

V-I-C-T-O-R-Y for adult spelling bee winners

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(Photo: SHAWNEE BARNES / Staff Photo)

ITHACA – The winners of this year's Ithaca Public Education Initiative's adult spelling bee had a distinct advantage.

Combined, they had a knowledge of French, Spanish, Latin, a background in the sciences and they were on their home turf.

The team, "IHS Bee-T-A, made up of Jarra Jagne, Esther Racoosin and Betta Fisher-York, of the high school's Parent-Teacher Association, took home the Fuzzy Bee trophy Sunday at Ithaca High School. The team earned their trophy by correctly spelling "chateaubriand," a thick steak cut from the tenderloin filet of beef.

The team beat out Cayuga Radio Group's "Highway to Spell," in the final round after they misspelled the word "idiosyncratic," a behavioral characteristic peculiar to an individual or group

Last year's winner, WSKG's "We Spell Krazy Good," was eliminated in the final round with the word "cotyledon," a part of the embryo within the seed of a plant.

About 300 people cheered on the 28 teams, during the four rounds where words quickly became more challenging.

The event is largest fundraising effort for the Ithaca Public Education Initiative, which awarded \$75,000 in grants last year to teachers in the district. The nonprofit supports the Ithaca public schools through grants for teacher projects, initiatives and facilitating community to school collaboration.

This year, the bee raised just over \$26,000 through team entry fees, sponsorships and a silent auction.

Some creative team names included the Ithaca City School District's "Slightly Better Than Autocorrect," Hospicare and Palliative Care Services' "A Doctor, a Lawyer and a Sea Captain Walk into a Spelling Bee," and Caroline Elementary School's "Caroline Bee-tricks."

The event, which also gave awards for team spirit and best costume, is run like an official spelling bee with rules, a "pronouncer," host, timekeeper, and three judges. Judges included IPEI founder Ralph Jones, Paulette Manos and Deborah Lynn. This year's host was Jean McPheeters, former president of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce.

This year, each round had an honorary "bee-keeper" including Robin L. Davisson, professor of molecular physiology at Cornell University of wife of university president David Skorton.

For more information, visit ipei.org.

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