

Eighth graders hold mock murder trial

Four friends were indicted for the murder of Felix Navidad, a young millionaire, said to have been friends with the suspects. The indictments were handed down on September 20, 2000 and the hearing was set for February 21 and 22, 2001.

Two weeks ago, on the dates set by the Grand Jury; Kendra Goode, Vera Cruise, Alfredo Fetuccine, and Gene Poole were tried for the murder of Navidad. The four were accused of conspiring and murdering their supposed friend. By Thursday afternoon, the jury in district court handed down the verdict.

If this all sounds strange and unbelievable, it is. The eighth grade Comets team have just completed an interdisciplinary unit focusing on the murder of Felix Navidad, a fictional character. The students put together a mock murder trial as a culminating event for this unit.

The unit began in Science class where the students were studying chemistry. After learning some of the tests needed, they entered into Crime College. Here, they took on the role of Forensic Scientists and learned how to conduct in-depth analysis on various types of evidence. Single "crimes" with one key piece of evidence were used to help the students master the techniques needed in order to solve a more complex situation. Fiber, powder, hair, and liquid tests were conducted to show students how real evidence is sifted through for use in criminal investigations. Additionally, fingerprinting and fingerprint lifting techniques were explored and re-created.

Once students "graduated" from Crime College, their skills were put to the test. A crime scene was staged in the library and the students were the first on the scene. Once there, students had to examine detail for detail every piece of evidence that was present. Armed with an ample supply of clues, the forensic teams went to work piecing together the evidence back in the lab. This was no easy task! Students had to go by the facts and the evidence, which meant they had to leave their personal opinion out of their analysis.

After extensive examination and armed with scientific testing to back their hypothesis, the classes then began formulating possible scenarios surrounding this horrible crime. All of their reasoning and support were collected in crime journal and saved in order to be presented in court at the trial of the four suspects. Students going to see just how science and justice go hand-in-hand.

In Language Arts, students did a mini-unit about persuasive text. Concentrating on fact vs. opinion, and persuasive techniques. They also viewed *Twelve Angry Men*, and discussed the processes a jury goes through with the information they are given. Through this they learned about citizens responsibility as a juror and how to handle persuasive material.

In Social Studies, students began looking at the historical perspective of our nation as it formed the new government from 1789 to today. They researched the topics such as the Articles of Confederation, the Continental Congress, the Magna Carta, as well as historical figures involved in creating our living Constitution and our government.

Once students understood the historical perspective of our government, they began looking at the Articles of the US Constitution, first focusing on the Judicial Branch of our government. After reading and discussing this branch of government, students began transferring information from the forensics unit in Science to the lessons in Social Studies. Students wrote character sketches on themselves for chances to take on one of several roles of the courtroom. Amy Parsons, Donnie Sowder, Graham Fay and Gene Allen were chosen to

be judges for the two days.

Local attorneys spent a morning working with the lawyers as they designed their cases and prepared to prove guilt or innocence of the four accused friends. The Prosecuting attorneys were: Heather Hammond, Carlisa Bond, Amanda Wright, Ben Graves, Kacey Scoggin, Ronnie McClure, Megan Parker and Delon Graves. The Defense attorneys were Matthew Whitaker, Amy Cromer, Courtney Hale, Danielle Savage, Brittany Perkins, Kyla French and Brent Clontz. On the first day of the trial Chief Justice Joseph Lambert spent a morning with the Comets discussing the different levels of courts in our country as well as the role of the state Supreme Court and the justices. Teresa Vanzant, her staff, and Judge Dan Venters were also a part of this mock trial. They made sure that a courtroom was available for the students to get "the feel" of being in a courtroom.

For two days the Comets invaded the District Courtroom at the Rockcastle County Courthouse. As witnesses were questioned and cross examined, a judge and jury listened carefully to all that was said. Chris Alexander and Jessica Zupanic served as court reporters. Luckily bailiffs were on hand to maintain order in the court. Serving as Comet bailiffs were Adam Paquette, Cole Dorsey, Brandon Grubb, Chris Croucher, Max Saylor and Jon Morrow.

Once the Prosecution and Defense gave their closing arguments, the jury was escorted to the jury room to deliberate the information and determine guilt or innocence. The morning group found only Kendra Goode guilty of murder. All four were found innocent of conspiracy. In the afternoon session, all four defendants were found guilty of conspiracy. Kendra Goode and Alfredo Fetuccine were found guilty of murder. The roles of defendants, character witnesses and expert witnesses were played by Gabe

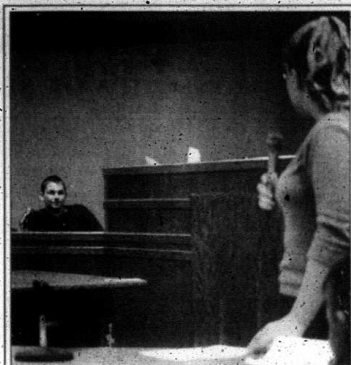
Guilfoi, Russell Willey, Katelyn Cash, Rick Sandusky, Jamie Ellison, Ashley Mize, Derreck Hurst, Ryan Graham, Brittany Offutt, Daniel Bustle, Stephen Rowe, Amanda Ballew, Kelli Doan, Blake Roberts, Matt Allen, Holly Ann Colson and Casey Taylor.

