

# **BCS Conflict Resolution Teen Court takes the show on the road**

## ***Outlaw named “Best Trial Attorney” and “Best Prosecuting Attorney”***

RALEIGH—The Bertie County Schools Conflict Resolution Teen Court competed in the annual North Carolina Teen Court Summit Mock Trial in Raleigh this past weekend.

There were two courtrooms in the competition, with more than 200 students, making up a total of 13 teams from all across the state. Bertie Early College High School junior Anaya Outlaw was recognized in her courtroom for being the “Best Trial Attorney” as well as the “Best Prosecuting Attorney.”

Every team tried the same mock case. This state competition was the first time Bertie County Schools students have ever competed.

“Those eight students did extraordinarily well,” said Sgt. Bonnie Powell, our Teen Court Program Manager. “I look forward to them all returning to this battle again next year.”

Powell said a special thank-you goes out to the following individuals and entities: Chief District Judge Brenda Branch; our local District Attorney’s Office; local Attorneys Tonza Ruffin, Rob Lewis and Clifton Smith; the Bertie County Sheriff’s Office; Bertie County Schools; the Bertie County Parks and Recreation Department; Deputy and SRO MacKenzie Williams; and Janice Ricks, Instructional Technology Specialist, former attorney and Powell’s assistant.

“These student, courtroom rock stars definitely exemplified excellence all weekend long,” said Powell. “In them is the potential to become future attorneys. They have qualities that you do not see in just every child—they are passionate, driven, and consistent, unlike many others. They were determined to go and win!”

The judges for the competition were attorneys from Wake County. “Those judges were ‘blown away’ by our students’ performance,” said Powell.

Judge Branch hopes to extend and expand the Teen Court program into other counties in our district, modeled of course, from the program here in Bertie. Currently, Bertie County is the only county in the district that operates a Teen Court.

Teen Court offers an alternative to the juvenile justice system, for students who complete minor infractions, and who are otherwise rule-abiding students. In this program, the alleged student perpetrators are tried by a jury of their peers. It is their fellow classmates who serve as the attorneys, clerk, and other courtroom positions as well.

Sgt. Powell welcomes community participation. The local program is funded by a JCPC grant, and local sponsorship is welcome also.

The next “regular” Teen Court Session will take place at the Bertie County Courthouse on May 6 at 6 p.m. It occurs once a month in Bertie County.

“Come out and support our students and see what Teen Court is all about,” said Powell.

“The takeaways I hope for these students are for them to be inspired and to aspire to follow their dreams,” she added. “Be goal oriented, and don’t be afraid to be competitive ... You never know where it will take you.”