

January 2015 Newsletter

Massachusetts Speech & Debate League

Happy New Year and welcome to the second half of our speech year. We started January with gusto at Newton South and look forward to Mardi Gras at Shrewsbury in February and the Needham tournament in March. In between we have the qualifiers for Catholic Nationals and the National Speech and Debate League nationals. Harvard also happens in February – as if we wanted a free weekend!!

With all of these tournaments going on we look to the end of the year and a changing of the guard. The board's term will be up at the beginning of May and we look to all of you for guidance in having the members of the current board continue or new faces take the helm. A committee of **non-board members** is needed to discuss with the current board if they wish to stay and to talk with new coaches to see if there is interest in filling positions. Please email me directly if you are interested in being on this committee. It would be great to have the committee in place by the end of January.

On another note, we have had many new schools join us this year and a few schools come and just observe to see what we are about and potentially join us next year. This is great for the league and the new students who benefit from this wonderful activity. However, we have noticed a concerning trend with new and old schools alike and I want to address it here. Many schools have been asking for their ballots and leaving tournaments early if they do not have students break to finals. While league officials understand that an emergency that can occur, the timely running of the tournament requires that all of the judges that came with each school stay until the last ballot for finals has been handed out. The number of judges needed to run a tournament is massive and just one leaving early can make things very difficult. There have been times that because there was no other option, a tab room staff member has had to leave tab to judge a round.

Not only is staying until after finals vital for the running of the tournament, it is beneficial for students. Those that don't break to finals should attend a final round to see exactly what it takes to get there. When they watch the rounds, they may consider, "What are the students in finals doing that get them to the top and what do I, as someone that didn't break, need to do to step up my game?" Attending or judging final rounds is also helpful for new coaches. They have the opportunity to learn from the best students. What a great way to become an even stronger coach! Staying for awards is a powerful experience. You have the opportunity to see which students were strong. You see the anticipation on the finalists faces and the joy and heartbreak that comes with the outcomes. All of these things are great life lessons.

We hope that those who left early from the last few tournaments will consider what they missed. We realize tournament days can be long, but if you use the time wisely there are huge benefits.

The MSDL board hopes you have a prosperous and successful 2015.