

Volunteers See Confidence, Skills of Teens Blossom

BY MARGARET HAYWOOD

Prior to joining the Colorado Court of Appeals bench seven years ago, Judge Robert Hawthorne was a long time attorney working in private practice. Although no stranger to the courtroom, his experience didn't include sitting on a trial bench. Following his appointment, Hawthorne volunteered as a presiding judge in the Denver regional mock trial competitions. By acting as a presiding judge for these competitions, Hawthorne's experience gave him perspective on the pace and decision-making process of trial judges, offering context as he reviewed appellate cases.

Hawthorne is one of the hundreds of judges, attorneys, paralegals, teachers, and community leaders who volunteers countless hours for the Colorado Bar Association's High School Mock Trial Program every year. Their guidance and instruction educates students about the judicial system and trial process, while providing them with an invaluable skill set that will stay with them as they enter their adult lives.

While each volunteer has a unique reason for coming to the table, each of them walks away with a similar satisfying and valuable experience.

Take Charlene Hunter, whose mock trial experience started as an employment alternative. She earned her J.D. from University of Denver Sturm College of Law in 2009, and was initially unable to find work. As a result, she focused on volunteering and jumped at the chance to sign on as a mock trial scoring panelist. "Every time I go, I learn something," Hunter said. "Whether about the law, about people, or seeing how something is presented in a different light—it's all a learning experience for me. Some people look at it and think you're giving so much, but I think I get so much."

Charles Ledbetter, a shareholder with Kennedy Childs, has a love for litigation but his practice doesn't put him in



George Washington student Deon Wilson acts as a witness while volunteer Alan Bucholtz presides during the 2011 Denver Regional High School Mock Trial Tournament at Denver's City and County Building.

the courtroom as often as he would like. Volunteering as a mock trial scoring panelist and presiding judge feeds his desire to see litigation in action.

Pete Hedeem's philosophy is if you're fortunate, give back. He used mock trial to be true to that belief. When he moved to Denver from Chicago 12 years ago, he was familiar with mock trial, though he had never participated. When he heard of a low-income school in need of an attorney coach, he jumped at the chance to use his skills and help out kids in need, and has been a volunteer since.

Carolyn Gravit, Director of the DBA and CBA Public Legal Education departments, touts the Colorado High School Mock Trial Program as one of the best in the nation, and said other states often seek out the CBA for programming direction.

"The key component to being the best is our volunteers, not only coaches but scoring panelists and judges," Gravit said. Sometimes, Gravit has to turn away volunteers. "Everyone comes back. Once they do it, they're

drawn in and return year after year."

Although their initial interests differ, ask any mock trial volunteer about why they continue volunteering each year and the answer is essentially the same: witnessing student achievement and being part of a program that teaches skills that will stick with students

TROUBLED BY RUDE AND UNPROFESSIONAL ATTORNEYS?

The following lawyers are willing to take calls on a confidential basis, for guidance, tips, and strategies for dealing with opposing counsel.

Pam Mackey:
(303) 831-7364

Karen Pearson:
(303) 874-8615

Dave Furgason:
(303) 861-8013

Rich Hennessey
(303) 839-1204

Sponsored by
**THE DBA PEER PROFESSIONALISM
ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

throughout their adult life.

As a scoring panelist for the 1st Judicial District and Denver regional competitions, Janet Price said she loves watching students stand in front of a courtroom, speak clearly and knowledgeably, and give a credible performance.

She added that the confidence she sees the students gain as one of the best parts of the program

Hunter agreed.

"It's a fabulous, fabulous program for young people," she said. "What it teaches them about organization, self-presentation, thinking on their feet, working with a team, everything. For kids who want to challenge themselves mentally, it is a wonderful, wonderful gift."

Denver attorney Brad Hill has been a scoring panelist for Denver regional competitions for more than four years, and attended Denver Public Schools as a high school student. He is impressed with the competitors' quick thinking, analytical skills, and ability to craft arguments.

"I couldn't have done that in high

school," Hill said. "It's a great program and I'm honored to be part of it."

Scoring was only the tip of the iceberg for Hill, who now volunteers as a mentor and teacher for high school students.

"I'm lucky to be able to do this, and I want to give back if I have anything to give," he said.

While coaching, Hedeem met a student on the fringe, barely passing and content with a career working at his family's garage. Hedeem convinced the teen to give mock trial a chance. Throughout the season, Hedeem watched the student transform, and by the end of the year, they couldn't get him to stop talking about mock trial.

In January, 7News honored Hedeem with their Everyday Hero for his participation as mock trial attorney coach. The award goes to Coloradans making a difference in their community.



Colorado Academy Team B won the Denver Professionalism Award at the 2011 Denver Regional High School Mock Trial Tournament.

"These kids fight so hard just to get to school, and then to compete, and do all the work on top of it," Hedeem said. "[By volunteering with mock trial], I get to watch the American dream in its most stark condition. I can't quantify what that means to me." **D**

Interested in Volunteering?

Contact Carolyn Gravit at cgravit@cobar.org or (303)824-5323 for more information.

DENVER BAR ASSOCIATION PLACEMENT SERVICE

● Full-Time ● Temp ● Time-To-Hire

- Attorneys
- Secretaries
- Paralegals
- Receptionists
- Accounting
- Administrators
- Office Services

Serving the Legal Community since 1986

Mev Parsons / Barb Allen
(303) 894-0014

**NOW PLACING
ATTORNEYS!!!**

INTRODUCING: The Colorado Estate Planning Portfolio

THE FIRST OF ITS KIND –
NOT AVAILABLE ANYWHERE ELSE!!



The only estate document presentation binder custom tailored to reference applicable Colorado law regarding wills, trusts and advanced directives and be seamlessly compatible with the most commonly used CBA "Orange Book" estate planning forms.

Available in a
1 inch capacity and a
1 1/2 inch capacity.

Argyle 
Publishing
Publishers of law books since 1978
A Colorado Corporation

Special
Introductory
Price of
\$35 each

To learn more about our Colorado Estate Planning Portfolios (including a complete list of everything included in each portfolio), please visit us at www.argylepub.com, or call us at 303-237-6467 or 1-800-955-4569.