

## 'Jury' says wolf really not so bad

A tale meant for the nursery was taken to the courtroom yesterday at the elementary school.

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**EAST LONGMEADOW** — Forget what you've read in the nursery tale: the wolf walks.

That was the unanimous verdict yesterday in the case of Mountainview Elementary School v. the Big Bad Wolf, a simulated trial staged by the fifth-grade pupils enrolled in the school's gifted and talented program.

"We wanted to give them experience in all aspects of a trial, so they really had to work hard," said program teacher Donna M. Whitman.

"This wasn't just a performance. It was designed to get them thinking critically as well as creatively."

Students had to study logic, laws and persuasive arguments



Staff photo by **MICHAEL S. GORDON**

**The Big Bad Wolf, played by guidance counselor Norma McKenna, listens yesterday during a mock trial for her alleged misdeeds as one of her defense lawyers, Alexa Napolitan, stands by.**

Please see Trial, Page A10

## Trial: Jury finds Wolf innocent

Continued from Page A1

to prepare for the trial, which was scripted by them. The school's counselor, Norma McKenna, agreed to play the part of the hirsute villain.

"We didn't know if they would decide to give her (McKenna) a year of recess duty or what," said Whitman.

The crime — malicious destruction of property and homicide (or porcinecide) of two pigs — has been made famous by the popular nursery tale, which alleges that the Big Bad Wolf huffed and puffed the homes into oblivion and ate the occupants.

Like any pretrial publicity, the fable was ignored by defense lawyers who focused on the physical evidence, eye-wit-

ness accounts and the opinions of experts. Bit by bit, reasonable doubt was established.

For example, what proof is there that the Big Bad Wolf reduced the two homes to rubble? Couldn't a strong wind have done the same?

Defense lawyers Deanna Avdoulos, Alexa Napolitan and Matthew Miller brought in two experts, Slither the Snake (the homes' architect), and Beave the Beaver (a noted builder), who testified straw and sticks were not the most sturdy building materials. In the end, neither one could swear that the two homes were destroyed by Big Bad.

Prosecutors Michelle Burdick, Brenna Clark and Quinn F. Hegarty lost no time in firing back with their own arguments

For example, wasn't the Big Bad Wolf just a tad too well-fed after a long, lean winter of hibernation? Moo the Cow, an animal science professor, told jurors that wolves love meat, and that a meal of two pigs would not be out of the question for a wolf the size of Big Bad. The wolf's private physician, Dr. Bear, testified his patient's lungs were big enough to have blown the house down.

In the end, jurors did not seem to be afraid of the Big Bad Wolf. They just didn't think the prosecution had proved its case.

The news was delivered by Judge A1, the school's custodian, Albert J. Montagna Jr.: "Big Bad is free to live out her big bad life here at Mountainview School forever."