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K-STATE STUDENT USES HIS KNOWLEDGE OF SPANISH TO ASSIST IN THE COURTROOM

MANHATTAN — Ronnie Hernandez, a Kansas State University sophomore in criminology and pre-law, is getting a jumpstart on his law career by working as an English/Spanish interpreter for the Riley County District Court.

Hernandez, Manhattan, was appointed as an interpreter by Chief District Court Judge Paul Miller because of the knowledge and experience he had gained while working as an interpreter for Enriquez Interpretation Services in the Barton County area in 2005.

Hernandez has the responsibility of interpreting court documents to plaintiffs and defendants. If the defendant does not understand the charges, it is up to Hernandez to interpret in Spanish what their rights are and to help them understand the hearing proceedings.

"It is very vital that you interpret everything to the best of your ability because you don't want to misquote anything," Hernandez said. "You have to be very detail oriented when you do this kind of job."

Hernandez has had an enthusiasm for law since he was a young boy. Growing up he saw a family member struggle through legal problems, which heightened his interest in the legal process.

"I decided that I should become a lawyer because I am so passionate about fighting for peoples' rights," Hernandez said. "I think if I do become a lawyer, I will feel very accomplished because I am making a difference for someone else."

Hernandez is currently serving as associate justice for the K-State Student Tribunal, an appointment made by Lydia Peele, student body president, and Adam Tank, K-State Student Governing Association attorney general. The Student Tribunal interprets the constitution, bylaws and legislation of the Student Governing Association.

Although Hernandez wants to start his career in law, he eventually wants to get into politics.

"I want to be part of the political arena," Hernandez said. "That's what I really want to do — help people and make a difference outside of the courtroom."