



School news

from the Santa Barbara County Education Office

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San Marcos High School Mock Trial Team advances to state competition

The San Marcos High School Mock Trial Team defeated Dos Pueblos High School in a close competition on Saturday, March 4, at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. San Marcos will represent Santa Barbara County at the State Mock Trial competition in Riverside March 24-26. The winner of the state event will then move on to the national finals.

Eight teams from seven schools throughout Santa Barbara County competed in the 34th annual Mock Trial competition, which began Feb. 25. Participating high schools were Cabrillo, Carpinteria, Dos Pueblos (two teams), Laguna Blanca, San Marcos, Santa Barbara, and Santa Ynez Union.

The Mock Trial competition is designed to immerse high school students in key concepts of the law, the Constitution, and the U.S. legal system. The students study case law, read broadly and critically, and build evidence-based arguments and counter arguments. They prepare to be grilled not only by their formidable competitors, but also by sitting judges who challenge their thinking.

On Feb. 25, two rounds of competition resulted in four high school teams — two from Dos Pueblos and one each from San Marcos and Santa Barbara high schools — progressing to the semifinals and finals that were held March 4. Judge Brian Hill, a long-time advocate for Mock Trial competition, presided over the morning semifinal round, along with Judge Kay Kuns and attorneys Sue McCollum and John Thyne. Judge Patricia Kelly and local attorney Steve Amerikaner presided over the final round.

Prior to announcing that San Marcos had taken the title, Judge Kelly shared a very inspirational message for the students about her own experience as a long-time supporter of Mock Trial, beginning in high school as a participant, and as a Mock Trial coach, scorer, and ultimately as a presider.

The San Marcos team was also presented a \$2,500 check from the Santa Barbara County Bar Association to help with the travel costs associated with the state tournament later this month.

Other presiders for the two weekends of competition included Judge Thomas P. Anderle, Judge Clifford Anderson, Judge Michael Carrozzo, Judge Donna Geck, Judge Pauline Maxwell, Judge Raimundo Montes De Oca, and retired Judge George Eskin, along with Tom Hinshaw, Von Deroian, Benjamin Ladinig, and Jeff Chambliss.

Local attorney Danielle DeSmeth once again headed up the volunteer scorers' training, and over 50 local attorneys volunteered their time over the two weekends to hear and score the trial.

“We congratulate the winning team from San Marcos, and we are grateful for the skill, commitment, passion, and generosity of all the community partners who made this competition possible for the Mock Trial participants,” said County Superintendent of Schools Bill Cirone, whose office sponsors the competition with the Santa Barbara Superior Court and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. “These young men and women develop lifelong critical thinking skills along with lifetime memories, and we truly appreciate all that these volunteers do to enrich our students’ educational experience.”



Winning Mock Trial team from San Marcos HS (Photo credit: Luis Medina)