



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Walker Wildcat fourth-grader wins district spelling bee title

The annual Goose Creek CISD spelling bee started out with "W-R-I-T-H-E" and went a record 30 rounds, ending with "P-E-C-U-L-I-A-R" as 18 of the district's brightest students battled it out with words Tuesday, Feb. 8 in the Cedar Bayou Junior School auditorium.

Each student earned a place on the stage, having won her or his school's spelling bee. Round by round, these top spellers were eliminated, leaving two students, Victoria Walker Elementary School fourth-grader Soham Datar and Highlands Junior School sixth-grader and two-time defending champion Chinmayee Kulkarni, to face-off.

In round after round, the two spelled such words as gregarious, harpsichord, elixir, omnipotent, meticulous, and agnostic. Their spelling acumen made for — by far — the longest spelling bee in Goose Creek CISD history.

The bee ended when Chinmayee had trouble with singe and Soham successfully spelled valiant and peculiar. Austin fourth-grader Luka Schooley finished in third place.

It was a bit of a turnabout for the two final spellers. Last year, Chinmayee, who won her district spelling bee title in 11 rounds, topped Soham in Walker's qualifying bee.

Now with Soham's win, a student from Walker has won the district spelling bee title for three consecutive years. The school has only been open for four years.

Soham says he is excited to represent Goose Creek CISD in the regional spelling bee again in March. From there, he could earn a chance to compete on a national level in Washington.

"I just plan to do what I've always done before, read and study a lot with my dad," Soham said.

Walker Principal Suzanne Keith said it was tough to watch the spell off between her current student and a former one.

"I am extremely proud of Soham, and also of Chinmayee," said Keith. "Soham is a great student and an awesome speller. I'm estatic."

Soham has a family history of spelling bee success. His brother, Samuil, is the greatest speller in Goose Creek CISD bee history, winning four straight titles from 2004 to 2008

Samuil is a junior at Goose Creek Memorial.

Soham's father, Sandeep, is an engineer at Jindal, and his mother, Shilpa, substitute teaches at Robert E. Lee High School.

The next stop for Goose Creek CISD's 2011 spelling champ is the regional Houston PBS Spelling Bee on March 26. The champion of the Houston PBS Spelling Bee wins an all-expenses-paid trip to compete in the 2010 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., held in June.

After the spelling bee ended, each first place, second place, and third place winners from each campus spelling bee were presented their trophies from Dr. Byron Terrier, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services.

Here are the 2011 campus spelling bee winners:

Alamo Elementary — Cristina Nieto, fourth grade, first place; Stephanie Barragan, fourth grade, second place; Michael Garcia, third grade, third place.

Ashbel Smith Elementary — Cierra Branch, fifth grade, first place; Cynthia Gonzalez, fourth grade, second place; Emilio Hernandez, fifth grade, third place.

Austin Elementary — Luka Schooley, fifth grade, first place; Elisa Garcia, fifth grade, second place; Jaida Davis, third grade, third place.

Baytown Junior — Zion Diggles, sixth grade, first place; Alexa Francois, sixth grade, second place; Ted Huerta, seventh grade, third place.

Bowie Elementary — Chelsea Touchet, fifth grade, first place; Evan Beane, fourth grade, second place; Samuel Ward, fifth grade, third place.

Carver Elementary — Andrea Torres, fourth grade, first place; Dadre Nole, fifth grade, second place; Anette Islas, third grade, third place.

Cedar Bayou Junior — Cassadi Pape, eighth grade, first place; Hannah Weaver, eighth grade, second place; Grace Patino, seventh grade, third place.

Crockett Elementary — Marisa Gonzalez, third grade, first place; Blair Taylor, fifth grade, second place; Edward Castro, fourth grade, third place.

De Zavala Elementary — Nathalie Martinez, fifth grade, first place; Sabrina Baca, fifth grade, second place; Madilyn Lawrence, fourth grade, third place.

Gentry Junior — Nathan Kelley, seventh grade, first place; Jan Castro, eighth grade, second place; Tim Rankin, sixth grade, third place.

Harlem Elementary — Tina Phan, fourth grade, first place; Havi Nguyen, fifth grade, second place; Kara Seaton, fourth grade, third place.

Highlands Elementary — Uriel Moreno, fifth grade, first place; Jailene Cruz, fourth grade, second place; Leslie Tellez, fourth grade, third place.

Highlands Junior — Chinmayee Kulkarni, sixth grade, first place; Rachel King, seventh grade, second place; Clayton Bruce, seventh grade, third place.

Horace Mann Junior — Shruti Bam, seventh grade, first place; Utkarsh Sharma, sixth grade, second place; Octavia Smith, fifth grade, third place.

Lamar Elementary — Ashley Jhagroo, fifth grade, first place; Leslie Lopez, fifth grade, second place; Jennifer Pena, fifth grade, third place.

San Jacinto Elementary — Brianna Lopez, fourth grade, first place; Jose Banda, fifth grade, second place; Edward Kuchinski, fifth grade, third place.

Travis Elementary — Marissa Springer, third grade, first place; Ashlyn Hobbs, third grade, second place; Semaj Hawkins, fourth grade, third place.

Walker Elementary — Soham Datar, fourth grade, first place; Jessica Zapata, fifth grade, second place; Cassie Orozco, fifth grade, third place.

The Goose Creek CISD spelling bee is open to all students in grades three through eight, and is organized by Jessica Tracy, Coordinator of K-12 Language Arts, and her secretary Rosie Bocardo.

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