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I. Welcome / History / Background

The Fifth Annual Shenandoah Valley Forensics League Tor Johnson Halloween Costume Contest Tournament for Speech and Debate is here yet again!

Here are some good points to keep in mind when it comes to this awesome and one-of-a-kind tournament!

The categories and voting will be the same as they were last year. And in the words of the founder of this great event...

"We have trophies, old ones that are the real deal. We want to use them year after year as legacy trophies for five categories of "best costumes." They are big, heavy, impressive and a little funny... Of course, the costumes will have to meet high standards for respect (funny is fine) and tastefulness."

-Bill Wonneberger

The five categories (which have been named and described) are as follows:

"The Socratic Cup" - Best Historical Theme Costume
"The Trekkie Cup" - Best Sci-Fi/Fantasy Theme Costume
"The Boris Karloff Cup" - Best Classically Halloween Theme Costume
"The Beetlejuice Cup" - Funniest Costume
"The Duo" - Best Duo Costume (Think salt and pepper, Abbott and Costello, Mario and Luigi, etc.)

[Link] is a link to the ballot students will have available to them at the tournament if you'd care to check it out. This form will be helpful in identifying those participants that have registered for a particular category and assist in voting.

Costume competitors will be issued a name tag with a code to put on for voting purposes when their coach registers the team. All students, regardless of costume participation and/or tournament competition, are encouraged to vote!
The top-scoring entries will be recognized with the winner taking home the cup and belt for the year until the January Championship!

Costumes

The long and short of it is this: common sense. Think about what your own school would allow when it comes to students wearing costumes during the school day. Considering that this is a speech and debate tournament this goes a bit further.

- No full face-covering masks. This is a safety matter. Masks for Covid protocols are still required and, if possible, should try to be worked into the overall costume.
- Distracting the judge so that they are more focused on the professional-grade open sore on your face oozing pus may not be the best choice.
- No weapons (or potential look-alikes).
- Same for drugs.
- Make use of the standard rule and avoid anything that "inflames or defames".

Again, let's apply common sense here and simply check with students ahead of time as to their plans, make sure they bring clothes as a backup (as they may want to change anyway) and when in doubt think about what your administration would most likely say.

For those students interested in participating I ask that you share with them (or do it yourself) the following link which will need to be filled out in order to be entered into the contest for bragging rights, big trophies, and ultimate glory!

The deadline for costume registration will be Monday, October 25th at 5:30 p.m. If a competitor or coach enters a costume entry after that they will most likely not be registered for competition although they may certainly come dressed for the competition. There will be more details on voting as we get to registration week in about three weeks or so.

Costume registration: Here

Please do share this link with your competitors so they may register the more participation the more fun!
II. Registration

Registration is now open!

-Tournament registration is still at tabroom.com. If you need help registering please let me know.

Our tournaments specific site link is: http://torjohnson.tabroom.com

There you should be able to find a listing and description of all events as well as this letter and the previous season opener letter.

-Here are some resources to help you out if you are new to Tabroom.com:

Creating a Tabroom.com Account and Setting up your Team

Creating a Student Account in Tabroom.com

Linking Student Accounts in Tabroom.com

Tabroom.com Competitor Accounts

-Competitors need to have an account on Tabroom.com in order to receive postings as well as their ballots at the end of the tournament.

-Student Congress legislation/topic areas will be addressed below under VI. Debate.

-Don't forget to register costumes as noted above.

No entry limits in either Forensics or Debate.

If this creates too much of a problem we will deal with it at the tournament and make adjustments for the remaining tournaments of the year.

Don't forget the ShenVaFL website (shenvafl.wordpress.com) when it comes to dues information ($50) including an invoice if need be.
III. Deadlines

Registration will end Friday, October 22nd at 5:30 p.m.

Name changes (and partner switches) may be made up until Wednesday, October 27th at 5:30 p.m., where all things entered will be no longer open to editing.

This includes judges and any/all fees, especially if not enough judges are found!

The way drop fees are set up is that if a student drops on the day of the tournament for any reason other than an emergency (illness/death in the family/coach approved emergency) there will be a $10 fine.

If it is an emergency drop there will be no fine. If it's because the kid "forgot" or didn't finish getting ready in time then the fee stands.

Arrival Times

If you are going to be arriving after 5 p.m. please call me (540-421-3716) or text and let me know if there are any drops or changes that we need to know about.

I will try to call coaches, as well, starting from here-on-out, but I need cell numbers to be entered into Tabroom, and be accurate, for me to make use of them.

The sooner we know if you have any drops/changes the sooner we can go ahead and publish rounds and get things moving in tab room. Even though you may be showing up after 5 we can make up for any lost time by not waiting for rounds to be announced.

