

Most courthouses across the state were closed on Monday, Oct. 11, for the observance of Columbus Day. But the Dundy County Courthouse opened its doors to six area teams which competed in the opening round of the 2010 Nebraska Mock Trial season.

This year's case is based on the death of a college student who attended a Halloween party and was served a drink spiked with various illegal drugs, which in combination, caused the student to die from a heart attack.

Because the party was held in a house shared by three roommates all wearing the same head-to-toe grim reaper costume and all involved in hosting the party, the argument between the two sides centers on the guilt or innocence of one of the hosts accused of manslaughter.

In mock trial competition, a team is comprised of three attorneys and five witnesses. Each team must prepare openings, closings, direct and cross examination questions, and pre-trial motions for both the plaintiff and defendant sides of the case.

Each time the case is tried, the team is limited to three witnesses. One team member must play a witness for both sides of the case. Additionally, each presentation by attorneys and witnesses must fall within certain time limits.

Cases are judged, usually by two practicing or retired attorneys and conducted by either a practicing or retired judge or attorney who becomes the tie breaker if the two performance judges disagree on the winner of the presentation.

### **PC Black Team**

The Perkins County Black team competed as the Defendant against a team from Southern Valley in the first round.

PCHS attorneys included Jeremy Hagan, Michael Dreiling, and Colton White.

Witnesses were Tori Osler, portraying Alex Toakless, the woman accused of manslaughter; Tanya Metcalf, playing the role of Frances Beck, one of Toakless's roommates; and Ashley Kemling, acting as Brooke Johnson, an attendee of the party.

Other members of the Black Team include Christian Miyamoto whose role is that of Conner Nelson, the policeman who investigated the crime; Kyle Schulze acting as Terry Smith, a reluctant witness who attended the party; and Ashley Kemling in her other character role as Drew Coker, a roommate of Toakless's who may have had opportunity and motive for murder.

Alternates/timekeepers for the Black Team include Rebecca Johnson and Allison Kiolbasa. Mock Trial rules do not allow for substitutions between designated teams and alternates must be ready to act as witnesses or attorneys at any competition. At the end of the first trial, both performance judges awarded the win to PCHS Black.

### **PC Red Team**

The Perkins County Red team was assigned the role of plaintiff in its case against Dundy County-Stratton, last year's regional state qualifiers.

Attorneys for the Red Team included Kim Cook, Michi Prante, and Trevor Lee, all first year performers. Witnesses were Ben Ross as Officer Nelson, Callie Meyer as Drew Coker, and Austin Thelander as Terry Smith.

When the Red Team plays the Defendant, witnesses are Alyssa Young as Brooke Johnson, Tayler Walter as Frances Beck, and Callie Meyer as Alex Toakless. Alternates/timekeepers for the Red team are Matt Sestak and Brady Mailand.

In a close decision for a trial which lasted 45 minutes longer than that of the Black Team,

PCHS Red lost the trial.

Very positive, however, for Red Team members was the fact that one of the performance judges saw only a three point margin of difference between the two contending teams.

Attorney coaches for the Perkins County teams are Lori Zeilinger, George Zeilinger, and Tawna Holmstedt.

The second round of competition will be held on Monday, Oct. 25, at the Gosper County District Courtroom in Elwood. Due to area scheduling conflicts, both teams will be representing the plaintiff in the day's trials.