



John T. Berry

Help Light a Fire

I highlighted law schools in my November 2003 article. This month it is most appropriate to focus on educators and lawyers who help light the fire within high school students to appreciate our democracy and the rule of the law.

Recently I attended an awards ceremony at "Educating For Citizenship" a conference for educators and members of the community put on by the Center for Civic Education through the law. At the awards ceremony, I saw Cheryl Grace, a teacher at Ann Arbor Community High School receive the Law-Related Civic Education Teacher of the Year Award. She was nominated by Griffith Dick, the lawyer who assists her award winning mock trial team. During her brief comments, Cheryl thanked all lawyers for their help and encouraged more teachers to get involved in the Michigan High School Mock Trial Tournament.

With all the recent budget cutting by the Bar, many incredibly great programs have



Avondale Middle School students with State Senator Mike Bishop at the 2003 Project Citizen State Hearing and Showcase.



West Bloomfield High School students present their case at the 2003 state finals of the Michigan High School Mock Trial Tournament.

been reduced or even eliminated. But wonderful lawyers, judges, educators, and citizens have found a way to continue teaching our young people the important aspects of being responsible citizens.

My article is being written to thank them all for what they do and to direct your attention to their efforts. I have volunteered to go into some high schools to learn what is on their minds about the democracy they live in and to share some of my experience from the legal community.

I would encourage each of you to give thought to finding out how you might help.

One program particularly hard hit has been mock trials. I've had the privilege of being a judge for a similar program in

Florida and believe you me it gives you a new respect for our young people.

For each of us who bemoans (yes most of us do at least occasionally) the state of the legal profession compared to some time in our past, now is our chance to light a candle rather than curse the reduced light!

If you want to know more, contact Jim Troost, Director of Programs at the Center for Civic Education through Law at (248) 209-2325 or e-mail at ccele@oakland.k12.mi.us.

Thanks again to all involved in this effort.♦

Share your thoughts/concerns

Please forward comments to voice@mail.michbar.org