Just a reminder from the season opener e-mail that there will be the ability to check your team in via Tabroom.com so if you have everyone you may mark yourself as "registered" which lets us know that you're good to go. You'll still want to check in once you arrive, but indicating your arrival on Tabroom.com is just as acceptable as calling or texting me.
Welcome Letter

Our first tournament of the new year is being hosted by the always-wonderful and absolutely essential Mr. Michael Villacrusis at Turner Ashby High School! The week of the tournament those schools that have registered will be receiving more explicit instructions and details directly from him.
IV. Pandemic Protocols

This information was the league/season opener e-mail but here it is again for reiteration purposes:

Masking - As we were working on setting up for this season we consulted with the highest administrative levels of our host schools and the guidance/requirements that were given to us are as follows:

Masks are required in the building when performing. Masking does not mean a face shield, but some type of covering over the nose and mouth which must be worn at all times when in a school building.

Furthermore, concerning tournament mechanics one thing came up and was discussed with the following decisions made:

-No food will be served at the tournaments as six-foot spacing would be almost impossible to enforce/maintain.

-Eating to/from the tournament site is up to each school/coach to manage as they see fit. (Outside of the building is acceptable or back on the bus during the tournament in between rounds would also be okay.)

-This includes food for the judges' lounge. We will do our best to let judges know of their judging assignments so they may plan accordingly.

One thing to note is that with the transition to tournament dynamics going through Tabroom.com the e-mail/text messaging system will be in place to let judges know their assignments as well as the competitors. So, if someone is outdoors or in a vehicle they need not worry about missing an announcement as this will be sent to them directly.

This, of course, depends on being registered with Tabroom.com in order to have e-mail/text messaging enabled.

We, obviously, understand how this is not ideal, but we are not exactly operating in ideal times. Is it better than last year? Absolutely. Is it just like it always was? Not quite and not yet. In order to be able to offer this opportunity to compete, we must follow through with host site guidelines and do everything we can to keep our students, judges, and coaches safe.
V. Judges

Judge Notes/Registration

Please check any notes you have on judges as we DO look at those and can use that information to make sure that we are using people to the best of their abilities. If you have someone entered into Speech to judge for Congress, but they are qualified for Lincoln-Douglas or Policy please do put that on there. If we end up being short in an area when setting up the night before we look at the notes to see who we might be able to slide into another category.

Judge requirements -

- One judge for every six Forensics (speech) and/or Student Congress (debate) entries.
- One judge for every two Lincoln-Douglas debaters.
- One judge for every two Public Forum teams.

If there are any questions/concerns about judge burdens do let me know.

Also, per the season opener e-mail please ensure that judges have a Tabroom.com account. If they judged for ShenVaFL OR VHSL last year they should be good to go. If they are new to judging or took last year off they will need to set one up.

Here are some resources to help aid in this effort:

Creating a Judge Account on Tabroom.com

社 Judge Account Linking Directions

Tabroom.com Judging
VI. Forensics

A. Scripts

We will also be allowing scripts in Forensics categories since this is the first tournament of the year and so early on. So there will be no penalty for use of scripts at this tournament, but following the October tourney, the standard script rule will be in effect.

B. Double Entries

Double-entry is acceptable in Speech with the exception of Extemp.

How Double Entry Works...

Since it has been a year since we were last in person and there may be people new to the world of Double Entry here is how Double Entry works. After a coach has registered all of their competitors and shared their codes with them the competitor will need to check in with BOTH events at the start of the round. Judges are often getting things sorted out before beginning so there is no need to rush.

Competitors should visit the event they are doing second **first** to let the judge know that they are double entered and will return once they complete their first event. This keeps the judge from waiting around for everyone to show before beginning and is considered to be a professional courtesy.

Once in the first event that the competitor has chosen to complete first they should, again, let the judge know that they are double entered and so should be moved up to the top of the speaker order so that they may then leave after finishing their piece/performance/speech and go to their second event.

A double-entered competitor should take note of their speaking order in both events - typically the preference would be to do the event that has the competitor listed higher on the speaker order to avoid too much disruption to the flow of both events, but if there is a true preference for doing one event first that is up to them.
This obviously affects the judges in that they are seeing a competitor sooner rather than later on the speaker order for the first event and often the double entered competitor may be moved to the last spot for the second event. Of course, the judge is always the ruler of the room and may work in the double entered competitor however it works best for the second event, but double-entry should always be given deference to speaking first in order to help the timing of the tournament and completion of the rounds to take place.

The biggest thing to remember, again, is that competitors should be checking in with both judges starting with the second event that will be competed in for the round.

