

2014 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

SPELLERS CONTINUING IN THE FINALS



Speller No. 154, Sriram Hathwar

Corning Rotary Club, Corning, New York
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Alternative School for Math and Science
Hometown: Painted Post, New York

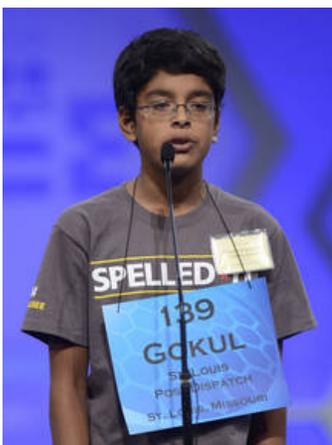
When not studying spelling, Sriram plays the oboe, piano and chess to keep his mind stimulated. He also enjoys more active pursuits including badminton, tennis, basketball and ice skating. Reading also brings him pleasure, and he encourages others to read by volunteering at his local library. A seasoned traveler, Sriram has been all over the world, but he still has Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, France and South Africa on his travel bucket list. Because he has been to the Scripps National Spelling Bee four times already, Sriram once produced a TEDx talk about his experiences in the Bee. He previously competed in the Bee in 2008, 2009, 2011 when he tied for 6th place, and 2013 when he placed 3rd.



Speller No. 237, Ansun Sujoe

Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas
Age 16, 7th grade
School: Bethesda Christian School
Hometown: Fort Worth, Texas

Ansun is so musically gifted that he not only plays piano, guitar and bassoon, he also has perfect pitch. In other words, he can instantaneously identify or sing any given musical note without a reference pitch. Ansun also enjoys playing chess, solving complex math problems and programming robots. In his spare time, he ministers to seniors in nearby nursing homes. Ansun is making his second trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee; he also participated in 2013.



Speller No. 139, Gokul Venkatachalam

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, Missouri
Age 16, 7th grade
School: Parkway West Middle School
Hometown: Chesterfield, Missouri

One of Gokul's hobbies is photography, so it's no surprise that he hopes he can someday visit Hawaii to take in the gorgeous scenery and capture it with his camera. He also spends time watching basketball, and he looks up to Miami Heat forward LeBron James. *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio is his favorite book, and he likes both rap and alternative music, from artists like Eminem and Imagine Dragons. Gokul also enjoys action movies, especially the hilarious *21 Jumpstreet*. Gokul tied for 10th place in the 2012 Scripps National Spelling Bee and tied for 19th place in 2013.

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Speller No. 188, Ashwin Veeramani

Northeast Ohio Media Group, Cleveland, Ohio
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Incarnate Word Academy
Hometown: North Royalton, Ohio

With a diverse portfolio of interests, Ashwin is fascinated by everything from international commerce to biomedical engineering research to investing and the stock market. In his free time, Ashwin plays golf and the piano. At school, he is involved in the Spanish and Latin clubs. It seems only natural then that his favorite movie is *The Dead Poet's Society*, which popularized the Latin phrase "carpe diem." Ashwin previously competed in the Bee in 2013, tying for 33rd place. His sister Anamika is the 2010 Scripps National Spelling Bee champion.



Speller No. 43, Mary Horton

Orlando Sentinel Communications, Orlando, Florida
Age 16, 8th grade
School: Home School
Hometown: West Melbourne, Florida

Mary has been a bit of wanderer: In her 13 short years, she and her family have lived in four states, eight houses, and three different climates. Though currently living in Florida, her favorite place to be is Virginia in autumn, and she misses the mountains and cold, snowy winters of some of her other homes. She is also a budding photographer, and she considers the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool to be one of the most photogenic spots in Washington, D.C. Hopefully, she can take her photography to Europe, where she can capture images of France's art, architecture and landscapes. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends and family and watching TV shows from the 1950s and '60s. Mary comes from a spelling family. Her brother Jonathan and sister Deborah have both competed at the Scripps National Spelling Bee, with her brother tying for 6th place in 2006. Mary herself previously competed in 2013.



Speller No. 58, Alia Abiad

Commonwealth Edison, Chicago, Illinois
Age 17, 8th grade
School: McClure Junior High School
Hometown: Western Springs, Illinois

Alia loves to travel and has been to Washington, D.C., several times; but this time she's looking forward to sharing the sights and sounds with many of her classmates and friends, who will also be in the nation's capital on a school trip. When not traveling, she spends time practicing the violin and plays in the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras. While studying for spellings bees, she likes to listen to educational podcasts and radio shows such as *This American Life* and *Radiolab*. If she could meet anyone in the world, she would choose Pope Francis because she finds him incredibly inspiring and thinks he has made a positive impact on the world. Alia previously competed in the 2013 Scripps National Spelling Bee, tying for 19th place.

