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Students compete at county spelling bee

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Sahra Smallwood, a seventh-grade student at Patton Junior High School, ultimately won third place among the 39 registered students. She received a dictionary and thesaurus provided by Lansing Kiwanis Club. Before the bee began, Smallwood said the process was fun.

"I was surprised that I won the spelling bee for my grade at school because we have many good spellers," Smallwood said. "And, even though I'm a little nervous, I hope to do well today."

The USD 207 students who qualified for participation in the county spelling bee represented the top spellers in grades 5-8.

The fifth-grade representatives were Theodore Hall of Bradley Elementary School who did not complete, Levi Hanlen of Eisenhower Elementary School and Melanie Libby of MacArthur Elementary School.

Sixth-grade students who competed were Anastasia Breen of Bradley Elementary, Sophia Martin of Eisenhower Elementary School and Tony Jasso of MacArthur Elementary School.

Smallwood and eighth-grader Riley McBride represented Patton Junior High School at the county bee. McBride said students had to take a preliminary test to qualify for participation in the school spelling bee.

"Once we took the test, we were able to participate among our classmates at school. And, our competition at school was really close," McBride said. "I did not feel nervous during that competition because I enjoy spelling. I'm trying not to be nervous for the county bee."

Marilyn Michalls, spelling bee coordinator, said that the county bee is part of the Sunflower Spelling Bee, a regional sponsor of Scripps National Spelling Bee. She said that the primary purpose is to help students improve spelling, increase vocabulary, learn concepts and develop correct English usage skills.

"The Sunflower Spelling Bee accepts winners from 79 counties in Kansas. The number of schools enrolled through Scripps National Spelling Bee determines the number of county-level winners," Michalls said. "And, the ultimate winner of the Sunflower Spelling Bee receives an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., along with other prizes."

Laurie Breen, whose daughter Anastasia competed, said it is positive to have resources like the county spelling bee process available.

"This is a wonderful learning experience," Breen said. "We think it is wonderful anytime an opportunity to build self esteem and confidence in a child is available."

Breen's daughter was equally enthusiastic about the opportunity to compete.

"I may seem calm on the outside, but inside, there is a dance party going on," Anastasia Breen said. "The entire experience has actually been enjoyable though."

Aaron Brown, a Lansing Middle School eighth-grader, was the overall winner of the 57th annual Leavenworth County Spelling Bee. The winning word was "philanthropy."

Brown advances to the Sunflower Spelling Bee Feb. 25 in Hays. The winner of that competition will advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington.

Brown was presented a plaque and received the \$50 top prize sponsored by the Leavenworth Times.

Kalia Fountaine, a seventh-grader at Tonganoxie Middle School, finished second and will also advance to the Sunflower Spelling Bee. Fountaine received the \$35 second prize sponsored by the Leavenworth Area Retired School Personnel Association.

Other students who finished among the top ten spellers were Kyler Turner of Basehor-Linwood Middle School, Joseph Discavage of Xavier Catholic School, Isabella Basanta of Pleasant Ridge Middle School, Aubrey Eder of Glenwood Ridge Elementary School, Alyiah Shirley of Basehor Intermediate School, Martin of Eisenhower Elementary School and Eliza Resch of David Brewer Elementary School.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Eisenhower Elementary School sixth-grader Sophia Martin smiles upon correctly spelling a word in the third round of the Leavenworth County Spelling Bee Feb. 3 at the Eagles Lodge 55 in Leavenworth. Sophia was among the top nine spellers in the fourth round, during which she correctly spelled "contraband," but went out in the fifth round on the word "abdicate." Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp