



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Students say LAWS great learning opportunity **For immediate release Wednesday, March 9, 2011**

MOUNDSVILLE, W.Va. – Students who attended the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia’s Argument Docket at the Marshall County Courthouse today said they were grateful for the opportunity to see the Court in person.

“I think it’s great for them just being here. It’s nice of them to do this. It’s one thing seeing a mock case, but these are actual cases. In class we kind of made the justices out to be elite. We didn’t really think they would be as personable as they are,” said John Marshall High School senior Matthew Palmer, who had lunch with Justice Brent D. Benjamin and other students at the former West Virginia Penitentiary.

Another student who sat with Justice Benjamin, John Marshall senior Alexander French, said, “I really like that we got to talk to them one-on-one. They are just like everybody else.”

The Supreme Court heard cases in Moundsville as part of the LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students) program. High school students from the Second Judicial Circuit (Marshall, Tyler, and Wetzel Counties) were invited to hear cases that they previously had studied with their teachers and local attorneys, and all had lunch with the justices.

Students from John Marshall High School’s Broadcast Technology program provided video for the live webcast of the Court session. The Court always webcasts its oral arguments live no matter where it hears cases, but this was the first time video for the broadcast was provided by high school students.

Student Paige Madden acted as director for video portion of the webcast. “This experience broadens our horizons,” she said. “It’s neat to be involved in the broadcast of something we also studied. It’s interactive and great for everyone involved.”

Heath Kale put names of the speakers on the video feed as they talked. “It’s been scary,” he said. “I wanted it to be spot-on and perfect so people don’t think just because we are high school students we are not capable.”

Carly Lucas was the student reporter for the group. She interviewed Supreme Court Clerk Rory Perry II and Second Judicial Circuit Judge David W. Hummel, Jr., and plans to do a story about the Court’s visit for a later newscast. As WJMH Media, John Marshall High School students produce daily morning announcements for the school, a weekly half-hour newscast that airs on West Liberty University’s WLTV, and occasional news and sports segments for WTRF-TV, WVLY Radio, and WKKX Radio.

“It’s been a really good experience,” Ms. Lucas said. “I think we take for granted what we have, including our equipment and even our teacher. We are lucky to have what we have and learn what we learn. Today has been different. We didn’t know what we were coming in to. But this is one of the biggest things we have done.”

John Marshall Broadcast Teacher Tony Wood said his students took great care with their work on the webcast, as they do on all their projects. “They strive for a perfect broadcast. They are very dedicated. It makes me proud high school kids can put on a production that rivals a big network,” he said.

LAWS is a partnership between the court system, schools, the Bar, and the community. Since Justice Robin Jean Davis began the program when she was Chief Justice in 1999, more than 4,200 high school and college students in twenty-two counties have participated.

The Supreme Court held the first LAWS program in Beckley in 1999. Other LAWS programs have been held in Clarksburg, Huntington, Wheeling, Summersville, Martinsburg, Parkersburg, Charleston, Romney, Princeton, and Lewisburg.

Cameron High School junior Jessie Fletcher said, “It’s interesting to learn the stuff they do in court. None of us have been to a court like this before. “

The Cameron students who participated in the LAWS program studied their court case as part of the curriculum in their U.S. History class. Junior Sarah Smith said, “It’s interesting and more recent than studying the Revolutionary War.”

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