



NEWS RELEASE

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Court of Appeal Reaches Out Today to San Bernardino County Students

Rialto—Hundreds of students at Rialto High School in San Bernardino County today are participating in a special court-community outreach program where they are learning about the state court system and are being encouraged to consider careers in the law.

The Outreach Plus program, a joint venture of the bench, bar, and schools, opened this morning with an oral argument session before the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, at Rialto High School, 595 South Eucalyptus Avenue, Rialto.

After the arguments, the justices held a question-and-answer session for about 200 students. Teams of justices and members of the San Bernardino Bar Association also visited the classrooms of about 800 students and encouraged them to stay in school and pursue a college education.

The program is, in part, aimed at cutting the high school dropout rate, which statewide is estimated at 12.7 percent (by the California Department of Education) to 30 percent (by the Pacific Research Institute).

The Court of Appeal developed the program in response to Chief Justice George's emphasis on court and community collaboration, said Presiding Justice Manuel Ramirez. The appeals argued today include the following issues.

- ***People v. Bebe F. Scheller, E036402:*** This case involves a defendant's conviction for possession of methamphetamine for sale and illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. The defendant's counsel will argue that her incriminating statement, made to a

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probation officer before she withdrew her guilty plea, should not have been used against her in the prosecution's case-in-chief, but only for impeachment purposes.

- ***People v. Roman Terrence Ponce, E036367***: In the second appeal, a jury convicted the defendant of robbery. Defendant's appellate counsel will argue that the jury should have been told it could convict the defendant of a lesser included offense; that there was not sufficient evidence to prove the defendant committed robbery; that two prior convictions were not sufficient to be used to increase the defendant's sentence; and that the jury, rather than the judge, should have decided the length of the term for the robbery.

Outreach Plus was originally created through the collaboration of the Court of Appeal and the San Bernardino County Bar Association with Herbert R. Fischer, Ph.D., San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, Arturo Delgado, Ed.D., Superintendent of the San Bernardino Unified School District, and Kenneth Martinez, Principal of Pacific High School.

The court and bar association adapted the program to Rialto High School with the assistance of three of the school's administrators: Principal Mehran Akhtarkhvari, Assistant Principal Christine Foote, and Caroline Pearson, who coordinates the "Smaller Learning Communities" and internship programs. The public was invited to attend the special oral argument proceedings.

The Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two, hears appeals from the superior courts in Inyo, San Bernardino, and Riverside Counties. The San Bernardino County Bar Association is California's oldest continuously operating bar association, having served the Inland Empire's legal community and public for 130 years.

For more information, call Henry Espinoza, Assistant Clerk/Administrator, at 951-248-0200.

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