

ARIZONA STUDENTS COMPETE IN FORENSIC SCIENCE “WHO DUNNIT?”: Teams from North Canyon High and Desert Sands Middle School Named “CSI: Arizona” Champs

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[PHOENIX, AZ] –The crime scene, in which a young man’s severed hand lies at the bottom of an empty reptile tank, is staged but to the teams of 11 to 17 year old forensic investigators who gathered last Friday for the “CSI: Arizona” Statewide Showcase, it’s a serious competition of law and science. Now in its third year, the competition gives students from around the state the opportunity to showcase their investigation, analytical and presentation skills.

The top five middle school and top five high school teams began early Friday morning and were evaluated by a volunteer panel of expert judges on their processing, documentation, examination, and interpretation of the crime scene and evidence, as well as their interviewing skills and a final presentation of their hypothesis. The culmination of the days activities came when **Desert Sands Middle School**, coached by John Halverson, and **North Canyon High School**, coached by Donald Davis, were announced the overall winners of the competition.

“This is my 3rd year with CSI: Arizona and it has been so amazing to watch how this program, and the kids especially, have grown and developed. These kids work so hard!” shared Officer Robert Church, a school resource officer with the Clarkdale-Jerome Police Department and volunteer judge for this year’s CSI: Arizona competition. CSI: Arizona Program Coordinator, Michelle Kenoun agrees, “So much of CSI: Arizona’s success and popularity is directly related to how much the kids really love it. In addition to the fascinating science application, the students get such a great perspective and respect for the law and the professions that work to uphold it.”

Eighth grader Oliver Walters, from Yuma’s Centennial Middle School, stated that his favorite part of the competition was the Interviewing Round because it helped put the pieces of the crime puzzle together and added, “This is my second year as a lead detective for the CSI competition. I want to be a CSI (Crime Scene Investigator) when I get older.”

The first place high school and middle school teams each won a \$250.00 scholarship sponsored by the Phoenix-based company Affordable Responders Supply. Second and third place middle and high school teams each won high-powered microscopes for their schools. In addition to the winning school teams from Desert Sands Middle School and North Canyon High School, other participating school teams included: Centennial Middle School (Yuma, Coach Ellen Potes), Crane Middle School (Yuma, Coach: Officer Kenneth Vandersloot),

Desert Sands Middle School (Phoenix, Coach John Halverson), Woodard Jr. High School (Yuma, Coach Sonny Seale), Barry Goldwater High School (Glendale, Coach Margaret Aguilar), Canyon del Oro High School –Two Teams (Oro Valley, Coach Officer Shawn Benjamin), and North High School (Phoenix, Coach Michael Kaddatz)

The statewide CSI: Arizona showcase participants were selected on the merits of a report which documented how the team processed, preserved, analyzed and interpreted evidence from a mock crime scene. Each of the 28 reports submitted were evaluated by a panel of police officers and the top 5 Middle School and top 5 High School submissions were invited to the State Showcase.

The CSI Arizona Showcase is hosted by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education in partnership with the Phoenix Police Department and Arizona Department of Education. Judges for the competition include law enforcement officers, crime lab personnel, and science professionals. Representatives from various legal professions acted as witnesses in the case.

About the CSI: Arizona Program

CSI Arizona is a Forensic Science and Law Related Education program which combines the fundamentals of law and science to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in both fields through the application of crime scene analysis, evidence gathering, critical thinking, and communication and presentation skills. Students are able to engage in practical experience of applying the law and science to a real life scenario. High school and middle school teams are formed through an elective class or a school club at their school site. The Foundation provides training and support for teachers and officers through the Law Related Education Academy and hosts the competition.

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education

The Foundation provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups working toward “access to justice for all Arizonans” through law-related education and free legal services. The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education plays a leading role in preparing Arizona students for civic responsibility. The Foundation reaches more than 100,000 children each year by training teachers, school resource officers and probation officers about our laws, justice system and the foundations of democracy. It is also home of *LawForKids.org*, America’s first Web site dedicated to teaching students about the law.

Helpful Websites

- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education: <http://www.azflse.org>
- Arizona Forensic Science/CSI: <http://www.azflse.org/CSIArizona/>

