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Bee ready: Gearing up for nationals

It's crunch time for Hanna Ghouse, a seventh-grade student at KTEC West who is heading to the Scripps National Spelling Bee later this month.

And while spelling bees are — naturally — all about letters, numbers play a role, too.

Hanna is Speller No. 73 on the spelling bee's website, where her photo and a short bio are listed. She's one of 291 spellers who will compete starting May 28. That's out of 11 million students nationwide who took part in local bees leading up to the national contest.

Hanna's dad



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By the numbers

The **Scripps National Spelling Bee** is all about letters, but here are some numbers associated with the iconic competition:

Nine: Newspapers teamed up and started the bee in **1925**.

11 million: Students participate in spelling bees each year leading up to the national bee.

291: Students start out at the national bee.

50: Students compete on stage in the finals.

1: National winner from Wisconsin (so far). Joanne Lagatte won in 1991, spelling the word "antipyretic" to win.

Winning words

The tricky thing about spelling bees is that not all words are created equal. You may be asked to spell a tough word like "albumen" (the national winning word in 1928) while the next person gets "therapy" (that was actually the winning word in the 1940 Scripps National Spelling Bee).

Here are some other winning words from the past nine decades of the National Spelling Bee, which we've divided into categories for those playing along at home:

■ **Too easy:** knack (1932); dulcimer (1949); vignette (1952); croissant (1970); narcolepsy (1976); luge (1984); kamikaze (1993).

■ **Challenging:** cerise (1926); asceticism (1929); intelligible (1935); canonical (1939); sacrilegious (1942); chlorophyll (1947); eczema (1965); psoriasis (1982); staphylococci (1987).

■ **Say what?** foulard (1931); meticulousity (1950); crustaceology (1955); syllepsis (1958); spoliator (1989); chiaroscuroist (1998).

■ **And ... you're kidding, right? This can't be a real word!** smaragdine (1961); esquamulose (1962); xanthosis (1995); autochthonous (2004); guetapens (2012); gesellschaft (2016).



SUBMITTED PHOTO

KTEC West teachers traveled to Madison in March to cheer on Hanna Ghouse at the state spelling bee. Attending, from left, were: Brenda Carlborg, Stephen Dollar, Ghouse, Chris Ratzka, Jenny McCall, Sarah McMillian and Christina Oldani.

dad, Mahmood Ghouse, who helps his daughter train for the bees, said of the final weeks, "She's not getting much time because of her demanding school work."

She will have some time off from school just before the national bee, he said, thanking the school for allowing the study break.

Hanna's dad says her teachers at KTEC West "play a huge role" in supporting Hanna.

Six of those teachers went to Madison to cheer for her in the state bee. Here's what they had to say:

■ "It was a privilege to witness her outstanding performance in Madison. I was amazed by her stage presence under intense pressure and stress." — Jenny McCall, seventh-grade science.

■ "It was impressive to see her

Scripps National Spelling Bee

When: "Bee Week" is May 28 through June 3

Where: The Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Md.

Bee there: Admission to the on-stage rounds is free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis. Visit www.spellingbee.com for more details.

Watch it live: ESPN will televise the final rounds, from 9 a.m. to noon and 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on June 1.

Rule change: The Scripps National Spelling Bee is adding a new wrinkle this year in an attempt to stop a streak of ties for the championship.

This year, the top spellers will sit for a written tiebreaker test — with 12 spelling words and 12 vocabulary words — before they begin spelling words in the primetime finale. The results will be revealed only if two or three spellers get through the final rounds unscathed. The speller with the highest score would then be declared the champion. Only if the top spellers get exactly the same score will the competition end in a tie.

The bee has ended in a tie for three years running.

compete and be in the top finalists to go to nationals. I am so proud of her hard work and dedication." — Brenda Carlborg, seventh-grade math.

■ "She is a great example of how hard work pays off. I am so proud of her." — Stephen Dollar, sixth-grade English language arts and social studies.

■ "I have watched her work hard over the last two years to reach this goal. Great job, Hanna! I know you will rock the nationals." — Chris Ratzka, sixth-grade English language arts and social studies.

■ "She was disappointed in how she finished in the spelling bee last year so rather than just giving up, she worked even harder for the competition this year. She deserves to go to nationals, and I believe she will do well there." — Sarah McMillian, sixth-grade math and science.

■ "Hannah's performance at the spelling bee was truly impressive. It was an honor to watch her compete." — Christina Oldani, sixth-grade math and science.

As a top finisher at state, Hanna won a trip for two to the National Spelling Bee in Maryland.

She and her dad are going, joining students from across the United States.

Two preliminary written spelling tests are given. The top 50 finishers will compete on stage, televised on ESPN.

No matter what happens, both Hanna and her dad said spelling bees offer benefits beyond learning a batch of new words.

"Participating in competitions like spelling bees gives Hanna an intellectual challenge as well as opportunities to meet all kinds of people from around the country," Mahmood said. "And Hanna always makes new friends."

Have a comment? Email Liz at esnyder@kenoshanews.com or call her at 262-656-6271.