

March 2015 Kanawha County High School Mock Trial Competition Held at BridgeValley Community and Technical College

On March 16,17,18 and 20, 2015, the BridgeValley Community and Technical College Paralegal Studies program located in South Charleston, West Virginia hosted the Kanawha County high school mock trial competition. This competition pitted one high school against another in litigating both civil and criminal cases. Over 300 high school students, lawyers, BridgeValley paralegal students, and judges attended this four day event. BridgeValley Paralegal Studies students served as jurors in the mock trials that spanned the four day period.

According to Joseph Lewis, a BridgeValley Paralegal Student and president of BridgeValley's student chapter of the Legal Assistants and Paralegals of Southern West Virginia, the high school students who served as counsel and witnesses did a "great job presenting their cases." Mr. Lewis further stated that it was a great experience to participate in the mock trials.

The mock trial program was started to allow high school students to experience the courtroom in a hands-on role. The mock trials are set up and structured just like a real court, bound by the same rules. Mock trials help students to learn about the roles that different people play in the judicial system.

Craig Giffin, Esquire, head of BridgeValley's two year Associate Degree program in Paralegal Studies, noted that exposing students to mock trials helps them to better understand the judicial process, including how evidence is included and excluded at trial. "Not everyone realizes that the jury doesn't get the whole picture due to the constraints placed on the introduction of evidence at trial by applicable rules, including the Rules of Civil and Criminal Procedure and the Rules of Evidence," stated Mr. Giffin. "Once students try a case, they have a much better understanding of the litigation process."

Mr. Giffin also stated that the mock trial competition provides prospective students with a chance to be introduced to BridgeValley's academic programs, in particular the Paralegal Studies program. BridgeValley offers several classes that are geared toward the legal field that are part of the college's very affordable Paralegal Studies degree program. Paralegal Students position themselves for careers in the public and private legal industry following their graduation from BridgeValley. BridgeValley Paralegal Studies graduates end up working in areas involving both civil law and criminal law following their graduation, with some alumni continuing their education to pursue a law degree from an accredited law school. For more information about the BridgeValley Paralegal Studies program, please visit BridgeValley's website at www.bridgevalley.edu For information about how you can become a part of this program, please contact Craig Giffin, Esquire, at 304-205-6644 or craig.giffin@bridgevalley.edu