

# Spelling champ outsmarts mom

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Louella Dizon knows her Ps and Qs. The bright-eyed Detroit Country Day School sixth grader from West Bloomfield outspelled 37 other district winners to win the metropolitan Detroit area annual spelling bee Wednesday. She will go to Washington, D.C., the week of June 4 to compete in the national spelling bee.

Before Louella spelled "vignette" correctly to become the winner, she had to spell "pique" also, the word missed by Philip Brandt of Dearborn Heights who came in second in the competition.

The two had gone back and forth, with first one missing a word and then the other, several times before Louella finally won. The winner had to correctly spell the word that had been missed by the previous contestant plus one more word to win the competition.

"It seemed like forever," Louella said Friday. "We spelled 27 words before we got to the winning word. We were finally taking wild guesses. They were just impossible."

BECAUSE SHE is only a sixth grader, Louella was sure Philip, an eighth grader, would be the winner, she said.

It seems scary to compete with other people to represent your own state with a lot of people depending on you.

This is Louella's second year at Country Day and the second year she has been the school's number one speller, qualifying her to compete in the district finals. She came in 19th last year.

"I was more relaxed this year," she said. "Last year I thought I probably would be in about sixth place but I found it wasn't so easy." The competition is for fifth through eighth graders.

When the competition was down to Louella and Philip, the words they were asked to spell were "out of this world," she said.

"SOME OF them I can't even pronounce. My mother never heard of them and she's a doctor. You can get a heart attack from that."

Spelling bees "usually are won by luck," Louella said, and also "by the kind of words you get, experience and from reading."

"Sometimes it's just how lucky you are," she added. Contestants are advised to study a booklet titled "Words of Champions," which Louella did.

Her parents, both doctors at Mt. Carmel Hospital, also quizzed her and she studied the dictionary some and is an avid reader.

"This grows on you," she said. "You win one and you want to win another. But right now I don't think spelling is my favorite subject."



Louella Dizon of Detroit Country Day School, Beverly Hills, will represent Michigan in a national spelling bee after out-spelling 37 other district winners. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

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