



# MEDIA ADVISORY

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## **Court of Appeal Reaches Out to Riverside High School Students**

### ***Justices and Desert Bar Association Encourage Students to Stay in School and Consider Careers in the Law***

Riverside—An innovative court-community outreach program called Outreach Plus will be held by the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two (Riverside) on Thursday, May 20, 2010, at Desert Mirage High School, 86-150 Avenue 66, Thermal, California, it was announced by Presiding Justice Manuel A. Ramirez.

The Outreach Plus program, launched in 2005, features classroom visits by justices and local lawyers who urge high school students to stay in school and consider careers in the law. Students are taught about the legal system and the Court of Appeal. The court's outreach programs have reached almost 8,000 high school students since the programs began in 2002.

The program has been adapted to Desert Mirage High School with the assistance of Principal Joe Ceja. It will include a reception with students at 8:30 a.m. and oral arguments at 9:30 a.m., followed by a question-and-answer session with students and classroom visits by justices and members of the Desert Bar Association, led by President Matt Morris.

Oral argument in a criminal appeal and a juvenile delinquency appeal will be held in the Desert Mirage High School Theater, each appeal lasting about 30 minutes. The public has been invited to attend the special oral argument proceedings. The cases to be argued are:

- *People v. Leal*, involving a 19-year-old defendant who was convicted of shooting to death his 17-year-old girlfriend, the mother of his infant son. At trial the defendant claimed the shooting was accidental; the trial judge instructed the jury on first and second degree murder and involuntary manslaughter, and the jury convicted the defendant of second degree murder with additional prison time for intentionally

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discharging a firearm causing death. On appeal, the defendant contends that the trial court erred in rejecting an instruction on voluntary manslaughter and in failing to instruct the jury that intentional discharge of a firearm required knowledge that the gun was loaded.

- *People v. Weed*, involving a defendant who was convicted of first degree murder and a store robbery a month later based largely on a plea-bargaining codefendant's testimony. The defendant was sentenced to life without possibility of parole based on a special circumstance finding that the murder was committed in the course of a robbery. On appeal, the defendant contends that (1) the accomplice testimony was not sufficiently corroborated by independent evidence; (2) the judge did not make clear that corroborating evidence could not derive from anything the accomplice had said; (3) the accomplice's testimony was not voluntary and should have been excluded; (4) the court should have granted the defendant's motion for mistrial based on a juror's viewing of the defendant in waist and ankle chains; (5) the judge did not instruct the jury on the murder special circumstance that the jury found true; (6) the jury did not make a finding that the defendant had acted in concert in the robbery of the murder victim; and (7) the parole revocation fine was improper.

The People will be represented by Marissa Bejarano and Jennifer A. Jadovitz, Deputy Attorneys General. Appointed counsel Susan K. Shaler and Mark L. Christiansen will represent the appellants.

Desert Mirage High School has many Hispanic students and encourages an appreciation of students' home cultures while emphasizing English acquisition to fully participate in the life of their families' new country. The high school provides a full spectrum of course offerings and extracurricular activities, including college preparation programs. The school also addresses community needs through home visits, community meetings, English and technology classes, and parent involvement groups and empowerment workshops.

The Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, hears appeals from the Superior Courts of Inyo, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. It will conduct another Outreach Plus program this fall at Bishop High School in Inyo County on September 28–29, 2010. The Inyo County Bar Association will host a reception on the evening of September 29.

*For more information or for information regarding ADA accommodations, call Paula Garcia, Assistant Clerk/Administrator, at 951-248-0200.*

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