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OnTheTOWN

City students 'practice' law in a real courthouse

By **DENISE M. CHAMPAGNE**
Daily Record Reporter

Issues in a case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court were taken up last week by ninth-grade city students before the Appellate Division, Fourth Department.

Separate panels of judges heard arguments from students at World of Inquiry School No. 58 in the third annual Moot Court competition, sponsored by the court.

All 64 ninth-graders participated, considering whether it was an illegal search for police to use a drug-sniffing dog at the front door of a house to detect marijuana, a fact pattern similar to the one in *Florida v. Jardines*, pending before the nation's highest court.

"The students should be commended for their efforts," said Justice Henry J. Scudder, filling his role as the court's actual presiding justice. "They obviously worked very hard to prepare for this competition. The skills they



Nico Lopez, center, argues his case regarding the legality of a drug arrest during the final round of last week's competition at the World of Inquiry School No. 58 Moot Court Competition, drawing reaction from the Hon. Nancy E. Smith, back left, and the Hon. Henry J. Scudder.

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learned will serve them well as they move forward with their education.”

James Mulley, the court’s executive assistant, said students worked on the case for several weeks. Preliminary rounds were conducted May 7 at the school and May 8 at the courthouse. The semifinal and final rounds were May 9 at the courthouse where 16 finalists presented.

Taariq Cleveland took first place honors, followed by Nico Lopez, second; Nicole Santiago Gibson, third; and Branwyn Wilkinson, fourth.

Other finalists are Al-Nurden Azim, Jyare Carter, Unique Fair-Smith, Keith Gibson, Indya Jackson, Alen Katardzic, Marcus Mastromonico, Rashawn McCrea, Cainen Ortiz, Ivarie Redding, Quinterra Robinson and Doug Vorndran.

Two three-judge panels heard the semifinal rounds. One panel consisted of Justice Scudder; New York Court of Claims Judge Philip J. Patti; and Alan Ross, former Mendon Town Court justice and deputy clerk, Appellate Division, Fourth Department.

The other panel was made up of Justices Nancy E. Smith and Stephen K. Lindley, associate Appellate Division justices; and Mulley, who is also a Penfield Town Justice.

The final round was before Justices Scudder, Smith and Lindley and Judge Patti.

Other participants included Sheelarani Webster, the school’s principal; Gabriel Chodak, ninth-grade social studies teacher; and Joseph Dier and Elizabeth Clarke, Appellate Division attorneys whom Mulley said took the lead on the program.

— *Photos by Kris Dreessen*

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Charmaine Cleveland hugs her son, Taariq Cleveland, after he was named the winner.



Elizabeth Clarke, left, of the Appellate Division, Fourth Department, encourages students in the competition.

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Doug Vorndran, foreground with backpack, congratulates his competitor, Quinterra Robinson after it is announced that she will advance in the competition.



Charmaine Fair congratulates her son, Unique Fair-Smith, after he argued his case during the first round of competition.