

Bee alert

LTU competition names state spelling champ

By Tim Smith
staff writer

If at first you don't succeed, . . . make sure the spelling bee judges didn't make a mistake themselves.

That strategy paid off for 13-year-old Nathan Erb of Lapeer's Ziemer Junior High, who Tuesday won the annual statewide bee cosponsored by Lawrence Technological University. In the sixth round, Nathan disputed the judges' original call that he misspelled a word, and asked them to listen to the tape.

Upon listening, the panel decided they heard the candidate wrong the first time. It thought Nathan spelled "monomechy" instead of "monomechy."

The reversal enabled him to make it to the final round against runnerup Lana Zacharczuk, of Marshall Junior High in Westland. He correctly spelled "buckstering," then the clincher, "knickknack."

"I THOUGHT I was right," said Nathan about his dispute with the judges. "I didn't want to lose on it."

Upon capturing the spelling bee, Nathan exhaled and wiped his brow in relief.

Despite Erb's win, candidates from the Observer & Eccentric area fared well in the bee, which included a field of 35 area winners, all in grades 5-8.

Three of the final six survivors were from the area. They included Zacharczuk, Troy Stanichuk, of South Park Middle School in Troy, and Livonia's Lia Pagel, of St. Paul's

Lutheran School.

"I could have studied a little harder," said Stanichuk, who misspelled "expallate" in the ninth round. "I knew that word. I don't know why I missed it."

Zacharczuk, meanwhile, said she didn't see "buckstering," the word she was eliminated on, during her lengthy review of word lists with her family in preparation for the bee.

"I DIDN'T know that word. I didn't see it on any of the lists," said Lana, who picked up a thesaurus, 1990 World Almanac and dictionary for finishing second.

Livonia's Pagel, also eliminated in the ninth round, said she was "just glad to get this far."

Even those who were knocked out early, such as Sean Galloway of East Hills Middle School in Bloomfield Hills, had to win earlier contests in their classes, grades, schools and regions to reach LTU.

"I knew every word that was going to be in the finals," by studying three hours a day with his mother, Galloway said.

Unfortunately for him, the word he was eliminated from the bee on ("commination") was not among those he studied.

"The word I got wrong was one of the intermediate words. I guess that's why I lost," he explained.

ALSO COMPETING were Joseph Kirkland, of Farmington's Beahan Junior High School, Taneshia Blackmon, of People's Community Baptist



According to Carol Kirkland of Farmington, she was a "wreck" in the days leading up to Tuesday's statewide spelling bee. But her son, Joseph, was fine, she said.

Church in Westland and Michelle Perez, of Avondale Middle School in Rochester Hills. Kirkland was eliminated in the seventh round, the others in the eighth.

According to Kirkland's mother and spelling coach, Carol, the seventh grader was the calm one in the weeks of preparation leading up to the bee. "I was a wreck, he was fine."

Carol Kirkland said the importance of being a good speller and reader has been emphasized in her family since her children were small.

Several of the candidates said a byproduct of such good spelling hab-

its is the opportunity to leave bulky dictionaries behind.

"You don't have to look it up all the time," Zacharczuk said.

Regardless, a dictionary was one of Erb's prizes for winning. Others included a set of encyclopedias and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C., where the national spelling bee will be held.

NATHAN, WHEN asked what his secret to success was, modestly declared, "hard work and luck."

Experience also helped him, Erb said. The student competed in the 1989 LTU bee, which was won by Robin Covey.



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Farmington's Joseph Kirkland was cool as a cucumber at the LTU-hosted spelling bee, at least until being eliminated in the seventh round.

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

● suspect arraigned

An employee of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills was arraigned in Oakland County Circuit Court in connection with the sexual assault of a center volunteer.

Appearing before Circuit Judge Jessica Cooper March 22, Jerome Edward Patton, 27, of Detroit, pleaded not guilty to assault with intent to commit criminal sexual conduct-third degree (involving penetration) — a 10-year felony.

Cooper continued Patton's \$5,000 personal recognition bond. A pretrial hearing is scheduled for Thursday.

The victim, a woman in her 20s, is a center volunteer.

Following an internal investigation, the center put Patton on a leave of absence, with pay, pending outcome of the criminal charge, a center spokeswoman said.

The alleged assault took place Feb. 20 in a kitchen storage room. It was reported to the center's administration the next day and to the police Feb. 22. Patton, who has worked at the center for more than a year, was arrested March 2.

● driver ticketed

A 30-year-old Westland man was ticketed for possessing narcotics paraphernalia when a baggie of cocaine residue and two plastic syringes were found during a traffic stop at Drake Road and 12 Mile Wednesday, Farmington Hills police said.

● marijuana seized

A 19-year-old Howell man who Redford Township police arrested on a felony warrant Wednesday in the parking lot of the Rainbow Park Motel, 20691 Grand River, faces a marijuana possession charge in Farmington Hills.