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Speller No. 38, Jacob Williamson

The Daily News, Bonita Springs, Florida
Age 18, 8th grade
School: Home School
Hometown: Cape Coral, Florida

As a member of the Fort Myers Coin Club, Jacob considers himself to be an avid numismatist -- a student of currency -- and has collected coins since he was four years old. Because of this, of all the historical sites to see in Washington, D.C., he is most excited to visit the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where he can watch currency being created. At home, he has a dog, Snickers, and two fancy goldfish. In his free time, Jacob most enjoys playing fantasy sports, especially fantasy football.



Speller No. 20, Neha Konakalla

KPIX-TV & KCBS Radio AM & FM, San Francisco, California
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Sam H. Lawson Middle School
Hometown: Cupertino, California

Neha loves to write and recently won a Daughters of the American Revolution history essay contest. She has been to Washington, D.C., before and has seen many of the monuments in the capital city, but she hopes to visit the Lincoln Memorial for the first time on this trip. When not spelling or reading adventure novels, Neha can be found playing badminton, practicing karate or taking singing lessons. The best part of making it to the Scripps National Spelling Bee for Neha has been to see all of her hard work and dedication pay off and to achieve her hard-earned goal. This is her second year at the national finals, having previously competed in 2013.



Speller No. 87, Tajaun Gibbison

Jamaica Gleaner, Kingston, Jamaica
Age 16, 8th grade
School: Knox College
Hometown: Mandeville, Jamaica

As a resident of Jamaica, Tajaun knows something about beautiful beaches. So when he gets excited about someday going to a place like Tahiti for its pristine, adventure-filled beaches, you know those islands must be impressive. In his free time, he enjoys playing soccer and cricket or snacking on his favorite dish, ackee and salted cod. While in Washington, D.C., he hopes to visit the Smithsonian Museums to view exotic art from all parts of the globe. When he grows up, Tajaun hopes to attend to Oxford University in England to study medicine.

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Speller No. 232, Kate Miller
Abilene Reporter-News, Abilene, Texas
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Big Country Home Educators
Hometown: Abilene, Texas

Film analysis, knitting Rodentia, and "crafting irreverent travesties of pop songs" top Kate's list of hobbies. She is also a Girl Scout and has won the Bronze and Silver Awards -- in 2010 and 2013, respectively. An aspiring writer, Kate imagines what it would be like to spend a day with the Brontë sisters and even wrote a short story that was produced for an episode of the television program *Green Screen Adventures*. Kate previously competed in Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2012 and 2013. With six more dictionaries in her private collection than in her local library, it's no surprise she is making her third appearance at the Bee.



Speller No. 263, Tejas Muthusamy
Richmond Times-Dispatch, Richmond, Virginia
Age 14, 5th grade
School: Rivers Edge Elementary School
Hometown: Glen Allen, Virginia

Tejas is learning Bharata Natyam, a type of South Indian classical dance, but he's just as likely to rock out to "Roar," by Katy Perry! Tejas also stays active as a member of a competitive swim team. Olympic champion Michael Phelps is his role model, and Tejas uses Phelps' example of humility and determination as inspiration to do his best. Recently, Tejas has started learning how to cook and can already prepare both chutney and raita. A wordsmith in more ways than just spelling, this year he was one of only 16 in the nation to earn a perfect score in two consecutive meets in the Gold division of the WordMasters Challenge, an analogy and verbal reasoning competition. When he travels, Tejas collects refrigerator magnets from each destination -- he has close to 40 magnets so far.



Speller No. 255, Samuel Pereles
The News-Virginian and *The Daily Progress*, Charlottesville, Virginia
Age 16, 7th grade
School: Kate Collins Middle School
Hometown: Waynesboro, Virginia

Samuel is usually busy performing on the stage and the field -- he received scholarships for tap dancing and also plays on a traveling soccer team. When not dancing or cheering on his favorite basketball player, LeBron James, Samuel plays the French horn and spends time with his miniature dachshund, Truffles. In the future, Samuel would like to study biomedical engineering at Harvard University, as well as visit Tanzania to see the Serengeti National Park and Mount Kilimanjaro. Samuel previously competed in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in 2013.



THE 2014 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

THURSDAY, MAY 26
8:00 P.M.
LIVE ON ESPN