



## **Mock trial is a test of wits**

**BY PATRICK THATCHER**  
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### **VICTORVILLE**

• Looking at Fourth Amendment rights surrounding unlawful searches and seizures was the scenario facing more than 32 high-school students from 13 schools in San Bernardino County Tuesday evening at three different courthouses, including the Victorville court- house, in the first round of a mock trial competition.

The program is a collaborative effort between the offices of the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and the District Attorney to provide students within the county a working knowledge of legal institutions and the judicial system. Students research a case developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation and prepare for trial as attorneys, witnesses, defendants, bailiffs and clerks.

Deputy District Attorney Jill Gregory has been the Victorville Courthouse coordinator for the Mock Trial the last three years.

“It is a phenomenal experience for students, even those that may not pursue a law degree,” Gregory said.

Captain of the Victor Valley High School Mock Trial team Christopher Jaquez, a senior, has participated in the competition the last three years.

“This is an academic sport, we do go against other schools and it is cool to be competitive,” Jaquez said. “The reason I do it is because I’ve always thought about becoming an attorney, but I didn’t know for sure if it was something I really wanted to do. When I got involved in the Mock Trail it really showed me that I have an interest and this is what I want to do.”

The Mock Trial is a spectator sport as family members and friends gathered in the court rooms to watch the teams compete.

Gregory says the legal community who volunteer their time help make the Mock Trial a successful experience for the students.

“Many judges, public defenders, deputy district attorneys, and private attorneys volunteer as scoring attorneys, judges and coaches,” she said.

Defense attorney Susan Slater has volunteered her time as a scoring attorney for the past three years.

“Any opportunity that I have that I can encourage kids to strive and do the best that they can do. I think that is what you should do with your life is exceed,” Slater said.

Apple Valley senior Kirstie Woith played the part of a witness who found the body. This is her third year participating in the Mock Trial competition.

“I love it, I love the intensity, I think it is a great program and I’ve always been interested in law, Woith said. She says she is looking at two possible careers, law or to Loma Linda for orthodontics.

The students are scored not just on how well they perform their assigned task, but even on things like poise.

The first four rounds of the competition are held simultaneously at the courts in Victorville, Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernardino each Tuesday from Nov. 3 to Dec. 1. The semifinals will be held in San Bernardino on Dec. 5.

**Brett Twigley and Nolan Andreasen two seniors from the Academy for Academic Excellence say this is their first year for the competition and both say it is giving them more confidence in public speaking and thinking on your feet. The two also have something else in common, they’re competing Valedictorians.**

Gregory says the Mock Trial competition is a great way to put a positive image on students that work hard in school with an eye on their future.

“This is such a neat program and it’s nice to see great kids doing good work,” Gregory said.

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DAVID PARDO, DAILY PRESS

A PHENOMENAL EXPERIENCE: Grace Kim, 17, of Apple Valley High School, acts as a trial attorney against the Academy for Academic Excellence, in the first round of the mock trial competition at the San Bernardino County Victorville courthouse on Tuesday.