



Third-year Rhodes University law students Lara von Wildenrath, left, and Armand Swart won the second annual Child Law Moot Court held at the Pretoria High Court.

PICTURE: MASI LOSI

Rhodes pair win Child Law Moot Court

EDDY DELCHER

RHODES University won the second annual Child Law Moot Court, held at the Pretoria High Court on Saturday.

Lara von Wildenrath, 22, and Armand Swart, 21, edged out University of Pretoria (UP) students Priscah Ramalekana, 17, and Trevor Shinwana, 19, in a tightly contested repeat of last year's final.

"It was amazing because we did not expect to win. We were really on par with Tuks and only won by two points," said Von Wildenrath, who intends to become an attorney in corporate or child law after completing her studies.

"It was a lot of work and Tuks put up a strong fight. We're very proud," added Swart, who also wants to practise child law.

Although the UP duo came second in the team competition, they won the prize for the best written argument and Ramalekana won the best speaker award.

"I am very happy and very proud. We'd been working on it for two months and everyone did really well. It was also an amazing opportunity to speak in front of judges in court," said Ramalekana, who aims to work for Bowman Gilfillan or Norton Rose South Africa in the future.

"I'm glad all the hard work paid off," added Shinwana, who wants to become a practising attorney in commercial law.

The mock case centred on a homosexual man's attempts to prevent the mother of his long-estranged daughter from relocating to a country which gay people were

barred from entering.

The teenager had recently discovered who her real father was, after he publicly "came out", and the two had started building a relationship via Facebook.

Law students from UP, the University of Johannesburg, Rhodes University and University of North West took part in the competition, which was initiated by the Centre for Child Law and UP.

Rhodes and Tuks made it to the final round, over which Judge Jody Kollapen presided, along with Davyton Chief Magistrate Daniel Thulare and family law attorney Gerhard van Zyl.

"I am very impressed, just as I was last year. You would not have a problem finding good legal representatives here," said Kollapen.

"This moot court is essential for

every student who wants to go into child law. It gives them a real feel of what to expect as practitioners as they have to stand up before judges. It also promotes teamwork and sets high standards," he added.

"Both teams were almost equally matched. It's almost unfair that a winner has to be announced," said van Zyl.

"If I needed counsel, they would be the first ones I would choose," he added.

Ann Skelton, Centre for Child Law director, hopes the annual event will attract more lawyers to child law.

"Child law is a new, interesting field which requires special knowledge, but a lot of students go into big corporate law. Children can't pay you, so people don't do (child law)," she said.