

## Student Competitions *Continued from page 7*

brings together nearly 1,000 sixth- through twelfth-graders from the county's schools and districts to compete at large. It was designed to "promote, encourage, showcase and reward the achievements of students" in several fields of science.

Judged by a volunteer army of local scientists and engineers (many from the area military bases), about 75 winning entries will compete at the State Science Fair the following week. The longstanding event has been held in Ventura County since 1955 and has grown to include entries in biology, botany, zoology, physics and more.

At the Mock Trial, high schools send their student teams to work a true-to-life courtroom case so that the students can learn

about American legal procedures through first-hand experience. Students are assigned character roles and spend months before-hand researching the case and readying for trial.

To prepare for the competition, which is modeled on real courtroom proceedings, the county's legal community steps up to help the students. Attorneys consult and advise the students and seated judges hear the cases. The Ventura County Mock Trial was held last month. The winning teams can compete at the state level and from there at the National Mock Trial event.

"The really

nice thing about Mock Trial and Science Fair is they are industry specific so it gives kids a chance to get their feet wet and interact with people in those fields," Tarkany said. "When Mock Trial is over, they give kids feedback on what they did, and at the Science Fair they're hearing from people right here in this county."

Ventura County schools have a long history of representing California in the national Academic Decathlon. Nine-member high school teams compete in 10 scholastic events after months of studying and preparing. At the Ventura County Academic Decathlon held in early February, Westlake High School won and will be sent on to the state competition March 14-17 in Sacramento.



Members of the Adolfo Camarillo High School 2012 Mock Trial team.



Members of the 2013 Hueneme High School Academic Decathlon team from left, Gezreel Kim Federis, Patricia Atanacio, and Marisa Jones

# Preschoolers Take a Walk for Learning

Strategically placed next to First 5 preschool facilities, three Born Interactive Learning Trails in Ventura County parks help caregivers interact with the young children in their care.

Funded partly by the Ventura County United Way, the trails, found in Oxnard, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley, were created to help provide learning opportunities for young children and their caregivers from every day moments, said Susan Englund, vice president of Community Impact for United Way.

The trails are designed around nine learning activity signs that each give different directions to adults. They are printed in Spanish and English. Examples include: *Watch! Stop! Learn! Play!*, which encourages the caregiver to follow the child's lead to build curiosity and confidence, and *Talk! Listen! Sing!*, which encourages singing and talking with children.

There are also stenciled games and activities on the ground along the trail, such as a hopscotch board and the ABCs.

This month, the United Way will unveil its fourth Born Learning Trail in West Park Community Center in Ventura. The other locations include Berylwood Park in Simi Valley, Nyeland Acres Community Center in Oxnard



The Born Interactive Learning Trails help caregivers to interact with their preschoolers.

and El Parque de la Paz in Thousand Oaks.

Each trail costs about \$3,000 to create and the labor is provided by volunteers, said United Way's President and CEO, Dave Smith.

"One of our corporate partners, Aera Energy, will have a team of volunteers doing all of the construction work," he said.



Three Born Trails are currently found in Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Oxnard and a fourth is in the works at West Park Community Center in Ventura.