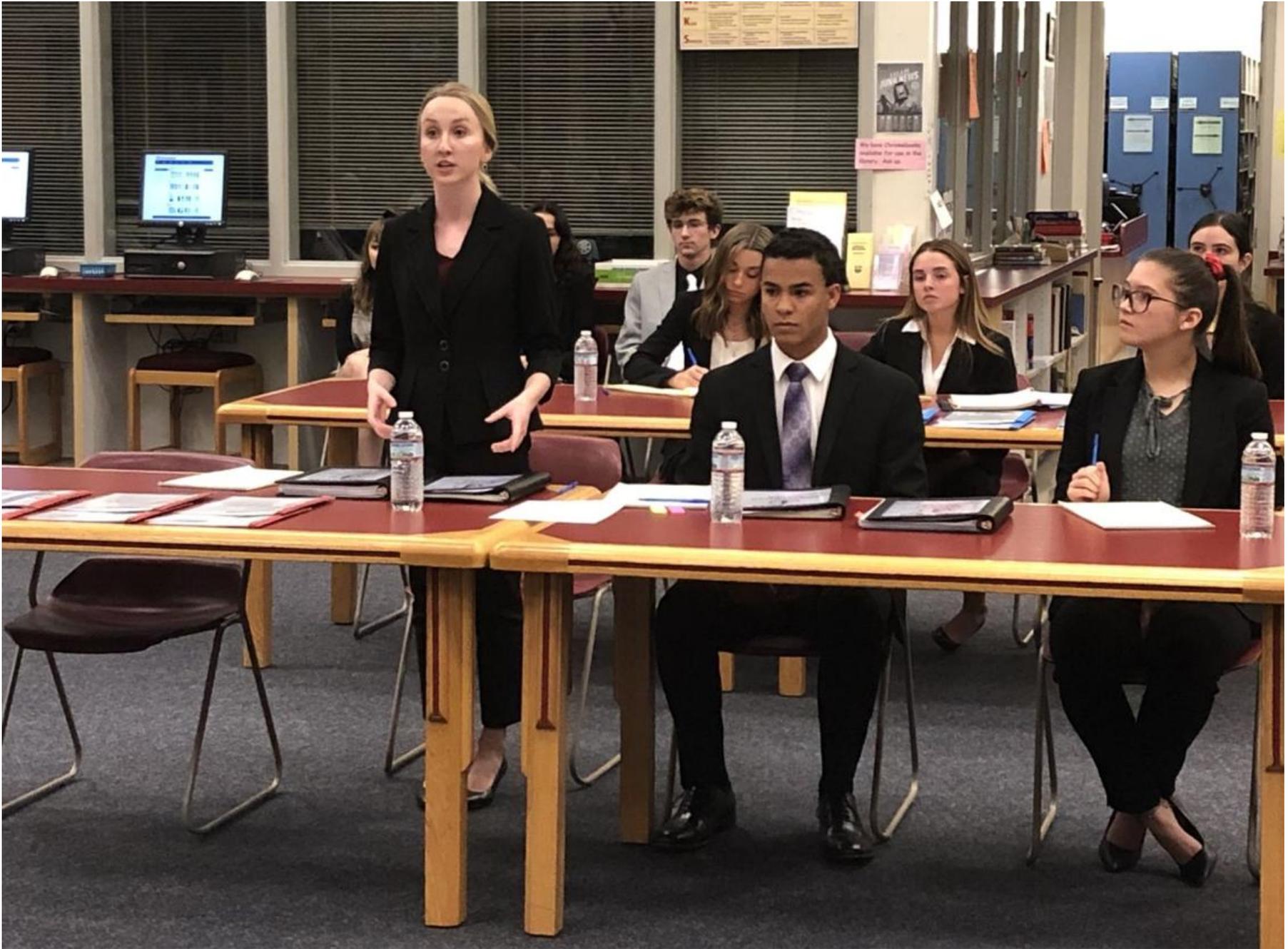


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Centennial High mock trial team heading to world championships

BY JOSEPH LUIZ jluiz@bakersfield.com 1 hr ago



Centennial High student Haley Sprague speaks during a mock trial scrimmage on Wednesday. Sprague and eight other with the mock trial team will be heading to New York next week for the Empire World Championships.

Joseph Luiz/The Californian

The mock trial team at Centennial High School will be making local history later this month.

The team is the first in the county to be accepted to participate in the Empire Mock Trial World Championships, starting Wednesday through the following Monday in New York City. The team

will be one of around 40 worldwide that will be participating in the tournament.

“I’m really proud of my team,” said teacher Brett Dobson, who supervises the mock trial team. “They’ve stepped it up in last few years, going to larger tournaments out of the area. This will be a little more pressure than we’re used to, but I’m confident they will present themselves well.”

Nine students from the team will head to New York to participate as attorneys, witnesses or both in the fictional case of the United States v. Harry McCarson. The nation has charged McCarson with committing a federal hate crime in assaulting Tommy Abel during a protest.

The case was inspired by the real-life white nationalist protest in Charlottesville, Virginia last year.

Junior Jill Dailey, one of the students who will participate in the championships, said she was surprised to hear the team was accepted.

“It’s definitely pretty amazing and kind of scary, but it’s really impressive that we’ve gotten this far,” she said. “It’s really cool that since we’ve put in such hard work, we get a fun reward. It shows how if you work hard, you can achieve whatever you want.”

Students have worked since the summer in preparation for the championships, doing individual and group practice, participating in scrimmages with other teams and more.

“The hardest part has been polishing our scripts, making sure we have everything down, and making sure that we are prepared for anything that could happen,” said senior Ian McNairn. “We’ve got everything prepared. I think we’re as ready as we can be.”

McNairn said he expects the competition to be fierce, but he hopes the team will do well enough to make a mark at the championship.

“It would be fun to win. I don’t know if it’ll happen, but getting in the top four would be great,” he said. “There’s a lot of good teams here (in Kern County). I’m surprised none of them have gone to this before. I hope that us going sets a precedent with more of us going out and participating.”

Fellow senior Haley Sprague said that as long as the team prepares for the unexpected, she believes they will be able to handle anything that comes their way.

“We have a lot of returners this year, so we’re really confident in our ability to compete,” she said. “I feel really blessed that we get this opportunity. This is another step up, which is intimidating but also exciting.”

Regardless of how the team fares in the competition, the students said being in mock trial has been a great learning experience.

“I wanted to get into mock trial because of the team. The team really becomes a family,” she said. “The best part for me has been working with my teammates, improving and growing.”

Sprague said she is considering a legal career for her future thanks to her participation in mock trial.

“I love the feeling of being in a position where you’re the only person fighting for the life and the rights of another person. It’s a feeling you don’t get anywhere else,” she said.

Dailey said she’s still not sure if she wants to get into the legal profession or not but has enjoyed being on the team.

“I love the aspect of learning about the law, and I also love the presentation side of it,” she said. “I get to use my knowledge and intelligence but also kind of put on a show.”

While McNairn said he currently isn’t considering a legal career, he has appreciated his time with the team.

“It’s been a fantastic experience. I wouldn’t trade it for the world,” he said. “I’ve met a lot of people who have inspired me, who have become my friends.”

Dobson said that besides participating in the championship, the students will get to do a little sightseeing in New York City. He said there are plans to take them to a Broadway show, the Sept. 11 memorial and other areas if time permits.

“I really just hope they have a wonderful experience,” he said. “I hope they develop their skills further and get to know other students from around the world.”

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