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MEDIA RELEASE

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County Judge Joins Ashwaubenon High Students in ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ Discussion

Ashwaubenon, WI – February 19, 2013 – The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been a staple in high school classrooms for decades. The crux of the novel describes a court case in 1930’s Alabama in which a Black man is accused of raping a White woman. Readers learn early on that the Black man, Tom Robinson, is innocent but doomed for a guilty verdict because of ignorance and prejudice. Brown County Circuit Court Judge Honorable Marc Hammer “presided” over Nancy Bassindale’s English 10 class at Ashwaubenon High School fielding questions about the particulars of the Robinson case and the workings of our twenty-first century’s judicial system in Wisconsin. Judge Hammer enlightened the class about the judicial process, as well as his own judicial career, and answered any and all questions with which students “hammered” him.

Judge Hammer informed the students about the fact that Wisconsin is the only state in the Union that allows lawyers who have been educated in either of the only two Wisconsin law schools in the state, Marquette University and U.W.-Madison, need not take the Bar Exam to practice law. He also clarified information for students who were curious about his role as a judge. English 10 student Triston Streckenbach stated this about Judge Hammer’s time in the classroom. “I thought from what you told us that your job is awesome. I loved everything about your presentation. You were very easy to listen to and interesting.”

Students thoroughly enjoyed the visit and wrote to Judge Hammer about the impact of his words. “I really liked how Judge Hammer told us about how a jury functions and how you could be selected to be in a jury. I always wondered how you were selected for jury duty, now I finally know,” stated Alex Alberts, sophomore. Becky Mrozinski remarked, “I thought it was really interesting how lawyers have three strikes to use when choosing the jury, and they can use them on anybody as long as they are not discriminating against them.”

Meeting a local judge in a classroom is a special opportunity for everyone involved. Judge Hammer illustrated to the students that judges have a sense of humor, enjoy life as they do but need to be respected both in and out of the courtroom. Ultimately, the group of students “judged” the visit as a positive experience had by all. Shaynon Peters wisely concluded, “I think that being a judge comes with many responsibilities. The biggest one they have is probably giving the people a sentence and telling them their punishment. This is a pretty big responsibility because these people have to go through their punishment and have to deal with it for the rest of their lives.”

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