

Students test legal waters at mock trial

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Photo: Kristi Nix

A mock trial was conducted at the Friendswood Municipal Court last week by students in the Criminal Justice, Para Legal and Court Reporting Programs at Alvin Community College.

The trial was based on the conviction of Charles Raby. In 1992, Raby confessed to killing 71 year old Edna Mae Franklin. From death row, he has since recanted his

confession. And now, new DNA and blood evidence from the crime scene supports his claims of innocence and suggests someone else may have been the killer.

The mock trial exercise was organized to give students valuable courtroom experience. Before the event, students were given basic background information about the murder and were then challenged to consider the case and the new evidence.

Roles were assigned to the students, and witnesses were called to speak before the jury.

“In the mock trial, my daughter-in-law Stephanie Gutheinz acted as the judge,” said Alvin Community College Professor Joseph R. Gutheinz. “As an Associate attorney with Berg & Androphy, she is actually working on the Charles Raby defense team.” Also present was Sarah Frazier, who works alongside Gutheinz as a fellow Partner at the Houston law firm. She has been defending Raby since 2001.

In preparation for the mock trial, the students read hundreds of pages of documents and court transcripts.

“At the conclusion of the proceedings, we had an open forum where the student jury talked about the case,” Gutheinz said. “They felt the DNA and blood evidence was compelling evidence in favor of Raby.”

In the end, students and the members of the audience were asked to vote whether they felt Charles Raby was innocent or guilty.

“Every person in attendance, raised their hand to signify their belief that Charles Raby was not guilty,” Gutheinz said.

In real life, Raby now sits on death row, awaiting the possibility of a new trial and the chance to prove that he is indeed, not guilty.