

# Sisters students engage in mock trial

By Sianna Flowers  
Correspondent

The judicial system is supposed to make it possible for the common man to defend himself. Law sets out definite checks and balances that define what it is to be a U.S. citizen. However, law is somewhat of a jungle and can hurt more than it helps if someone doesn't understand it. Thanks to the mock trial class at Sisters High School, students don't have to fear such ignorance.

Two teams from Sisters High School competed in the regional mock trial competition on Saturday, February 28, at the Deschutes County Justice Building in Bend. The designated "black" team ended up winning the competition, defeating a team from Summit High School in the final round. The victory qualifies the team for the state competition to be held this weekend at the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Court Building in Portland.

In addition to the two Sisters teams, the competition

on February 28 was attended by teams from Bend High, Mountain View, Summit, and Cascades Academy.

The SHS mock trial program is taught by community members Jerry Hanford and Darryl Doke, and supervised by teacher Paul Patton. Mock trial is based around a hypothetical case that is created and distributed by the Classroom Law Project every year. While some schools work the case year-round, SHS pours one trimester into analyzing, understanding, and trying the case before the regional competition at the trimester's end. The first few weeks of the class are spent learning the many aspects of law, specifically trial law. For the rest of the trimester students are split into two teams, in which they have roles for both the defense and plaintiff/prosecution as attorneys and witnesses.

This year's case featured an issue of mistaken identity and excessive force by a police officer, an extremely pertinent event in light of recent news. Since students play all kinds of roles on both sides, they are



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sisters' Mock Trial team will compete this weekend in Portland.

given a comprehensive view of what it is like to be involved in a court case.

The class wouldn't be possible without the devotion of Hanford and Doke. Both are retired lawyers (criminal and civil respectively) but every winter they give their time to teach a group of teenagers that are sometimes cheeky — yet always grateful. They both enjoy working with the students to help them understand the law and learn how to think critically — not to mention the payoff of the team going to state almost every year.

Most students either have

considered law or an occupation that is heavily intertwined with the law, like police work. However, as Doke and Hanford both mentioned, mock trial doesn't actually set you up for law school. The class is supposed to teach students about the U.S. judicial system, which it does in an entertaining and challenging environment.

The class equips them with the courage to speak in front

of a crowd, the critical thinking to win nearly any argument, and knowledge of their rights as U.S. citizens.

Mock trial was started as a club activity by Mary Thomas several years ago and was kept alive last year by high school Principal Joe Hosang, who supervised the class after a staffing shortage left no teacher available to do so.

For more information visit [www.classroomlaw.org](http://www.classroomlaw.org).

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