

Jessica L. Paine

## Mock Trial Offers a One-of-a-Kind Experience for Volunteers

The 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Ohio Mock Trial Competition is just around the corner, and the CMBA is pleased to again host the largest District and Regional competitions in the state in February. Each year, hundreds of high school students from across Northeast Ohio meet in Cleveland to present their finest legal arguments in a hypothetical trial over a citizen's constitutional rights. Each year, dozens of volunteers from our legal community spend an afternoon in the courtrooms serving as judicial panelists to score the trials and offer these bright young minds their advice and encouragement. This year, will you join them?

The words of volunteers who return to the competition every year express best why they find such enjoyment and value in helping with the Ohio Mock Trial, so we'll let them share their experience.

**Judge Mary Jane Boyle, Eighth District Court of Appeals:** I have been a volunteer participant in the Ohio Mock Trial Competition for over 15 years. It is an amazing program that gives Ohio's high school students an excellent introduction to the justice system. I wish that such a program was available to me as a high school student. The pride, enthusiasm, and preparedness that these students demonstrate, along with the collaboration of attorneys, judges, and teachers, inspires me to participate each year. I have no doubt that these students will become some of the finest members of our profession, and I am honored to have had some influence on them.

**Neal E. Shapero, Shapero & Roloff Co., L.P.A.:** I have been involved with the Ohio Mock Trial Competition for over ten years, and each year I look forward to participating. I am always amazed by the efforts of the students, from their understanding of the facts of the case and the legal issues involved, to their actual trial performance and overall enthusiasm for the process. I am inspired each year by the students and I see attributes and excitement that remind me of why I first entered the legal profession. I plan to continue my involvement in this program for many years to come, and I would highly recommend it to any attorney, regardless of their years of experience or area of practice.

**Magistrate William F.B. Vodrey, Cleveland Municipal Court:** I've been judging mock trials for

many years, and always enjoy it. The hypothetical cases are interesting, and the students' commitment, preparation and energy really impress me. They want to do well, they want to make their schools proud, and they want to learn how American courts work - or ought to work. Even the most jaded and cynical lawyer can draw inspiration from them.

**Judge John J. Russo, Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas:** I truly love being involved with the Ohio Mock Trial program! My involvement has been from all facets of the competition. I have participated as a legal advisor for teams, a judicial panelist on all levels of the competition and was instrumental in starting the current program at St. Edwards High School. I have been involved for the last 10 years or more.

Why do I keep coming back? The amount of dedication, work and commitment that it takes for students to prepare themselves is daunting! The young men and women who participate are always well prepared. They come to the Courtrooms raring to go! The intensity is awesome! The students become the roles they play as if they are truly that person. They have a desire to succeed and to do that they have to work as a team. The Ohio Mock Trial Competition prepares the students for the reality of team work, success and failure that they will inevitably face sometime in their lives. These young men and women, with this experience, are much more prepared for challenges they will have to face in the future.

**Joel I. Newman, Newman & Newman:** What makes the Mock Trial special is the general level of enthusiasm among the students. Their commitment to their faux persona frequently generates astonishingly realistic outcomes. I specifically remember an exchange between counsel and a witness qualified as an expert, where neither would give and each had exactly the correct response fully justified by the facts in the scenario. But the best part is watching each side develop during the trial, finding information they had not fully comprehended as having a specific place in the case and their pleasure when they saw how it fit. All of this makes it an honor to be allowed to assist in this endeavor.

**Karen E. Ross, Tucker Ellis LLP:** For several years, I have had the pleasure of serving as a presiding judge in the Ohio Mock Trial Competition. My involvement

with the program has provided me the opportunity to witness the youth of our community, and hopefully future members of our profession, in action. Beyond amazing performances as lawyers and witnesses, the students display the qualities that make successful participants in our community: preparedness, a strong work ethic, teamwork, respect, and the ability to deal with adversity. To me the competition is not just about presenting a case or playing a witness, which the students do with ease, it is about supporting students in something that reaches beyond the walls of their schools. It allows all of us to experience the good in the youth of our communities, guide them as they navigate high school and plan for their future, and show these dedicated students that they are important and have a great future.

Given my time with the program, I have watched students grow from timid freshmen to strong and bold upperclassman, all the while exuding an excitement for the law that sometimes fades in practicing attorneys. While the students greatly appreciate the attorneys who serve as coaches and judges, I believe it is the attorney volunteers who truly benefit from the program. Sharing time with aspiring attorneys and watching them present a case provides each of us an opportunity to reflect on why we dedicate ourselves to the law and reminds us that we are part of a community that needs our attention to thrive. I invite each of you to join me in a fulfilling activity and participate in the Ohio Mock Trial Competition — the students deserve our commitment.

### CONCLUSION

Volunteers are needed to judge at two afternoon trials for the District Cuyahoga Competition at the Justice Center on Friday, February 1, 2013 or for advancing teams at the Regional Cuyahoga Competition at the Lakeside Courthouse on Friday, February 22, 2013. There will be a training for new and returning volunteers on Wednesday, January 23 at the CMBA offices at noon. Please see page 4 of this month's Bar Journal for an official signup sheet, volunteer online at [www.clemetrobar.org/OhioMockTrial](http://www.clemetrobar.org/OhioMockTrial), or email Competition Coordinator Jessica Paine at [jpaine@clemetrobar.org](mailto:jpaine@clemetrobar.org).

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