

An Evening of Court for 4-H Youth

Recently ten 4-H youth participated in the 4-H sponsored 'Chatham Crawl.' They took a trail walk at Jordan Lake, were excited about the exotic animals at Carolina Tiger Rescue and then got serious Courtroom experience at the Chatham County Historic Courthouse.

At the Courthouse, the girls learned the duties of various courtroom participants from experts who have filled the roles as professionals. Then the youth performed those roles in a mock trial in the historic Courtroom. One became the judge, two became the prosecuting attorneys, two became the defense attorneys, four were witnesses and one became the bailiff in the fictitious case of *State versus J. Simpson*. The two prosecutors were coached by the current Clerk of Superior Court, Sam Cooper. The defense attorneys were coached by Todd Roper, a partner in the local law firm of Moody Williams Roper and Lee. The judge was coached by District Court Judge Sherrill Murrell, and the bailiff was coached by the next Clerk of Superior Court, Dana Hackney. The jury, composed of 4-H adult leaders during the trial and joined by the youth for deliberations, was coached by Pittsboro Mayor and attorney Cindy Perry.

To prepare for the trial, the youth and their coaches were given just the facts of the case. They had 30 minutes to plan strategy and determine questions for prosecution and defense witnesses. Only the facts elicited during trial were presented to the jury. The jury was charged by the judge with determining the accused's guilt. After some deliberation, the jury chose to ask a question of the judge who sent them right back for further deliberations.

Surprisingly, during deliberations a courtroom spectator tried to tamper with the jury! The judge noted the egregious behavior and had the bailiff eject the spectator.



The Evening of Court portion of the 4-H Chatham Crawl could not have happened without 4-H leaders and local legal professionals giving generously of their time and talents for an evening to Chatham youth. Also, thanks to Chatham Historical Museum volunteers Patty Walters, Pat Stucke, and Cindy Schmidt who participated in and organized the evening.

Participants were:

First Row L-R: Lauren Browndyke, Katelyn Walker, Aria Browndyke, Dana Hackney, Brilliet Olvera, Cindy Schmidt

Second Row L-R: Ginger Cunningham, Miana Taylor, Sage Coykendall, Rylie Ward, Liz Mauney, Sam Cooper

Third Row L-R: Victoria Brewer, Avery Wright, Marissa Kurz, Lindsay Shore-Wright

Fourth Row L-R: Cindy Perry, Todd Roper, Emma Wicker, Amelia Rodriguez, Sherri Murrell

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