



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

2011 High School Mock Trial Invitational

The empty hallways and courtrooms came alive early Saturday morning as high school students from Lake County and surrounding suburbs gathered to compete against one another to gain top honors as the best competitive mock trial team in northern Illinois. Several of these teams will go on to compete at the state level in Springfield in March.

This is the 7th Annual Lake County Mock Trial Invitational sponsored by the Lake County Law-Related Education Initiative, the Lake County Juvenile Officers Association and the Lake County Bar Association. The major planners responsible for the event include Chief Judge Victoria Rossetti, Lake County Assistant State's Attorney Christen Bishop, and Mundelein High School teacher Stacey Gorman.

The high schools participating in this year's invitational included Carmel Catholic, Chicago Christian, Deerfield, Evanston, Highland Park, Lake Forest Academy, Libertyville, Morgan Park, Mundelein, St. Charles East, St. Charles North, Wheaton Academy, and York.

In the mock trial competitions, students play out the roles of attorneys and witnesses who ultimately hope to be recognized for their outstanding performances. Lake County sitting judges Luis Berrones, Michael Betar, Margaret Marcouiller, Christopher Morozin, Veronica O'Malley, George Strickland, Christopher Stride, and Donna-Jo Vorderstrasse presided over the trials, while several assistant state's attorneys and public defenders and private practitioners volunteered their time to serve as evaluators. At the end of each round the individual student actors were judged on their ability, presentation, and effectiveness. Eventually, at the awards ceremony held after two trial sessions— at 9:00 a.m. and again at 10:45 a.m., the names of the top student attorneys and witnesses would be announced.

The case this year was a criminal case entitled *People v. Grey*. Whitney Grey, the defendant, is an alleged arsonist who worked as a handy person for the pub, Bellows & O'Brien. The pub, owned by two friends (Ashton Bellows and Lane O'Brien) went up in flames very early one morning destroying the building and thousands of dollars worth of inventory. Bellows expressed an interest in selling his share of the pub to move out of state. O'Brien was working on raising money to buy out his long time friend and co-owner. Grey worked at the pub as a bartender, server, and handy person. He was charged with arson.

At approximately 1:30 p.m., everyone gathered back in the jury assembly room for the awards ceremony to hear Christy Bishop call out the names of the top student performers who acted out the roles of defense and prosecuting attorneys and witnesses. Next Chief Judge Rossetti stepped up to the microphone to introduce Rick Lesser, Chair of the Lake County Bar Association Foundation and Mark Peavey, Chair of the Bar's Awards Committee who were present to make a special announcement -- that although the Bar Foundation has always supported the law-related education initiative and, particularly, the mock trial invitational, this time the Foundation was awarding the winning school with a \$250.00 check to help defray some of the expenses associated with the school's mock trial program.

Lastly, the announcement by Judge Rossetti of the names of the third, second, and first place school winning teams. They were: Third Place, Morgan Park; Second Place, Mundelein; and First Place, St. Charles East.

In closing, Judge Rossetti thanked everyone for their participation and support and wished all the teams the best of luck as they prepare to compete in the state competition in Springfield.

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