



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Herbert Hoover High School Students Building Furniture for Intermediate Court of Appeals Courtrooms

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CLENDENIN, W.Va. – School is out for the summer, but the Herbert Hoover High School shop classroom has been open for business so three students and their teacher can build furniture for the new Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) courtrooms.

The school won the bid to produce the benches, podiums, and tabletops for the main courtroom in Charleston and five satellite courtrooms. The students are also producing carved wooden ICA seals for each bench.

The main courtroom bench is made of walnut and will seat up to five judges, in case the Supreme Court ever needs to hear a case from a high-tech courtroom. The satellite courtroom benches, made of cherry, are much smaller and are designed to hold 55-inch televisions that will link the courtrooms in Grant, Lewis, Morgan, Raleigh, and Wetzel Counties to the main courtroom in Charleston.

Chief Justice John Hutchison, Justice Tim Armstead, and ICA Judges Tom Scarr and Charles Lorensen visited the shop on July 7 to see the furniture and discuss details like where to put pencil drawers, lights, and electrical outlets for laptops. The justices and judges thanked the students and their teacher for their work.

ICA Chief Judge Dan Greear plans to visit the shop later this month. “I have heard rave reviews of the beauty of the furniture. I am glad we were able to provide this learning experience for Herbert Hoover students.”

Judge Greear is a longtime SSAC football official and has officiated games involving Tim Meyer, the shop teacher who is the former Hoover football coach. “He clearly is a gifted shop teacher. We will think about these students and be grateful for their skill every time we sit at that bench.”

Chief Justice Hutchison said, “The work is awesome. I’m so impressed. I am unbelievably pleased, I really, truly am. The quality of the workmanship is superb. For high school students to be able to do all this and meet our specs, that says a lot about the teaching.”

Meyer has been teaching shop at Herbert Hoover High School for 23 years. Since a 2016 flood destroyed the school, his shop has been six portable classrooms combined to make one large space. It is the biggest room on the “campus” of Herbert Hoover, a collection of portables next to Elkview Middle School. A new school is being built.

Herbert Hoover students also built the West Virginia Board of Education meeting room table, as well as smaller projects like individual pieces of furniture.

It took four classes of students an entire school year to build the Board of Education bench. Three students are working on the ICA project during the summer and are being paid \$15 an hour. The students are Kole Johnson, 16, and rising seniors Josh Stuart, 17, and Lane Ramsey, 18.

“The three guys we have doing this, they really know their stuff. They are experts at what they do. You guys wanted them to do the work and they are,” Meyer told the court officials. “They could set up a cabinet shop and make a living at this.”

Herbert Hoover Principal Michael Kelley said, “They have always done quality work. The scope of the projects has gotten bigger. The kids seem to take a great deal of pride in doing this kind of work. Every time they see this court on TV, they will be able to say, ‘I built that bench.’”

Stuart and Ramsey proudly showed the judges around their shop (Johnson was not there when the judges visited) and discussed woodworking with Chief Justice Hutchison, who is also a craftsman.

“I was working in the shop when I was in school. I figured it would be fun to do and get paid at the same time,” said Stuart, who plans to join the Marines when he graduates.

This is the second summer Ramsey has worked in the shop. Last year, they built kitchen cabinets, said Ramsey, who plans to be a heavy equipment operator when he graduates.

The justices, judges, Supreme Court Clerk Edythe Nash Gaiser, Supreme Court IT and Facilities Director Pat Moats, and her staff were impressed with the students’ craftsmanship and excited to see the plans for the courtroom furniture become reality.

Judge Scarr was thrilled. “It’s beautiful. They have a true vision. It’s terrific.”

Justice Tim Armstead said, “Principal Kelley and the teachers and staff at Herbert Hoover have always provided a high-quality education for students in the Elk River communities. The work on this project is just another example of how the school teaches skills that students can use throughout their lifetimes. The work these students have done is truly outstanding.”

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