

7th & 8th Graders From Valley View Middle School Go To Court With The Support Of Einhorn Barbarito

On Tuesday, June 11, 2015, almost two dozen Valleyview Middle Schools Students went to court. Well, sort of. The Valleyview Middle School's Mock Trial Club once again held their own "Night Court at Valleyview" mock trials in which they actually created and wrote the facts of each case, the testimony of the witnesses for both sides of the argument, and presented each case to a jury consisting of their peers, parents, faculty and Denville Mayor, Thomas Andes at the Denville Municipal Court.

For the sixth year in a row, the 7th and 8th grade students of Valleyview Middle School have participated in a New Jersey Bar Foundation promoted program and contest, Law Adventure, designed to foster critical thinking skills and to teach students about the legal system in New Jersey.

Many of the other schools who decide to take part in this program have actual Mock Trial/Debate Classes, but Valleyview Middle School does not. If the students wanted to participate they were going to have to do it as an afterschool club in which the parents of the students would have to fund the program. However, thanks to a generous donation from Einhorn Barbarito, a full service law firm in Denville with close ties to the community, the students were allowed to participate cost free.

In addition to their generous monetary donation, [Timothy J. Ford](#), Counsel with Einhorn Barbarito, donated his time for a fifth year in a row to work with the students. Several times a month, Mr. Ford, an experienced litigation attorney, and Mark Hoffman, social studies teacher and faculty advisor of the Valleyview Mock Trial Club, would meet with the students to assist them with designing their cases for submission to the state competition. Mr. Ford explained that this program helped these students to "develop both their creative and critical thinking abilities." Mark Hoffman founded and has been a driving force behind the Mock Trial Club for seven years.

At the end of the evening's "trials" the students were presented with certificates of participation. Mr. Ford said: "This is my fifth year as an attorney mentor of the Valleyview Mock Trial Club, and it's just as

enjoyable as it was the first year. I am proud of the students who worked hard all year.”

About the Program

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation provides the format and rules for the students to create original mock trial cases. The students create the cases in the fall before submitting them to the State Bar Foundation in January. From February through May, students transform written cases into trials. They create characters of plaintiff, defendant and supporting witnesses and write their respective statements. This year, the two themes chosen were:

- School and/or community based sports team liabilities, and
- Fourth Amendment (the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures) Rights.

Over 100 different cases were submitted to the state wide competition but only a small number were chosen to present their cases at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. While Valleyview’s students were not chosen, both Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Ford, as faculty advisor and mentor, thought they should present their Mock Trials in front of their own juries made up of peers, parents, faculty and Denville Mayor, Thomas Andes.