

# Daily Gazette article

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## Champ will next compete in Washington

By Michael Goot

### BH-BL teen wins spelling bee



SCHENECTADY — Thirteen-year-old Ashley LaMere stood on the “precipice” of the spelling world on Monday.

Ashley, an eighth-grader at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, outlasted more than 100 other spellers who were unsuccessful in their “odyssey” to be the champions of the 28th annual Capital Region Spelling Bee held at Proctors.

Others were felled by the “guillotine” of words such as “anachronism,” meaning not in the correct time period, “maladroit” — awkward — and “kohlrabi” — a kind of cabbage.

Ashley LaMere of Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake smiles after winning the 2010 Capital Region Spelling Bee at Proctors in Schenectady on Monday.

However, Ashley survived nearly five hours and correctly spelled “retinue” — the attendants accompanying a high-ranking person — and “latency,” — being dormant — to win.

“It’s like unreal,” Ashley said of her experience. “I studied a lot. I made a binder with quite a few words.”

Ashley’s favorite subject is English and she has a more than 99 percent average in school, according to her proud father, Steve LaMere.

This win is redemption of sorts for Ashley because she placed in the final round in last year’s bee, but didn’t win.

Ashley is headed in June to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., where she is looking forward to doing sightseeing at the nation’s capital. Ironically, the family was supposed to go on a trip last year but couldn’t make it.

She also receives \$300 worth of savings bonds, a laptop computer, a \$40 gift certificate to Amazon.com, a one-year subscription to Encyclopedia Britannica Online and a special gift pack from Proctors.

A field of about 110 spellers was reduced in several rounds to 30 and

eventually five. The other four finalists were Ahna Pearson, a sixth-grader from the Guilderland school district, Rebecca Natale, an eighth-grader from St. Mary’s Institute in Amsterdam; Andrew Becker, an eighth-grader from Ichabod Crane; and Noah Pappas, a seventh-grader from the Bethlehem school district.

The finalists will be recognized at an event on April 23 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Barnes & Noble on Wolf Road in Albany. The public is welcome.

Other spellers made deep runs in the tournament.

Eleven-year-old Andrew Hartana of Niskayuna, a fifth-grader at Craig Elementary, lasted until the fourth round, before being tripped up by “metamorphosis.”

Andrew said he didn’t do much preparation for the bee, except for “just spelling hard words.”

His mother, Jane, said he did not want to put too much pressure on himself.

“I think he has some good potential,” she said. “If he studied a little bit maybe he could go further.”

Andrew said he was a little nervous being in front of the big audience of spectators, who wildly cheered and clapped for their

favorite spellers.

"I was nervous I would mess up," said 10-year-old Brooke Martin, a fifth-grader from Galway Central Schools.

The contestants carefully sounded out the words, asking for definitions, language of origin and alternate pronunciations.

Other students had done more preparation.

"I had a packet of words I would go through," said 11-year-old Sophie Calderon of Scotia, a fifth-grader at Sacandaga Elementary School. "People would test me."

"Pneumatic" tripped her up. "We couldn't study all 1,200 [words]," said her mother Michele.

"I did better than I thought I'd do," Sophie said.

She had better watch out, though, because her third-grader sister, Mari, was ready to compete next year.

"I know how to spell most of them," she said.

Thirteen-year-old Dimple Permeul, an eighth-grader at Van Antwerp Middle School in Niskayuna, said she studied the dictionary to get ready. She wants to be an English teacher or professor when she grows up.

"She is an A-plus student in English," said her mother, Devenie.