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FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

15th ANNUAL MOCK TRIAL INVITATIONAL AT LAKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Early Saturday morning, the hallways and courtrooms of the new Lake County Criminal Courts Tower came alive as the 15th Annual Mock Trial Invitational took place. The morning began with a welcome from Circuit Judge Victoria Rossetti, while Circuit Judge Christopher Stride introduced the ten judges presiding over the trials. The forty attorney evaluators were introduced by Circuit Judge Christen Bishop, who then announced the team pairings. The twenty high school teams competing against one another to attain first place in the competition included students from: Bartlett High School, Carmel Catholic High School, Chicago Christian High School, College Preparatory School of America, Evanston Township High School, Highland Park High School, John Hersey High School, Lakes Community High School, Libertyville High School, Maine South High School, Maine West High School, Mundelein High School, Niles West High School, South Elgin High School, St. Charles East High School, St. Charles North High School, Stevenson High School, Timothy Christian School, Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, and York Community High School.

By 9:00 a.m., the students were making their way to assigned courtrooms to begin their first trial session. The mock trial, selected by the Illinois State Bar Association, was entitled, "*People of the State of Illinois vs. Alex Buckley.*" The criminal case is set at Prairie Lake Preparatory Academy, where a tragic arson occurs in one of the dormitories on campus. Carly Walsh, the projected Valedictorian of the senior class, is the target of the fire and is killed in the blaze. The Defendant is charged with First Degree Murder and Aggravated Arson, and the People allege the motive is fierce academic competition, resulting in the loss of a college scholarship.

The teams tried the case twice, both as the prosecution and as the defense. Students performed the roles of both attorneys and witnesses to compete for outstanding performances. Lake County Judges Luis Berrones, Michael Betar, Stephen DeRue, Ari Fisz, Charles Johnson, Reginald Mathews, Jacqueline Melius, James Simonian, George Strickland, and Christopher Stride presided over the trials, while Assistant State's Attorneys,

Assistant Public Defenders, and practicing trial attorneys volunteered to evaluate and score the students on their ability, presentation, and effectiveness.

Judge Rossetti and Judge Bishop brought the ever-popular event to Lake County in 2004. It is sponsored by the Law-Related Education Initiative, the Lake County Bar Association and Lake County Bar Foundation, and the Lake County Juvenile Officers Association.

After lunch, an awards ceremony was held in the Jury Assembly Room. The individuals who had the top scores for their performances as attorneys and witnesses were named and presented with trophies. Lake County Bar Foundation board member Joann Fratianni awarded the first, second, and third place winners with a check to help defray some of the expenses associated with the mock trial programs and state competition.

The winning school teams were: Third Place, Maine South; Second Place, York; and a tie for First Place, Evanston and Timothy Christian.

In closing, Judge Rossetti and Judge Bishop thanked everyone for their participation and wished the teams good luck as they now prepare for the state competition in March.

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