The jurors for morning and afternoon sessions were Josh Ruttle, Robbie Mink, Zac Pensol, Johnna Higgins, Kayla Bryant, Amanda Childers, Vanessa Adajis, Surprise Stallworth, Rose Prewitt, Brittany Vanwinkle, Sherry Johnson, Heather Miller, Kent Mullins, Erik Stallworth, Josh Hasty, Brandon Griffin, Jake Taylor, Frank Christian, Jeff Ramey, Emily McKinney, Johnna Abney, Cassie Kendrick, Brandon Nicely and Dee Dee Rouse.

Students were able to get a first hand learning lesson on citizenship and their rights and responsibilities. Very few students found this event to be "boring" or "stupid." We want to again thank all those in our community who made this trial possible.



Brandon Grubb - morning session Bailiff kept order and swore-in all witnesses.



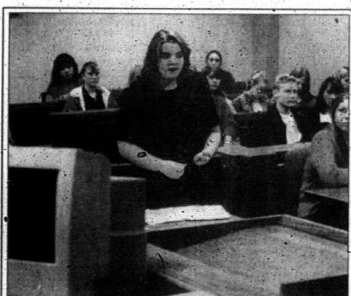
Carlisa Bond - morning session Prosecuting Attorney questions "Patrick Nicholas" - Russell Willey.



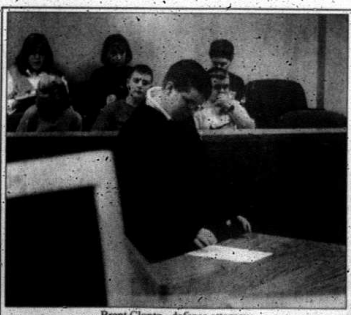
Daniel Bustle contemplates his next answer. Daniel was the "expert witness."



Matthew Whitaker - afternoon session defense lawyer.



Kacey Scoggin - afternoon Prosecuting Attorney.



Brent Clontz - defense attorney.



Kyla French - morning session defense attorney questions "Vera Cruise" - Ashley Mize.

Cummins named Y-Club member of the week

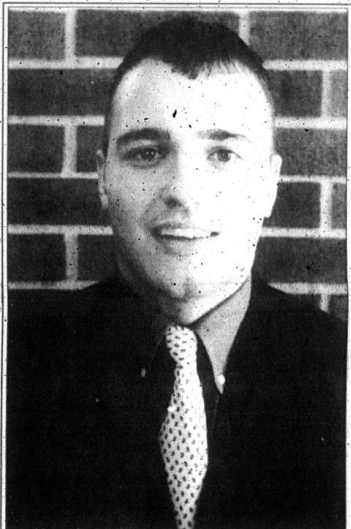
Submitted by R.C.H.S. Y-Club Amanda Cummins has been named Y-Club member of the week at R.C.H.S. She has helped make the Y-Club the strong club it is today.

Name a project. Amanda was there! No matter what or when something needs to be done, Amanda is there to do it with a big Y-smile. She is a model club member whose example inspires others to help. She is also actively involved in the Y-Club's

mentor program. The club is lucky to have her on the roster, she is truly making a difference in our school and community.

March 12-16th will be Y-Club Spirit Week. March 15-20 is the Kentucky United Nations Assembly. The R.C.H.S. Y-Club will be representing the country of Canada.

Please feel free to visit the Y-Club's web page <http://rcs.yclubtrapped.com>. Remember to sign the guest book!



Travis Anderkin, son of James and Pamela Anderkin of Mt. Vernon, was one of seven Western Kentucky students vying for Coming Home King during Western's game with Middle Tennessee State February 24th. Travis was also recently elected President of the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity.

Academic Honor Roll



Jamie McFerron, daughter of Michael McFerron and Patsy Ramsey, of Mt. Vernon has a 3.98 GPA at Rockcastle County High School. She plans on attending Somerset Technical College and major in Graphic Technology. She is president of National Honor Society, a member of FBLA, FHA, HOSA, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. She is also a co-op student at 21st Century Learning Center. Jamie attends Cjmax Christian Church and computers are a hobby for her.



Donnie Sowder - morning session Judge.