



## MOCK TRIAL NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016

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### **HAS IT REALLY BEEN 25 YEARS?**

*By M. Gordon Widenhouse*

*CCCE President*

I have fond, although dimming, recollections of going to the Wake County Courthouse on an otherwise uneventful weekend in 1993. Someone told me I was needed to judge a mock trial. When I arrived, someone told me to preside over what was the final round of the competition. I had seen no materials, no case, no rules, no guidelines.

It was exciting, if a bit unnerving, to be on the bench in front of a full courtroom. Little did I know this experience that weekend afternoon would begin a quarter-century odyssey with high school students in their "civics education" about the judicial system, especially the importance of the right to trial by jury.

Like most adults who have experienced high school mock trials, I was quite impressed with the students in their roles as attorneys and witnesses. Although the program (if it could even be called a "program" at the time, as only six schools from the entire state participated) was in its infancy, the students were knowledgeable, poised, and capable. It seemed like a worthy activity in need of a home.



Sometime the following week, I was at the offices of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers, now the North Carolina Advocates for Justice. I told several people about the experience and mused that having high school students experience a "trial" in this setting could be a project befitting one of the Academy's missions: educating the public about the importance of the right to jury trials. Before long, and due to the commitment of various Academy leaders at the time and in the months and years to come, the North Carolina High School Mock Trial Program was off and running.

It began with six schools from across the state, each sending a team of students to the Wake County Courthouse on a Saturday. There, the students found 12 boxes of doughnuts and several jugs of orange juice, along with a handful of lawyers who had no idea what was in store for them. Several years later, the number of participating schools grew and the program expanded to four regional sites, with the winners advancing to state finals in Raleigh. The growth continued, and additional regional sites were added. What began with six schools, each with one team, morphed into a competition where as many as 90 teams may be involved in any given year, with many schools fielding multiple teams.



The program even directs a mock trial camp during the summer. Undoubtedly, no one even dared to imagine such a thing in the earliest years of this program.

Now, students, teachers, coaches, and parents who compete in and attend State Finals enjoy an opportunity to explore the Supreme Court of North Carolina, to interact with several justices, and to experience highly competitive trials hosted by Campbell Law School. The program has come far from its humble beginning.



The roots of North Carolina's high school mock trial program firmly took hold, and they run deep. These roots run so deep that we dared to host the National High School Mock Trial Championship (NHSMTC) both in 2005 and 2015. The stories of those experiences will come later.

Between 2005 and 2015, North Carolina withdrew from the NHSMTC due to issues involving religious accommodation (well, really a lack of accommodation). In the interim, North Carolina sponsored an alternative national championship. Like the hosting events of 2005 and 2015, this part of the story also deserves separate treatment.

Reflecting on the past twenty-five years is something we will do, hopefully in each newsletter and at each of our events, during the coming mock trial year. Many people, old and new, have stories to share. We need to hear them.

It is a gross understatement to say we have come a long way from "12 boxes of doughnuts and several jugs of orange juice" on a Saturday twenty-five years ago. It is a reminder that even a small seed can take root and blossom into a beautiful flower. It is a testament to the untold hours invested by so, so many people over the years.



I sincerely hope that every person associated with this program--students, teachers, coaches, judges, volunteers, parents, friends--will take the time to reflect, and reflect seriously, about where we have been and where we have come. We have much in which to take great pride and much for which to be very thankful.

### **4<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SUMMER CAMP INSPIRES STUDENTS!**

*By Sue H. Johnson*

*CCCE Mock Trial Program Coordinator*



Early in the morning on Wednesday July 27, nearly 50 excited high school students and teacher-coaches converged on Connor dorm in Chapel Hill for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual CCCE summer mock trial camp. While many lived nearby, others had come from as far away as Florida and Wisconsin. What inspired them to devote four days of their summer to an intense academic activity? Mock trial, of course! The intense boot camp atmosphere gave students a chance to learn about our legal system through informative lectures and hands-on trial preparations. While some students were looking to refine their skills in the Advanced

sessions, many Basic level campers weren't entirely sure what mock trial even was – but they were about to find out!

Experienced attorneys from across the state shared their knowledge with students in targeted sessions on trial preparation. Session topics included “Mock 101” (overview and case analysis), Direct Examination, Objections and Rules of Evidence, Witnesses, Cross Examination, Opening Statements and Closing Arguments, and Presentation and Demeanor. Instructors kept the students engaged by tailoring their presentations to the students’ level and employing the Socratic method. “Jeopardy” games provided a fun way to test the students’ knowledge of each day’s material, with prizes for individual answers and for the top team.



Teaching sessions were interspersed with hands-on breakout groups, in which the six teams of students put their knowledge into practice by preparing for an end-of-camp mock trial. Law school and college-aged “mockers” with experience at the highest levels of high school and collegiate competition mentored each team, guiding students in their preparations and giving them confidence in their new skills.

