

2013 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE

SPELLERS CONTINUING IN THE FINALS



Speller No. 163, Arvind Mahankali

Daily News, New York, New York
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Nathaniel Hawthorne Middle School 74
Hometown: Bayside Hills, New York

Arvind loves math and science and hopes to one day pursue a career as a physicist. That explains his choice of role model and the person he would most like to meet (Albert Einstein), but doesn't explain his favorite song ("I Believe I Can Fly"). A speaker of Telugu and Spanish, Arvind enjoys tennis, basketball and drama, and counts Novak Djokovic and Shaquille O'Neal among his favorite athletes. Arvind is making his fourth consecutive trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee. He placed ninth in 2010 and finished in third place in both 2011 and 2012. Of all the words he's seen and spelled, his favorite so far is sardoodledom.



Speller No. 64, Pranav Sivakumar

Lake County Regional Office of Education, Grayslake, Illinois
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Barrington Middle School - Station Campus
Hometown: Tower Lakes, Illinois

Pranav studied Latin for several years, and when he's learning new words, he finds it helps to make connections to this classical language. He loves the sciences, especially astronomy and astrophysics. This year, he won best research paper and best-in-category project in astronomy in the junior division of the Illinois Junior Academy of Science. Astrophysicist Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar is Pranav's role model because the scientist wasn't afraid to stand up to the establishment and made key discoveries about massive stars. When not studying space, Pranav enjoys watching cricket, especially batsman Sachin Tendulkar. His favorite book is *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and he spends a lot of time watching the night sky and wondering what it would be like to travel among the stars. This is Pranav's third consecutive appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee; he tied for 27th place in 2011 and for 22nd place in last year's competition.



Speller No. 156, Sriram Hathwar

Corning Rotary Club, Corning, New York
Age 17, 7th grade
School: Alternative School for Math & Science
Hometown: Painted Post, New York

Sriram has a passion for skiing, swimming, skating and ping pong, and he also plays a pretty good game of badminton. He's an avid musician who plays oboe in a jazz band and can chant Sanskrit hymns while playing the piano accompaniment. Sriram's first time competing in the Scripps National Spelling Bee was in 2008, and he tied for 37th place in 2009 and for 6th place in 2011. In 2011, he delivered a talk on his Bee experiences at the TEDx Chemung River event in the Southern Tier of New York, where he lives with his family. For breakfast before every spelling bee, he eats oatmeal with berries, but just before the event, he snacks on M&M's Minis for luck. Sriram would love to go back in time to meet Gandhi to learn more about how to maintain inner peace while promoting world peace.

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Speller No. 115, Amber Born

The Daily Item, Lynn, Massachusetts
Age 18, 8th grade
School: Home School
Hometown: Marblehead, Massachusetts

Amber would love to be a comedy writer one day, finding inspiration in everything from classic comic strips like Calvin & Hobbes and Peanuts to TV sitcoms like Seinfeld and Frasier. Jerry Seinfeld, Stephen Colbert, Jon Stewart and Ellen DeGeneres top her list of comedy role models. Amber plays keyboard in a Beatles tribute band, and she enjoys soccer, tennis, chess, fencing and playing piano. An avid reader, her favorite books include *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and the *Mysterious Benedict Society* series. This is Amber's fourth consecutive appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. She tied for 42nd place in 2012.



Speller No. 91, Vanya Shivashankar

The Olathe News, Olathe, Kansas
Age 15, 6th grade
School: California Trail Middle School
Hometown: Olathe, Kansas

Vanya loves being on stage, whether it's playing the piano or tuba, singing, dancing, acting or - of course - spelling. She also enjoys swimming, bike riding and playing with Champ, her family's Labrador Retriever. Vanya earned two individual bronze medals at the 2013 regional Science Olympiad and hopes to pursue a career in cardiac surgery. An energetic girl with an infectious smile, Vanya is already making her third appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, following in the footsteps of her sister Kavya, who was a four-time participant and the 2009 national champion. Vanya competed in the 2010 national finals, and tied for tenth place at last year's Bee.



Speller No. 256, Vismaya Kharkar

The Valley Journals, Salt Lake City, Utah
Age 18, 8th grade
School: Challenger School
Hometown: Bountiful, Utah

Vismaya is making her third consecutive appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee, and is looking to improve on her tenth-place finish at the 2012 Bee. She placed seventh at the state level of the National Geographic Bee and took first place in the Medicine & Health Sciences division of the Salt Lake Valley Science and Engineering Fair, earning an invitation to the international Broadcom Masters competition scheduled for August. Vismaya has been awarded a superior rating seven times by the Piano Federation, and she is a two-time recipient of the Presidential Physical Fitness Award. In her spare time, she enjoys watercolor painting, drawing, singing, reading and travel.

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Speller No. 39, Grace Remmer

The Florida Times-Union, Jacksonville, Florida
Age 18, 8th grade
School: Home School
Hometown: St. Augustine, Florida

Grace plays violin in the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra and viola in the Calandra Quartet. She also works as a student violin teacher and would like to follow in the career footsteps of her favorite musician Itzhak Perlman. Her favorite book is *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne, and she is crazy about all things Disney, especially the search for "hidden Mickeys" throughout the parks. Grace's diverse interests include everything from knitting and neuroscience to ancient civilizations and singing Broadway tunes. This marks her fourth consecutive appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. She has previously tied for 9th place in 2010, 14th place in 2011 and 22nd place in 2012.