Three baggies of marijuana and rolling papers were found in his possession when he was arrested after a surveillance.

The outstanding warrant was for violating the controlled substance act, Farmington Hills police said.

● illegal entry

An 18-year-old Farmington Hills man was ticketed for illegal entry

when he and his girlfriend again were found staying in a newly built unit at Citation Club Condominiums Thursday.

They typically picked units that were carpeted and heated but not yet sold.

The 18-year-old has been living on the street for 2-3 months. He hoped to find a job and marry his girlfriend.

The girl, from Walled Lake, was turned over to her parents, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

● house damage

BBs were fired through the front windows of two houses on Holly Hill late Thursday or early Friday, Farmington Hills police said. Damage topped \$100.

Veteran city employee remembered as helper

By Casey Hana
staff writer

Jim Burke is remembered as a captain of firefighters and an ace mechanic.

He always helped those who needed it, his daughter Colleen Weed said Thursday. "He helped everybody that he knew — whatever they needed," she said.

The longtime Farmington city employee and part-time Farmington Hills firefighter died Wednesday of a heart attack, just one day before his 53rd birthday. He was born, lived and died in the same house on Lakeway Street in the city of Farmington, which his parents had purchased in the 1930s.

A memorial service is scheduled for today at 1 p.m. at the Heene Sundquist Funeral Home in downtown Farmington. His remains were to be cremated.

"I've known Jim Burke nearly my entire career in Farmington," said

'Jim used to do a lot of work on our trucks. He took a lot of pride in keeping the vehicles working right.'

— Bob Rebtzy
district fire chief

Robert Deadman, current city manager and former public safety director. "He was a well-respected fireman and employee of the city."

"I served with him as a firefighter. We were out on the front line more than once together."

BURKE WORKED for the city of Farmington from 1971 to 1988 as mechanic, where he worked on all city vehicles and equipment, said public services director Earl Billing. He retired in 1988 due to health

problems.

Colleen Weed said her father served as a paid callback firefighter in Farmington Hills, and the former Farmington Township, from 1958 to 1979, when he retired with a captain's rank.

Bob Rebtzy, district fire chief at Hills Fire Station 3, recalled how dedicated Burke was to keeping things ship-shape. "Jim used to do a lot of work on our trucks," Rebtzy said. "He took a lot of pride in keeping the vehicles working right."

After Burke's retirement, his son Jim Jr. took over for his dad at the firehouse. Today, he works at Station 3, also as a paid callback.

In addition to daughter Colleen Weed and son Jim Jr., Burke is survived by his wife, Jeanette, son-in-law Gerald Weed, daughter-in-law Sandra Burke, three grandchildren, one sister, Beatrice Robertson, and many nieces and nephews.

reminds residents that April 1 was Census Day, the day to return your completed census form. "Be counted," she says.

● New fire truck — The city council has authorized the fire department to buy a new fire engine pumper for \$196,718 from Sutphen Corp., Amlin, Ohio.

The truck will hold 750 gallons of water. It meets National Fire Protection Association safety standards for apparatus vehicles, Deputy Fire Chief Peter Baldwin said.

Sutphen was the lowest of five bidders, only three of which met specifications. Delivery will take up to a year, Baldwin said.

The truck will be housed at Station 4 on Drake, south of 13 Mile. It'll replace an existing truck, which will be used as a reserve vehicle, Baldwin said.

Hills lauds block grant program

News briefs from the Farmington and Farmington Hills city halls will appear regularly in this column.

● FARMINGTON HILLS

● Last week was National Community Development Block Grant Week in Farmington Hills, as so declared by Mayor Jean Fox.

The Community Development Block Grant Program provides local governments with the resources required to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income persons. It also benefits "neighborhood-based non-profit organizations throughout the nation to address pressing neighborhood and human service needs."

In recent years, the federal government has reduced federal assistance to the program. But during this time, "the problems have grown as evidenced by the dwindling supply of affordable housing, the massive rise

CITY HALL news beat

in homelessness and the resurfacing of hunger and malnutrition," Fox's proclamation read.

The program "has assumed increasing importance for meeting pressing community problems," it added.

"The Congress and the nation have often overlooked the critical value of the Community Development Block Grant Program and the significant number of organizations and projects that rely on its funds for support."

● Census Day — Mayor Jean Fox

SIGNATURE COLLECTION

Meet Designer

Carmen Marc Valvo

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

April 18, Rochester

Formal Show, 2 p.m.

April 19, Birmingham

Formal Show, 1 p.m.

Meet the artist

who designs for the

active contemporary

woman. Refined

details, explosive

colors, body-skimming

silhouettes...his

signature. We show

his fuchsia sueded

silk draped tank

dress, \$270.

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