On Saturday, the students “showed their stuff” by arguing for either the prosecution or the defense in the case of *Lee Robertson v. C&C Supply* (modified from the 2005 Nationals case for the event hosted in Charlotte!). While notes were allowed due to the compressed time frame, many students confidently proceeded from memory alone. Objection battles were adeptly argued, and witnesses gave convincing portrayals even under withering cross examinations. At the end of the day, the students and their proud families were thrilled by all they had accomplished!

Preparing to leave Chapel Hill, the campers and teacher-coaches raved about the camp. As participants proclaimed on the evaluation surveys, “The camp was a fantastic learning experience. I really liked the structure and the different instructors. My team mentors were amazing and helpful!” A teacher-coach agreed: “I highly recommend the camp. The Resource Manual was exceptional, and the presenters were knowledgeable and engaging!”

As a result of our summer camp, several new schools plan to join the mock trial program this fall – a wonderful benefit to students statewide who will thereby gain important skills and a deeper appreciation for our legal system.



**A HUGE "THANK YOU" TO OUR VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTORS AND STAFF!!**

Instructors: Hailey Bunce, Philip Entzminger, Susan H. Johnson, Mark Kleinschmidt, Justin Matarrese, Lisa Williams, and Nicole Winget.

Presiding Judges: Judge Carl Fox, Amy Broughton, Susan H. Johnson.

Mentors and Volunteers: Toby Benjamin, Matt Burke, Ben Dolder, Frankford Johnson, Brandon Morrissey, Caroline Pope, Logan Spaller, Elise Wilson, and David Yasinovsky.

**CALENDAR 2016 – 2017 MOCK TRIAL SEASON**

Competition Case Released!	Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2016
Early Registration Deadline	Friday, Sept. 23, 2016
Final Registration Deadline and \$175 Team Fee Due	Friday, Dec. 9, 2016
Team Member List, Code of Ethics, Release Forms Due	Friday, Jan. 6, 2017
**Last Day to Withdraw Without Penalty**	Friday, Jan. 6, 2017
Regional Competition	Saturday, Feb. 4, 2017
Widenhouse Award Nomination Materials Due	Weds., Feb. 22, 2017
State Finals Competition	Fri. – Sat., March 10-11, 2017
National Championship, Hartford, CT	May 11-13, 2017

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 OUTREACH PROGRAM SPONSOR!**

**Lawyers Mutual Liability Insurance Company of North Carolina**

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2016 – 2017 COMPETITION SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS!**

State Finals:	Rudolf Widenhouse
Asheville:	Melrose Law, PLLC
Charlotte area:	The Sumwalt Law Firm
Fayetteville:	Britton Law, P.A.
Greenville:	Hardee & Hardee, LLP
High Point:	Manger Law Firm
Pittsboro:	Glenn Mills Fisher & Mahoney, P.A.
Raleigh:	Twiggs Strickland & Rabenau, and TBD, Co-Sponsors
Salisbury:	Rowan County Bar Association
Wilmington:	Shipman & Wright

**CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW** - partnering with CCCE to host our State Finals!

***IT TAKES A VILLAGE . . .***

***Special thanks to our 2016-17 Regional Coordinators and CCCE Board Members:*** Asheville Regional Coordinators Mark Melrose and Marion Parsons-Groat, Charlotte Area Regional Coordinator TBD, Fayetteville Regional Coordinator Rebecca Britton, Greenville Regional Coordinator Jeffrey Cannon and Phillip Entzminger, High Point Regional Coordinator Rich Manger, Pittsboro Regional Coordinators Liz Barber and Robert Jessup, Raleigh Regional Coordinators Christine Scheef and Lindsey Granados, Salisbury Regional Coordinator Darrin Jordan; Wilmington Regional Coordinator John H. Anderson, Jr.; and CCCE Board Members Gordon Widenhouse, Rebecca Britton, Rich Manger, Bradley Bannon, Adrienne Blocker, Christine Scheef, Brooke Schmidly, Mark Sumwalt; Bill Powers (ex officio) and David Henson (ex officio).

***Special thanks also to our 2016-17 Site Coordinators:***

***Asheville:*** Brett Pinkston and Victoria Townley, ***Charlotte area:*** Beverly K. Moore, ***Fayetteville:*** Tanja

*Shurling and Karen Kueny, **Greenville:** Jessi Cannon, **High Point:** Rose Pratt and Jane Goeke, **Pittsboro:** Patti Clapper and Lakisha Chichester, **Raleigh:** Michelle Keely and Sandra Strickland, **Salisbury:** Emily Applewhite, and **Wilmington:** Brandy Jo Lea and Christi Wert.*

*\*\*If you are interested in supporting or learning more about the NCAJ High School Mock Trial program, please contact Sue Johnson, Program Coordinator, at [sueheathjohnson@gmail.com](mailto:sueheathjohnson@gmail.com), or Rebecca Britton or Gordon Widenhouse, Mock Trial Committee Co-Chairs, at [rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com](mailto:rebecca@brittonlawfirm.com) or [mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com](mailto:mgwidenhouse@yahoo.com).*