



## News Release

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

### 2015 High School Mock Trial Invitational

Several Lake County and collar county high school students were given a great opportunity to show off their debate and lawyering skills recently in courtrooms of the Lake County Courthouse in Waukegan. This year marked the 11<sup>th</sup> annual high school mock trial invitational. On Saturday, February 21st, the students competed for a first, second and third place standing in a regional mock trial competition, which may help make the ultimate decision whether to compete in the state competition next month.

At approximately 8:40 a.m., Chief Judge John Phillips, Judge Victoria Rossetti, and Judge Christen Bishop greeted and welcomed the aspiring young actors/lawyers who chose to participate and perform in this year's mock trial competition. Judge Phillips thanked the coaches, instructors and the students for their continuous support and participation in the program and wished the students well in their upcoming performances. Thanks were also extended to the judges and attorneys who volunteered their time from their busy schedules on the weekend to help with the event. This year's 14 competing high school teams came from Bartlett, Boylan Catholic, Carmel Catholic, Chicago Christian, Evanston, Highland Park, Indian Hill, Libertyville, Maine South, Morgan Park, Mundelein, St. Charles North and York.

During the course of the year, students are coached by sitting judges, assistant state's attorneys, assistant public defenders, attorneys in private practice and teachers who spend hours training, explaining, and demonstrating actual trial court procedures and skills. The annual invitational can be considered a practice session in preparation for the state mock trial competition, this year scheduled to take place at the University of Illinois College of Law in Champaign on March 14-15, 2015.

The high school mock trial invitational was organized about eleven years ago by Circuit Judge Victoria Rossetti and Associate Judge Christen Bishop (then assistant state's attorney). Rod Drobinski, an assistant state's attorney, has since joined the judges' team and acts as liaison to the high schools. The mock trial event, held annually and usually in the month of February at the courthouse, is a collaborative effort between the Lake County Law-Related Education Initiative, the Lake County Juvenile Officers Association, and the Lake County Bar Foundation.

This year's mock trial presentation was a fictional criminal case entitled "*People of the State of Illinois v. Casey Jones*." The defendant, Casey Jones, is charged with the criminal acts of home invasion and aggravated battery. Mr. Jones allegedly was armed with a stun gun and used force while in the dwelling of plaintiff and intentionally caused bodily harm to plaintiff while masked to conceal his identity. The defendant pleaded "not guilty" to all of the charges.

In the trials, students took on the roles of attorneys, victims, and witnesses. Lake County Judges presiding over the trials included Judge Luis Berrones, Judge Mitchell Hoffman, Judge Mark Levitt, Judge Christopher Lombardo, Judge Veronica O'Malley, Judge Simonian and Judge Strickland. The juries (evaluators) consisted of private practitioners, assistant state's attorneys and assistant public defenders. The students were scored on their ability, presentation, and effectiveness.

After lunch break, Judge Victoria Rossetti and Judge Christen Bishop hosted the awards ceremony that took place in the jury assembly room of the courthouse. The judges took turns naming the top-scoring individuals for their performances as attorneys and witnesses. All named winners were presented with trophies.

Mark Peavey and Joann Fratianni, members of the Lake County Bar Association, were introduced and announced that they were present to make a special presentation on behalf of the Lake County Bar Foundation. Checks were to be awarded to the first, second and third place winners to help defray some of the expenses associated with the schools' mock trial programs. The checks were issued in the amounts of \$500.00, \$250.00, and \$100.00 respectively.

Lastly, the names of the third, second, and first place school winning teams were announced. They were: Third Place, Highland Park; Second Place, Libertyville; and First Place, Evanston.

In closing, Judge Rossetti and Judge Bishop wished all the teams the best as they prepare to compete in the state competition in Champaign.

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