

TrumbullPatch

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Kudos to Katie

Trumbull High School Social Studies teacher Kathleen Boland led a team of 24 seniors to victory in a statewide competition testing their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution



Trumbull High School Social Studies Teacher Kathleen Boland has 24 reasons to smile with her class' victory in a Hartford competition on Friday, where their constitutional knowledge enabled them to best teams from six other high schools.

“My grin didn’t leave my face all weekend,” Boland said.

She said “we won at 1:30. By 1:45 my e-mail in box was flooded with congratulations,” and added “we’re flying high.”

Looking ahead to the national competition in Washington D.C. at the end of April, Boland said “we’ve never had a top three team. Now we’re six units, one team, one goal – to win it all.”

Asst. Supt. Gary Cialfi applauded the class for its achievement. He asked what helped them succeed.

Boland praised the support from the Trumbull community: Academic Challenge for Excellence Foundation board member Kate Hampford Donahue, who oversaw the program; First Selectman Tim Herbst – a former WTP team member himself; State Sen. Anthony Musto, state reps. T.R. Rowe and Tony Hwang; many teachers, school administrators (Cialfi among them) and Board of Education members; Town Council and Board of Finance members; and a few just plain citizens.

"We The People" is sponsored by the Center for Civic Education. The Center presented prospective competitors with six “units,” or sets of Constitution related questions: “What are the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System?” Beneath it are three points to focus the students’ thinking.

The competition is structured as mock congressional testimony. Boland divided the class into six teams of four students. Each researched its question and prepared its “testimony,” then shared in presentation to the judges.

Following their testimony the judges asked questions to further test the teens' knowledge of their units.

Trumbull's six units won by taking four first places and two thirds. Three of the first place teams earned perfect scores, the other, 59 of 60 possible points.

Community members acted as judges and critics at a practice session at the high school that simulated the Hartford experience. A few days later they aided a more formal session held in the Town Council chamber, a setting that made the event more realistic.

Boland said these sessions “gave them so much practice and made them so confident.” Boland believes their confidence was “an important part of their success.”

Takeaways

Cialfi asked Boland whether anything they saw in Hartford surprised her. She said “some of the Trumbull judges' questions were harder than ones they were asked in Hartford.”

He asked what some of their takeaways were. Boland asked some team members. Emma Connelly said “as much as you know about yourself, it's working together that's important.” She added, “we're all friends, we know our own strengths. Learning your own role was important.”

Stephen Scott offered a different perspective, saying his brother competed in 2008. His team was the first to lose after a string of wins. “He felt bad. He wanted me to win.”

Boland said others included “strengthening their research skills, their writing and public speaking skills, learning to listen carefully and “to think on their feet.”

Looking Ahead

The team awaits a new set of questions they expect in late January for the national competition. For that program one thousand high school students representing every state will convene in Washington from April 27 to May 1 to compete on the campus of George Mason University and in U. S. Senate hearing rooms on Capitol Hill.

Those interested in learning more about the program and its major benefactor are invited to visit two sites: <http://new.civiced.org/> and <http://www.trumbullace.org/>.