

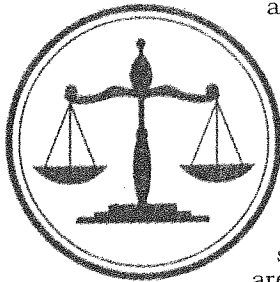
MOCK TRIAL

Program targets issue of teen dating violence

Efforts to educate students about the dangers and legal ramifications of dating violence, while providing them with a unique window into the workings of our country's judicial system, will culminate in a mock trial March 28 at the Hays County Government Center.

A cooperative effort among the Hays County District Attorney's Office, area district judges, Hays-Caldwell Women's Center, the Hays County Bar Association, Texas State University and Dripping Springs ISD, the mock trial is a first for Hays County.

Some 45 students will participate as the victim, alleged perpetrator, lawyers and witnesses and serve on three separate jury panels – an all-male, an all-female and a combined male-female jury – assisted by local legal profession-



als and experts in domestic violence issues.

"This effort is being greatly supported by all the groups who have a stake in educating our young people in how our legal system works and in ending any type of domestic violence," Dripping Springs attorney Sarah Brandon, who is spearheading the program, said. "Statistics on dating violence are difficult to come by, since so many people who are abused either don't understand that they've been a victim of an illegal act or are hesitant to come forward. Nationally, one in three teens report being exposed to dating violence, according to the CDC, so we believe the actual occurrences are higher," she

(See Mock page 2)

• Mock

(Continued from page 1)

said.

"We designed this exercise to cover two major areas of learning – expose high school students to the judicial system as well as educate teens on the dynamics of dating violence," Associate District Judge Brenda K. Smith, who is one of the organizers of the trial, said. "Teens need to understand the warning signs of dating violence, how to get help and how the justice system works to resolve cases of domestic violence."

At the end of the trial, the Hays-Caldwell Women's Center will present an educational program on dating violence to further reinforce the need to recognize the danger signs and get help.

Students raised funds through sponsorships to provide donations to the Women's Center as well as to pay for T-shirts and purple bracelets to raise domestic violence awareness.

The mock trial is open to the public and will be held in a courtroom at the Hays County Government Center, 712 S. Stagecoach Drive, San Marcos, on Thursday at 10:15 a.m.