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El Noticiero

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Spanish Bee Goes National

By Astrid Galván

Journal Staff Writer, Sunday, July 10, 2011

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After two intense hours on stage at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, a Santa Cruz, N.M., girl won the first National Spanish Spelling Bee.

Evelyn Juárez, a seventh-grader at Carlos F. Vigil Middle School, won by correctly spelling the word *bizantinismo*, which means excess luxury.

Juárez battled the runner-up Saturday morning for several rounds in a nail-biting matchup before taking the title.

The runner-up, Los Lunas Middle School graduate Germán Rojero, misspelled *kanindeyuense*, which refers to someone from the Canindeyú

territory of Paraguay.

"I was very nervous. I know both of us are very good, and very good competitors," Juárez said. "I feel very excited, very happy."

Juárez and Rojero each spelled about 20 words correctly after prevailing over nine other students in prior rounds. The other students came to Albuquerque from as far as Portland, Ore., and San Antonio, Texas, although the majority were New Mexicans.

"They were toe to toe. I thought I was in a boxing ring," organizer David Briseño said of Juárez and Rojero.

After the more-difficult words – some had as many as 15 letters

– the crowd of about 50 could be heard gasping in relief. One could assume some Continued on Page 4



First Place winner Evelyn Juárez spells her word during the Bee.



Germán Rojero, Second Place winner spells for the judges.

Families Enjoy a Host of Activities during Bee

From a pizza party at the Radisson Water Park, to lunch at Buca di Beppo, to interviews with the international, national and local press, the 11 students and their parents at the First Annual Santillana, USA National Spanish Spelling Bee were very busy, had fun and formed new friendships.

Francisco Vara-Orta, reporter for the *San Antonio Express-News*, recalled the formative nature of a special journalism camp he attended at a young age. "I remember how rewarding it was finding new friends your own age who were also interested in writing," he said. "Hopefully this event will offer the students a similar experience."

They had plenty of opportunities to become comfortable with a microphone and be photographed. ESPN's cameramen

recorded the entire event, interviewing each participant before and afterwards. Footage will be edited into a promotional video.

"The Bee received coverage from coast to coast and even beyond," said Dr. Loretta Salazar, one of the judges. The historic event was covered by the three Albuquerque television stations, the *Albuquerque Journal*, the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, the *Associated Press* wire, the *British Broadcasting Corporation* and the news media in Colombia, South America,

"This memorable event was planned to encourage family time together," said David Briseño, Executive Director of NMABE. After a morning of introductions, an orientation for the bee, and individual interviews with ESPN, Buca di Beppo hosted lunch. Families had time to relax a bit in the afternoon, and then went to a pizza party



ESPN tapes students as they make their way to the stage.

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"You could hear a pin drop...!"

The First Annual Santillana, USA Spelling Bee was a nail-biting, heart-wrenching, emotion-filled event. You could hear a pin drop as the students competed for 30 rounds, and 23 of those were between the First and Second Place



Jesús Moncada, NMABE President, and David Briseño with the competitors

winners.

Each student was very well prepared. And, of course, they were nervous, as

shown by their comments to ESPN and *The Albuquerque Journal*.

In one of her many interviews at the conclusion of the Bee, Evelyn Juárez, First Place winner, told *The Santa Fe New Mexican* reporter Sandra Baltazar Martínez, "I'm really proud. It's a unique opportunity, and I feel really proud (of the accomplishment)." Her statement replicated David Briseño's remarks to the press prior to the Bee. He said, "The event offers the opportunity for all Spanish-speaking children across the nation, be they mother-tongue speakers or kids who are learning the language, to showcase their command of Spanish spelling."

Valeria Perasso, *BBC Mundo* Hispanic Affairs Correspondent, *US to Hold Inaugural Spanish Spelling Bee*, July 8, 2011: "Having Continued on Page 4



El Noticiero

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No. 35:2 Winter 2011: January
(Board News, Bilingual Education Day,
Call to Action)

No. 35:3 Spring 2011: April
(Institute Announcements)

No. 35:4 Summer 2011: July
(Summer Activities)

Monthly Inserts/Wraps with *Language Magazine*

Our Mistress of Ceremonies

Dr. Emma Armendáriz – Retired New Mexico Bilingual Educator

Our Pronouncer

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Our Judges

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Dr. Sara Harris – New Mexico Highlands University

Dr. Gladys Herrera-Gurulé – New Mexico Public Education Department

Dr. Patricia MacGregor-Mendoza – New Mexico State University

Mr. Fernando Martín – Director, The Spanish Resource Center

Dr. Loretta Salazar – New Mexico Highlands University

First Annual Spanish Santillana National Spelling Bee Participants

Lorenzo Curtis, Fifth Grader
Portland, Oregon
Barnes Elementary School
Beaverton School District
Parent: Karla Barret-Curtis
Sponsor: Susan Rodríguez

Alex González, Eighth Grader
Lovington, NM
Taylor Middle School
Lovington Municipal Schools
Parents: Apolina and Perla González
Sponsor: Azeneth Sotelo

Lily James, Fifth Grader
Beaverton, Oregon
Vose Elementary School
Beaverton School District
Parents: Brian and Margaret James
Sponsor: Susan Rodríguez

Evelyn Juárez, Seventh Grader
Santa Cruz, New Mexico
Carlos F. Vigil Middle School
Española Public Schools
Parent: Angélica Estrada
Sponsor: Evelyn Maruska

Aitana J. Kampert-Abajo, Fourth Grader
Lafayette, Colorado
Escuela Bilingüe Pioneer
Boulder County Schools
Parents: Alex Kampert and Leticia Abajo
Sponsor: David Smith

Mario Pimentel,
Fifth Grader
Lubbock, Texas
Ramírez Charter
School
Lubbock ISD
Parent: Martha
Pimentel
Sponsor: Yvonne
Khan



Mario Pimentel from Lubbock Texas speaks to a news correspondent from Colombia, South America .

