



Educational Outreach

The First State Capitol • 1413 Eoff Street • Wheeling, WV 26003-3582

Barbara K. Knutsen, Executive Director

P: 304.232.2576 or 304.215.0522 F: 304.232.8200

www.walswheeling.com

Message from the Executive Director

We welcome you to The WALS (Wheeling Academy of Law and Science) Foundation website and encourage you to take a look at what we have accomplished to further our mission.

The WALS Foundation is a non-profit organization formed in 2004. At that time we created the Mock Trial Program as part of our educational outreach mission. This program has been funded by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. In 2013 we celebrated over 13,000-4th, 5th and 8th grade student participants from twelve counties in West Virginia before going statewide for all 5th grade West Virginia students.

We began with Ohio County as our base and school administrators there immediately noted the value of having an educational program of this nature available in the classrooms, without the necessity of transporting students to a courtroom or a venue off premises. Students from public, parochial, private, after-school and home schooled programs have been a part of the two-day project and over the years have role played in 11 different scripts, all dealing with substance abuse issues. The topic for the last five years has been prescription drug abuse. Students and volunteer lawyers brought the American Justice system to life right there in the classrooms!

Our two-day outreach extended to eleven other counties including Hancock, Tyler, Brooke, Jackson, Wetzel (two years), Marshall (three years) and Kanawha (seven years). Several years ago we received additional grant funding from The Appalachian Regional Commission that led us to four of those counties, along with the counties of Braxton, Clay, Barbour and McDowell.

It's been an unbelievable journey for me because I was able to create the program and share it first hand with over 10,000 student participants before making a teacher's manual in 2012 and training all 5th grade teachers in the RESA 6 area as part of the pilot program to expand. The school administrators, principals, teachers and especially the students have been a sheer joy. Volunteer lawyers from all of these counties have been extremely generous with their time and talent as they played the role of "Judge." The student surveys and teacher evaluations show the program is well received and always state they want it back.

According to the 5th grade Next Generation Social Studies Content Standards and Objectives, (SS.PD.5.C) from the West Virginia Department of Education, students will "assume a role in a mock trial," so we felt it was time to "let go" and pass along to teachers. We are proud to announce that ALL 20,000+ 5th grade students in the state of West Virginia now have the opportunity to participate in the WALS Mock Trial Program that is currently web-based and includes general/background information, the teacher's manual, resources, dvd's, contact information and more.

Over the years, this program has proven to be a great experience for the teachers and students as they learned about our justice system through this innovative, creative and active in the participation demonstration process.

More importantly, prescription drug abuse is an epidemic among our youth today, both in West Virginia and nationally. We must continue to educate our students about the dangers and risks associated with misusing prescription drugs. Evaluations have shown that students who participated in the WALS Foundation Mock Trial Program have increased their understanding about this current substance abuse issue through an established program that is objective, non-threatening and fun!

Barb

The mission of The WALS Foundation is to offer educational programming on issues of public concern, not otherwise covered in depth.