

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Rob Herman
Public Information Officer
(559) 733-6606 – office
(559) 303-8568 – cell

Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2009 Mock Trial Competition Begins January 27

Tulare County Mock Trial season begins January 27 with 13 Tulare County high schools competing at the Tulare County Courthouse, including: Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter High School, Farmersville High School, Golden West High School (Visalia), Lindsay High School, Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School and Woodlake High School. The trials, which are open to the public, are: January 27 and 29, February 3 and 5, and the semi-final round on February 10, 2009. Finals will be held at the El Diamante High School Theater in Visalia on February 17. All trials begin at 5:30 p.m.

High school teams present a hypothetical case before actual judges and attorneys, with three attorneys scoring each trial. Students assume the roles of witnesses, the accused, the bailiff and court clerks, prosecutors and defense attorneys. This year's case, *People v. Lane*, is set in the fictional town of Woodville, bordering the widely visited Alpine Forest Park. Residents of Woodville earn their living primarily from tourism. In the fall of 2006, a group called the New Believers purchased property including the private road which is one of only two access roads to Alpine Forest Park. After the New Believers closed the park entrance on several occasions, Leslie Lane spearheaded a group to take an active stand against the New Believers. Following a July 22 Town Council meeting, Leslie spoke to the

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crowd of about 100 chanting, “Burn ‘em out.” Within 30 minutes after the end of the demonstration, a fire broke out at the New Believer’s Community Center. The defendant, Leslie Lane, was taken into custody and charged with one count of incitement of others to riot, California Penal Code Sec. 404.6., and one count of arson, California Penal Code Sec 451.

The pre-trial issue involves the First Amendment’s freedom of speech and expression – recognizing that not all speech is protected including “fighting words” which might produce a violent reaction. In preparation to present this case, students must be familiar with California Penal Codes, jury instructions and 12 similar California cases.

All teams must make their presentations based on identical hypothetical case materials. Each team, coached by local attorneys and school personnel, will present the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition. Wrapping up the competition, all teams attend the Mock Trial Awards Banquet on February 24 to celebrate the work all participants have done in making this event a success.

“We appreciate the many legal community volunteers who donate their time and expertise to coach and evaluate the student teams,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “We also appreciate the support of organizations that make it possible for all Mock Trial students to attend the awards banquet at no charge.”

The Mock Trial Program is sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and co-sponsored by the California Department of Education, the State Bar of California, the Young Lawyers’ Association and the

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Daily Journal Corporation. TCOE's Instructional Consultant for History/Social Science, Marsha Ingrao, coordinates the program locally, with assistance from local attorneys and judges, Robert Dempsie, District Attorney's Office, and Cynthia Logan, Deputy Court Executive Officer.

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the state finals in Riverside, California at the Riverside Hall of Justice, 4100 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92501. Atlanta, Georgia will be the host city of the National Mock Trial competition May 8-10, 2009.

For more information, contact Marsha Ingrao at (559) 651-0680 or marshai@tcoe.org.

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