

Bailey says preparation key to winning Spelling Bee; Second grader Aaron Dunn wins primary division

James Bailey practiced spelling words a lot over the past few weeks. After winning the Harlan County Spelling Bee Monday to advance to the Kentucky Derby Spelling Bee on March 11, he was all smiles as he accepted his trophy and other awards.

"I'm not surprised," said his grandmother Joy Smith. "When this kid was 2 he could say all of his ABC's."

His sister, Brittany Creech, admitted the family had drilled him with words at every opportunity. "We practiced in the car," she said. "Spell this. Spell this."

In stores they would call out words that they saw on signs, making him practice even more.

"Everywhere we found words we would make him spell the words," she said.

When the competition had narrowed to only two remaining spellers, Bailey spelled correctly pliable and then captured the title by spelling quadrant.

While his favorite subject is math, he said Lisa Layne, his English teacher at Cumberland Elementary School, assigns study words each week and tests the students on them. Also, Melissa Quillen, his reading teacher, works with students on spelling, he said.

However, he said an important part of the preparation was studying "the book" which is distributed to contestants by the state spelling bee organization.

While his hobbies are baseball and bike riding, he said it is important to devote time and effort to your studies if you are to be successful. His plans are to pursue a career in neurology. He said spelling is important in that occupation.

"You have to be able to spell the medicines and the procedures you are going to be doing," he said.

Bailey said he is "very excited" to win the spelling bee and advance to the state competition in Louisville. "That is where my sister lives," he said.

He is the recipient of a \$100 cash prize and a trophy.

Krishna Sajnani, a sixth grader at Harlan Middle School, won second place honors which include a trophy and \$50 cash prize.



James Bailey

Tied for third place were Brittany Dummit, an eighth grader at Black Mountain; Lilly Caballero, a seventh grader at Green Hills; and Brayden Brock, a sixth grader at Harlan County Christian. They each receive a trophy and a \$25 cash prize.

The competition lasted for eight rounds.

In the primary division, Aaron Dunn, a second grader at Cumberland Elementary School, won first place. The primary division features students in grades first through third. He is the son of Stephanie Naillieux.

Ethan Lewis from Black Mountain was the second place winner. Angel Riddle, also from Black Mountain, was third. Both are third graders.

The primary division featured 24 rounds, with words like volunteer, mileage, celebrate, miserable, exercise, island, computer, mountain, organize and cabbage.

Spelling bees were held at schools across the county to determine who would compete in the event.

Sponsors for the spelling bee are the Bank of Harlan, Kentucky Farm Bureau and Agent Roger Fannin and Harlan County Public Schools.

Pronouncers were Lisa Lewis and Jeanne Ann Lee. Judges were Rich Haynes, Harlan Public Librarian, Tommie Saragas of Lyndsey Wilson College and co-founder of the Cawood Ledford Boys and Girls Club and Gina Stewart, Harlan County Schools education consultant.

More photos can be found below, on the Harlan County School District's Facebook page and the Harlan County School District's website at www.harlan.kyschools.us.



Aaron Dunn

Harlan County Schools Superintendent Mike Howard, left, and Kevin Cavins, assistant vice president for marketing and loans at the Bank of Harlan, right, present awards to winners of the fourth through eighth grade division of the Harlan County Spelling Bee. Pictured from the left are Howard, second place winner Krisha Sajnani, a sixth grader from Harlan Middle School; champion speller James Bailey, an eighth grader from Cumberland; and third place winners Brittany Dummit, an eighth grader from Black Mountain, Lilly Caballero, a seventh grader from Green Hills, and Brayden Brock, a sixth grader from Harlan County Christian School.



Harlan County Schools Superintendent Mike Howard presented trophies to winners of the primary division. They are champion Aaron Dunn, a second grader from Cumberland, Ethan Lewis, right, a third grader from Black Mountain, and Angel Riddle, a third grader from Black Mountain.





Primary Division Competitors Group Shot



Middle School Competitors Group Shot