

Madison County Bar Association Law Day

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On May 1st the Madison County Bar Association, along with bar associations across the nation, celebrates Law Day. As part of the celebrations this year, local high school and elementary schools are participating in mock trials at the Madison County Courthouse. Judges from Madison County's Third Judicial Circuit, along with attorneys from the State's Attorney's Office and students from local schools are all playing a role in the trials. Six separate mock trials have been tried or are set to be tried at the courthouse.

On April 30th Chief Judge Hylla and Judge Ruth will presided over a mock DUI trial which included an audience and participants of over 200 students from the Highland Middle School. In this mock trial the Highland High School students, with assistance from assistant state's attorneys, acted as attorneys and witnesses, while the elementary students were jurors. Officers from the Highland Police department also provided testimony in this mock trial. Judge Hylla said, "This is always a great teaching and learning experience. After the trial, I always get interesting questions about being an attorney and the trial process. We also talk about the dangers of DUI, the number of people killed as a result, and also the danger of texting while driving."

Earlier in April, the courthouse was the scene of another mock trial put on by law students in Professor Jeff Ezra's trial advocacy class at St. Louis University School of Law. After developing their trial advocacy skills during the semester, they were able to try the mock cases in the stately courtrooms on the third floor of the courthouse. This real courthouse setting was furthered by the presence of Judges Mangarelli and Slemmer, who volunteered their time to preside over these trials. It was also an experience for students in Ms. Cara Lane's class at Edwardsville High School volunteered their time and attention to act as jurors and came away with a much greater understanding of the trial process.

If you've ever wondered what would happen in a case of Mylie Cyrus v. The Jonas Brothers, this will be answered by a mock trial presented on Law Day in the Madison County Criminal Justice Center by the fourth grade class at Renthro School in Collinsville on May 1st. Judges Tognarelli and Knapp will preside over the trials. The students will act as witnesses, jurors, and will co-chair Assistant State's Attorneys Crystal Uhe, Chad Loughry, Sarah Smith, and Ryan Sweet in presenting the case. Assistant State's Attorney Rachel Crow was instrumental in coordinating this program with the Collinsville schools.

"The teachers, judges, attorneys and students put an amazing amount of time and effort into these mock trials. Their work is invaluable in providing a greater understanding of how our legal system works, and a positive exposure to the court system. As attorneys, we revere the rule of law and due process, and we want everyone to appreciate and understand these core elements of the American justice system," said Amy M. Meyer, Madison County Bar Association Law Day Co-Chair.