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GOOD HOPE COUNTRY DAY 7th GRADER MICHAEL ATWELL WINS STX DISTRICT SPELLING BEE

ST. CROIX, USVI – Good Hope Country Day School seventh-grader Michael Atwell spelled the word “torotoro” correctly in round 15, making him the winner of the 46th Annual St. Croix District Intermediate Spelling Bee on Tuesday, February 12, 2019, at the John H. Woodson Junior High School.

Excited yet humble, St. Croix District Champion Michael Atwell said, “I practiced really really hard to win,” Atwell continued, “I feel excited but I just want to win the next one. I’m going to start practicing for that one.”

The John H. Woodson Jr. High School band opened the Bee with the National Anthem and Virgin Islands March.

Woodson Principal Rodney Moorehead then shared welcome remarks.

“I know this morning on the stage we have the best spellers in the St. Croix District and I’m sure they have some butterflies in their stomach, so let’s give them a big round of applause,” he said. “I just want to add that I know it takes a lot of courage even just to volunteer to be in the Spelling Bee. So to be here on stage must be commended.”

Following Principal Moorehead, Acting Insular Superintendent Maria Encarnacion shared motivational remarks and reminded spellers to take advantage of the help they can use to triumph.

“Please avail yourself of every opportunity to hear the word again, definition, sentence, different pronouncer; whatever. Avail yourself of all the opportunities to be able to spell the words correctly.”

Chief Judge Maureen Moorhead did the reading of the rules, followed by the practice round. Fifteen spellers representing both public, private and parochial schools began the battle for the District title. Words such as “muumuu”; “herpetology”, “aggregate”, “altruism” and “seersucker” are some of the words the spellers faced.

Elena Christian Jr. High School seventh-grader Jah’Quane Graham, who is also the 2018 Territorial Spelling Bee Winner, took 2nd place. Graham misspelled the word “diaspora” in round 15. Church of God of Holiness seventh-grader Jaden Gonzalez took 3rd place by spelling the word “kasha” incorrectly in round 14.

Fourth runner-up Kayln Blackwood, fifth-grade student the Ricardo Richards Elementary School is the only elementary student in the top six finalists.

Participants received a participation certificate, medal, student dictionary, books from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Scholastic Inc., and Achieve 3000 headphones. All top 6 finalists received a trophy. United Way of the Virgin Islands will also present the champion with a laptop and the remaining five finalists with an Amazon Kindle Fire at the Territorial Spelling Bee.

The Honorable Senator Allison DeGazon, Board of Education members Terrance T. Joseph and Winona Hendricks were present for the Bee.

Victor Somme, master of ceremony gave closing remarks.

“On behalf of the St. Croix District Department of Education, we truly want to thank all of our sponsors and all of the participants, all of the individuals that gather to make sure this was a successful event.”

The Territorial Spelling Bee will be held on Tuesday, March 19 in St. Croix and will feature the best spellers of the St. Croix and St. Thomas - St. John Districts.

The top six finalists who will advance to the Territorial Spelling Bee are Michael Atwell of Good Hope Country Day; Jah’Quane Graham of Elena Christian Jr. High; Jaden Gonzalez of Church of God of Holiness; Kayln Blackwood of Ricardo Richards Elementary; Carmindy Pickering of John H. Woodson Jr. High and Alani Arnold of St. Patrick’s Catholic School.

Coordinators of the 46th Annual St. Croix District Intermediate Spelling Bee thank the Virgin Islands Department of Education; Virgin Islands Daily News; United Way of the Virgin Islands; Banco Popular; Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; Scholastic, Inc.; One Love Service Station East; Plaza Extra East and Achieve 3000 for their support and sponsorship.

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