



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Clara County students prepare for final Mock Trial showdown

SAN JOSE, CA – After a month of grueling competition among nearly 400 local high school students, two teams will face off at this year’s Santa Clara County Mock Trial Competition Finals on February 24 , continuing a venerable tradition that has been showcasing teen talent and savvy in our community.

The seven-round, four-week tournament is presided over by sitting superior court judges and is scored by hundreds of area attorneys, culminating in the finals event this Tuesday. Sponsored by the Santa Clara County Bar Association, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, and the Santa Clara County Superior Court, the event is designed to give students an authentic litigation experience.

Each team is made up of 18 students who have been preparing for competition since September. Each must be prepared to either defend or prosecute the case on short notice, and to fulfill the roles of pretrial attorneys, prosecutors, defense attorneys, witnesses and court staff.

Twenty-two local high schools have participated this year: BASIS, Cupertino, Downtown College Prep, Gunderson, Homestead, Leigh, Leland, Lincoln, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Lynbrook, Archbishop Mitty, Monta Vista, Mountain View, Pioneer, Prospect, Santa Clara, Santa Teresa, Saratoga, Sobrato, St. Francis, West Valley, and Willow Glen.

Of these schools, Prospect and St. Francis advanced to the finals.

In this year’s Mock Trial case, defendant Evan Shem, an aspiring artist, is accused of grand theft in connection with the alleged swap of “Treason,” an original painting by Fletcher Yazoo, with a forgery. Evan Shem was charged with the crime after Shem’s professor and mentor, Marty McCulloch, discovered the alleged swap and police investigators concluded the theft was a classic “inside job.”

For its part, the defense contends the painting found in Shem’s apartment is merely one of Shem’s many student replicas. Their arsenal includes expert witnesses and a compelling

alternate theory for who the real culprit may be: Charlie Gibbons, an old friend and roommate of Shem's with a dubious past.

This year's final round will be presided over by The Honorable Julia Alloggiamento. As in prior years, the final round scoring panel is comprised of top legal luminaries from the community, including Chris Burdick, SCCBA CEO; Hon. Roberta Hayashi; James Gibbons-Shapiro, Assistant District Attorney; Orry Korb, County Counsel; John Mlnarik, SCCBA President; Claire Cormier, Assistant U.S. Attorney; and Rick Doyle, San Jose City Attorney.

Shem's fate will be decided once and for all Tuesday, February 24 at 6 p.m. at the Historic Old Courthouse; 61 N. 1st Street in downtown San Jose.

The winner of the county tournament will go on to compete at the state tournament in Riverside on March 20-22.

For more information, contact: Melissa Christie, Director of Curriculum & Instruction at Melissa_christie@sccoe.org or (408) 453-6632.