

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Yvonne Milliner Bowsky Elementary School Third-Grader Wins STT-STJ Spelling Bee Championship

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ST. THOMAS -- Following twenty-four action-packed rounds, Yvonne Milliner Bowsky Elementary School third-grader Cairo Leonard claimed the championship title with the correct spelling of "llama" at the St. Thomas – St. John (STTJ) District Primary Spelling Bee on Wednesday in the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School Auditorium, the Department of Education has announced. Third-graders Amirah Hector of Tutu Church of God Academy and A'Shara Liburd of Calvary Christian Academy took second and third place, respectively.

According to the release, STTJ Acting Deputy Superintendent Desha Powell opened the annual spelling event by praising the efforts of students, parents, coaches, and DOE staff

for their respective roles in preparing for the successful event.

“You have the courage, confidence, and competitive spirit that has allowed you to challenge yourself, and your fellow participants and become a champion speller at your school. This is only the beginning of your success,” said Ms. Powell, encouragingly.

Addelita Cancryn Junior High School student Nashel Nunez sang the Star-Spangled Banner and the Black National Anthem. Luben Daniel, CAHS Music Department Chairman, then performed the Virgin Islands March on Clarinet, the release said.



Mr. Daniel offered words of encouragement to the spellers while reflecting on his experience winning the 1999 STTJ District Primary Spelling Bee.

"You may be excited, nervous, or even a little bit scared or happy, but one of the emotions you should feel is pride. You are presenting yourself as a champion speller for

your school. It is a feat that not many accomplish, and you worked hard for it,” shared Mr. Daniel as he wished the spellers good luck.

Following brief self-introductions by the spellers and the Reading of the Rules, the competition began.

More than half of the 20 competitors were eliminated within the first five rounds as the words escalated in intensity to include words such as “surprise,” “parallel,” “schedule,” and “ratio.”

Liburd misspelled “terrace,” leaving Hector and Leonard to battle for the championship. Hector and Leonard battled for 12 more rounds before Hector incorrectly spelled “quotient,” allowing Leonard to secure the title with the word “llama.”

Sophia Neille, Cairo’s coach and English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher was proud of Leonard’s success during the competition. “We practiced words for 20 minutes daily during his lunch breaks. Cairo is very talented and would quickly pick up new words from various subjects. His parents were also very involved, and parental involvement really makes a world of difference in helping our students to be successful,” explained Ms. Neille.

All Spelling Bee participants received personalized dictionaries, trophies, and certificates compliments of the STTJ District. The top six spellers also received word puzzle books and board games.

Although there is no territorial competition, Primary Spelling Bee and Elementary Programs Coordinator Kalamis Maduro sees the competition as preparation for the intermediate Bee. “I think the Primary Bee is a big boost of confidence in our students,” started Maduro. “Besides, it’s a big push on vocabulary, and that’s the goal of the spelling bee, to promote literacy—with a side of friendly competition.

The top six finalists that will compete in the Territorial Bee from the St. Thomas – St. John District are Cairo Leonard of Yvonne Milliner Bowsky Elementary School; Amirah Hector of Tutu Church of God Academy; A’Shara Liburd of St. Thomas Calvary Christian Academy; Ze’Yah Francis of Jane E. Tuitt Elementary School; Kai-Lan Leatham of Ulla F. Muller Elementary School; and Yaliya Felix of Joseph Sibilly Elementary School.