Superior Court Judge Steve Austin, along with five attorney scorers. .

Coordinated by the Contra Costa County Office of Education and sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Mock Trial is an academic event provided for high school students. The hands-on educational program was created to help students acquire a working knowledge of the judicial system, develop analytical abilities and communication skills, and gain an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as participating members of our society.

"As like numerous other counties in California, this was a challenging year for our High School Mock Trial program," said Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. "Due to COVID-19, this was the first time in 40 years that we were not able to hold our trials in one of the Martinez courthouses, but instead held the competitions via Zoom meetings. This year's Mock Trial success was because of a group effort between our volunteer judges and attorneys and our staff, as well as the patient and dedicated team coaches and their determined students."

The honored guest speaker, Judge Hardie, told the audience, "I'm so pleased that we didn't let COVID-19 get in the way of our historic and annual tradition. We are so proud of our longstanding partnership with the Mock Trial program. Here at the county's Superior Court, Mock Trials is one of our favorite times of the year. And, I heard so many wonderful stories from this year's volunteering judges. They all agreed about how seamless the trials went this year, especially adapting the competition from our physical courtrooms to virtual courtrooms. The students did not miss a beat!"

This year's case, *People v. Croddy*, was the trial of Lee Croddy who hosts a popular YouTube channel called The Right Choice of News (RCN). Croddy was 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 also featured a pre-trial argument on the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and as set forth in *Miranda v. Arizona*.

Since the beginning of the school year, teams of high school students worked with teacher coaches and volunteer coaches to prepare their version of the criminal case, from both the prosecution and defense perspectives. Students assumed the roles of trial attorneys, pre-trial motion attorneys, witnesses, clerks, bailiffs, artists, and court journalists. During the Zoom meetings, Mock Trial judges and attorneys scored the students' presentations and provided immediate feedback.

Approximately 60 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys and sworn judges volunteered their time and expertise to serve as Mock Trial attorney scorers and judges. These volunteers represented judges from the Contra Costa County Superior Courts, and attorney scorers included attorneys from Bay Area county District Attorney and Public Defender offices, the State Attorney General's Office, and the California Department of Justice. Also serving as attorney scorers, were nonprofit, public, private, and corporate attorneys.

California High will represent Contra Costa County at the California State Mock Trial competition, March 18-22.

For all the team and individual results, visit the Contra Costa County Office of Education's Mock Trial results at [www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/programs/](http://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/programs/)

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Acalanes High School Mock Trial team Photos provided

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