In the past competitors would right their code and name on the board with a DE to indicate their double-entry status, but with many schools that have SmartBoards or SmartPanels it would be best to avoid writing on any surface out of respect for our host schools. Also, since ballots are online the judges will already have the list of codes and names with them.

C. Extemp

Extemp questions will be provided by NSDA for this first tournament and questions will be available for coaches/competitors in order to help introduce extemporaneous speaking and ease the process along the lines of script usage for other Forensics Events. Here are the questions that will be used for this first tournament.

This will be the only tournament where questions will be previewed before the tournament. This is in an effort to try and help provide a "Scripts allowed" rule for Extemp. Also, after this tournament questions will be provided courtesy of the NSDA. We will make use of VHSL provided areas in determining questions for champs in January.

Laptops in Extemp -

"In preparing their speeches, students may refer to magazine and newspaper articles or printouts they have brought with them, or to files they have previously saved to a laptop computer. They may not use the Internet during their prep time."

Observing and learning: From the season opener e-mail - We would strongly encourage competitors to observe after they complete their performance in order to better learn by watching others. The only speaker that this would prove difficult for would be the first speaker in the second round. Everyone should be staying and watching during the second round during October, November, and December.
VII. Debate

A. Student Congress

Legislation submission is located here.

There you will find directions and outlines on how to post.

Reminder to coaches, be sure to be looking over and personally verifying legislation BEFORE it is submitted!

Legislation MUST be in by the registration deadline of 5:30 p.m. Friday, October 22nd otherwise your Student Congress Debater will be dropped.

In the spirit of trying to create the best environment possible, we are also asking that schools only submit a MAXIMUM of two pieces of legislation. There is no need to label dockets as the two pieces should be from two different areas of the DIEV. This is in an effort to help ease newcomers into the event and hopefully create better all-around competition. We are looking to try and have one chamber. The goal here is to have new debaters learn by observing more experienced ones and also reduce the research/preparation burden for all since it is the first tournament of the season.

This is for this tournament only. After October EVERY Student Congress Debater will need to submit legislation in order to be eligible.

Also, just a reminder - just like everything else we are trying a no-limits on entries for Student Congress as with everything else. One judge should be provided for every 6 entries, though, just like Speech.

Link to Student Congress Topic Area Submissions: Here
B. Lincoln-Douglas

There is both Varsity and JV offered at all ShenVaFL tournaments. We do not make use of the Novice Lincoln-Douglas debate topic provided by the NSDA.

October topic: Resolved: The member nations of the World Trade Organization ought to reduce intellectual property protections for medicines.

Per previous e-mail concerning JV versus Varsity placement: “JV helps ease some new debaters in by ideally starting them off with someone of their caliber or experience level. Some coaches don't believe in JV which is their prerogative, but in order to help establish ourselves as a learning league and encourage debaters of all backgrounds, we offer a stepping stone that maintains all of the rules and topics but ideally tries to pair debaters with those that are starting out just like they are.

I personally start all new debaters, regardless of age/grade level, in JV and if they manage to qualify for Champs before December then move them up to Varsity to see and experience more practiced and veteran debaters. Also, after two years of competition in ShenVaFL starting in JV is not an option for those in my program.

But, again, this is my prerogative as a coach and everyone may decide to approach it in a different fashion.

We have never felt the need to have a hard and fast rule for this as we know coaches know their debaters better than any of us and know what is appropriate for them and their program.”
C. Public Forum

Starting this year there is NO JV in Public Forum Debate.

October topic: Resolved: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should substantially increase its defense commitments to the Baltic states.

One other note on PF - we will be using the NSDA November/December topic for Public Forum just like they do in October/November. We will follow suit since they provide topics for other programs as well and we have used NSDA topics in the past.

January’s topic will be different just as the March and April one will be as well.

Also, per the previous e-mail - we will NOT be making any adjustments to the structure of Public Forum this year. There will be a discussion held at the end of the year concerning the 2021-22 season and whether to make an adjustment or not, but for now, we will proceed with the structure as it has been set over previous years with two minutes of prep time and two minutes for Summary Speeches and for each Final Focus.

D. Policy

There is only Varsity offered in ShenVaFL (due to low numbers) and we are working on developing a workshop/clinic with JMU at this first tournament.

No judges are required for this first one. There will be more updates as this is developed. We are currently in talks with JMU.

The topic for 2021-22: Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its protection of water resources in the United States.

That's all for now, hopefully. I've tried to address everything so that I am not filling your inbox with e-mails. I will send out a reminder (with a lot of the same information that is contained in this e-mail) the week registration is due.

I look forward to seeing everybody in less than a month! If you have any issues with any of the links/attachments please do let me know.

-Steve