

Spelling Bee event spells cash for schools

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7:52 PM, Mar 2, 2014 |

ithacajournal.com



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IPEI's 16th Annual Spelling Bee

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Officer Lori Bruce-Jawo were 1 of 28 teams in Sunday's IPEI 16th Annual Adult Spelling Bee. Their team, '3 of 6000 +' dropped out after incorrectly spelling the word 'Bravura'. / DAVE BURBANK / CORRESPONDENT PHOTO

It all came down to "passementerie." Derived from the French and meaning a fancy trimming used on clothing and upholstery, the word separated the champion team from the runner-up Sunday in the 16th annual Ithaca Public Education Initiative Adult Spelling Bee.

The Board of Ed Buzz, comprising two Ithaca City School District Board of Education members Pat Wasyliw and Sean Eversley Bradwell with friend Antonia Ruppel as a last-minute speller off the bench, couldn't spell it correctly. We Spell Krazy Good, made of Sam Goodyear, Monica Sandreczki and Bill Snyder of WSKG public radio, got it right and took home the fuzzy bee trophy.

"Sam got that because he's fluent in French," explained Bill Snyder, who gave the answers for the Krazy Good spellers.

The Board of Ed Buzz was able to correctly spell "schmierkase," a German word for a type of cottage cheese, meaning that in the final two-team challenge round, Krazy Good didn't have to even try. "The funny thing is I'm Pennsylvania Dutch. I've eaten schmierkase. I grew up eating schmierkase. I couldn't spell it for the life of me. I'm glad I didn't have to."

Twenty-eight teams took part in the bee, the largest fund-raising event for the IPEI, a nonprofit organization that supports the Ithaca public schools through grants for teacher projects and initiatives and facilitating community-school collaboration. Last year, the IPEI made \$75,000 in grants.

The raised an estimated \$25,000 through team entry fees and sponsorships. A separate annual campaign is a bigger source of funding, but the bee is the IPEI's biggest event.

It's also a fun time for participants and spectators. Among the creative names in the bee (the insect) theme were Takin' Care of Buzz-ness, the IHS Buzz, and a team of Fall Creek Elementary School teachers, Don't Stop Bee-lievin'!

One team that didn't have so much fun was 3 of 6,000+, the name for a team from the district administration: Superintendent Luvelle Brown, Assistant Superintendent Jason Trumble, and Lori Bruce-Jawo, head of the Office of Academic Excellence. They got caught up on "Bravura." Afterward, Brown good-naturedly blamed it on mis-communication in the heat of the moment that him replacing the final "R" with "V."

"We had written it down correctly, we had it spelled it correctly. The 'r' looked like a 'v' on paper," he said. "I will take this on the chin for the team."

Perhaps also contributing was Brown's enthusiasm that his alma mater, the University of Virginia, also known as "UVa," had beaten regional favorite Syracuse University in men's basketball a day before. When reading their answer, he ended it with "U-V-A."

"When watching that game with Syracuse fans and UVa winning, this was the first opportunity I had to boast about UVa."