Speller No. 238, Chetan Reddy

The Dallas Morning News, Dallas, Texas
Age 17, 8th grade
School: C.M. Rice Middle School
Hometown: Plano, Texas

Chetan prides himself on his sports skills, including basketball, cricket, badminton and table tennis. Cricket is his favorite and he's a member of the Dallas Youth Cricket League. His sports figures of choice also reflect his interests: his favorites are Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and Dallas Mavericks star Dirk Nowitzki. Chetan also enjoys music and movies, and he's the captain of his school's Whiz Quiz team. Chetan is a seasoned veteran of the Scripps National Spelling Bee and is making his fourth consecutive appearance in the Bee this year. He has previously placed 27th in 2011 and tied for 22nd place last year.



Speller No. 242, Syamantak Payra

HoustonPBS, Houston, Texas
Age 16, 7th grade
School: Westbrook Intermediate School
Hometown: Friendswood, Texas

Syamantak has a wide array of hobbies and interests. His favorite things to do include building computers, reading, playing music, swimming and playing ping-pong. He also loves building with Legos and is a licensed amateur radio operator. Academically, Syamantak participates in many competitions throughout the year, including science fairs and math club. He won a gold medal in the Physics/Astronomy division at his 2013 district science fair and placed third at 2013 Science and Engineering Fair of Houston. Syamantak also thrives in scientific and creative writing. He's published more than 12 poems and essays in anthology collections and magazines. He also won second place in the Scientific Writing Contest at the 2013 Science and Engineering Fair of Houston.

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Speller No. 41, Christal Schermeister

The Miami Herald, Miami, Florida
Age 17, 8th grade
School: HEARTS Home School Group
Hometown: Pembroke Pines, Florida

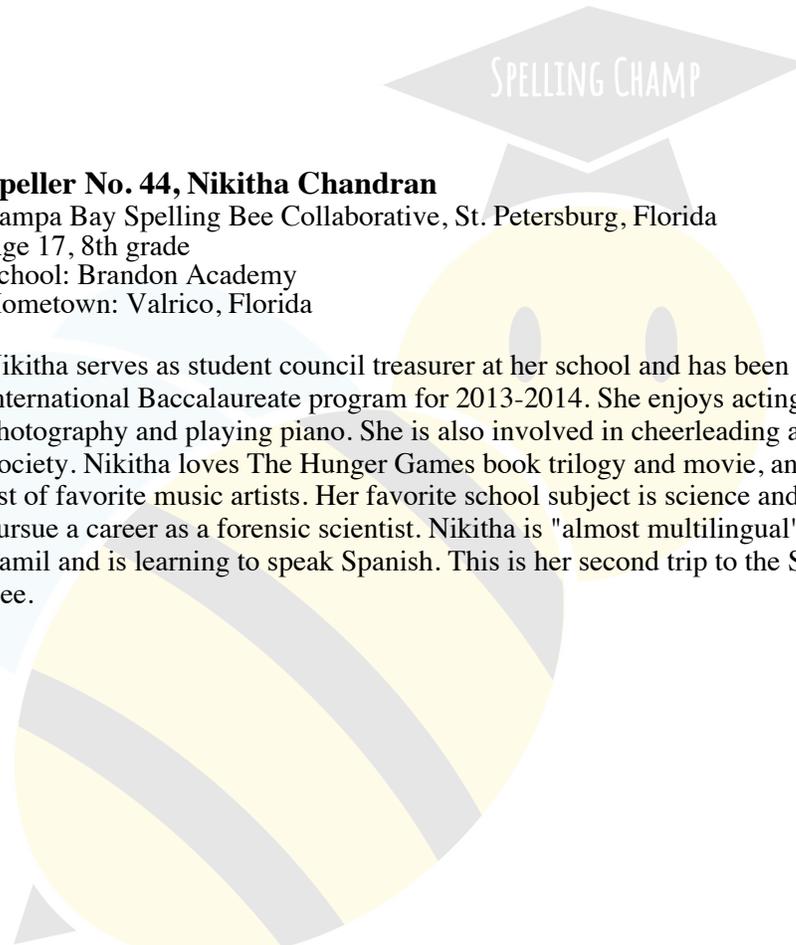
Christal enjoys ballet, bicycling and the creative arts. A fan of contemporary Christian music, she is involved in many activities at her church. Christal excels in science and loves the Star Wars movie series. At home, she has a Bichon Frise named Barney and a spaniel mix named Bonita. Christal participated in her first spelling bee at age six, and this year is making her second appearance in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. She tied for 22nd place in last year's competition.



Speller No. 44, Nikitha Chandran

Tampa Bay Spelling Bee Collaborative, St. Petersburg, Florida
Age 17, 8th grade
School: Brandon Academy
Hometown: Valrico, Florida

Nikitha serves as student council treasurer at her school and has been admitted to the International Baccalaureate program for 2013-2014. She enjoys acting, singing, dancing, photography and playing piano. She is also involved in cheerleading and National Junior Honor Society. Nikitha loves The Hunger Games book trilogy and movie, and Taylor Swift tops her list of favorite music artists. Her favorite school subject is science and she hopes to one day pursue a career as a forensic scientist. Nikitha is "almost multilingual" - she can understand Tamil and is learning to speak Spanish. This is her second trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.



TheSpellingChamp.com



THE 2013 SCRIPPS NATIONAL SPELLING BEE
CHAMPIONSHIP FINALS

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