Andrea Ramírez, Eighth Grader
Santa Teresa, New Mexico
Santa Teresa Middle School
Gadsden ISD
Parent: Sandra Ramírez
Sponsor: José R. Reyes

Azelia Reyes, Fourth Grader
Lubbock, Texas
Chris Harwell Elementary School
Lubbock ISD
Parents: Robert and Zeniada Reyes
Sponsor: Reyna Torres

Germán Rojero,
Eighth Grader
Los Lunas, New
Mexicot
Los Lunas Middle
School
Los Lunas Schools
Parents: Raymundo Rojero and María
Jesús Herrera
Sponsor: Lori Rogers

Linda Rodríguez, Eighth Grader
San Antonio, Texas
Legacy Middle School
East Central ISD
Parent: Rogelio Rodríguez
Sponsor: Manuel Ornelas

Antonella Vásquez, Sixth Grader
Cuba, New Mexico
Cuba Middle School
Cuba Independent Schools
Parent: Cecilia Vásquez
Sponsor: Johnny Atencio

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at the hotel's well-known Water Park.

After breakfast on Saturday, students were transported to the National Hispanic Cultural Center. ESPN took footage from the moment they stepped out of the van, to the anxious moments before stepping on stage, to the conclusion of the bee. Afterwards, Santillana, USA sponsored a luncheon at La Fonda del Bosque restaurant on the premises of the National Hispanic Cultural Center.

While ESPN concluded their individual interviews with stu-



The three finalists: Evelyn Juárez, Lorenzo Curtis and Germán Rojero

dents after the Bee, Fernando Martín Pescador, Director of the Spanish Resource Center, gave parents and their families a

private tour of La Torre at the Center. Inside they saw the magnificent fresco recently completed by New Mexico artist, Francisco Vigil, showing the entire evolution of the Hispanic culture in New Mexico, from *Las Cuevas de Altamira* in Spain, to the major historic, literary and scientific figures and events from Spain and Mexico, to the Na-

tive American cultures of New Mexico, to the Oñate colonization in 1598, and through events from the Territorial Period up to the present day. That evening, students were recognized for their phenomenal work at the National Santillana, USA Spanish Spelling Bee Awards Dinner. Santillana, USA provided each participant with a Spanish dictionary and two works of children's literature in Spanish. Awards were: \$500.00 to the First

Place winner Evelyn Juárez of Santa Cruz, NM; \$250.00 to the Second Place winner Germán Rojero of Los Lunas; and \$100.00 to the Third Place winner Lorenzo Curtis of Portland, Oregon.

All in all, a great and memorable time



Lorenzo Curtis of Portland, Oregon introduces himself.

was had by all, as summed up by Third Place winner Lorenzo Curtis, who, at the end of the ceremony said, "You rock, Mr. Briseño.."

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parents had forgotten to breathe.

The girl and boy had different approaches to spelling. Rojero, who as the state champion was representing New Mexico, took minutes examining the white board on which he'd spell out the word before reciting it. On a few occasions, he erased the word and tried again. Juárez took less time, but always asked the judges to both define the words and use them in a sentence.

Juárez said she prepared for the spelling bee by practicing words daily with the help of her family.

Family time is one of the perks of the spelling bee, Briseño said. Briseño is the executive director of New Mexico Association for Bilingual Education, which organized the event with the Alliance for Multilingual Multicultural Education.

He said the spelling bee, which has been a state event since 1994 but has never reached the national level, helped parents spend more time with their children as the families prepared together.

Although Briseño had dreamed of the idea for years, the event almost never came to light, he said.

Then about two years ago, a woman from the cable televi-

sion network ESPN called him to ask about the possibility of a national spelling bee in Spanish that could be broadcast like the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which is a popular event for ESPN.

"That gave me the push to go ahead and start doing it," Briseño said.

ESPN cameramen recorded Saturday's competition, and footage was going to be shown to

potential sponsors, Briseño said. The competition was not going to be aired publicly, but if it does well with sponsors, it could end up being televised next year.

That would be ideal for Briseño, who wants to attract more competitors from across the country for next year's bee.

"We need to celebrate the diversity of where we are," Briseño said. "Spanish is one of the major languages in the world."



Lily James of Beaverton, Oregon makes David Briseño laugh.

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an Hispanic version of one of nation's most popular competitions is an acknowledgement of America's multicultural and multilingual character."

Daniel Ward, editor of event sponsor *Language Magazine*, said: "Instead of dumbing down our kids, we're recognizing that - like most of the world's other children - they'll need more than one language to succeed in our global village."

According to the *BBC Mundo* article, the U.S. Hispanic population has soared in the past decade, comprising more than half of the country's population growth between 2000 and 2010, according to 2010 census figures.



The judges, the Mistress of Ceremony and the Pronouncer with the three winners

BBC Mundo went on to say that there are now 50 million Hispanics in the nation, making up 16.3% of the U.S. population, up from 12.5% in 2000, and the population is expected to almost double by 2050. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Spanish and English are spoken equally in about one-third of Hispanic households, and about 17% of Hispanic families speak more Spanish than English.

During the 23-round-battle for the championship, each student took his/her time to carefully prepare a response, as reported in the *Abuquerque Journal* article. It was easy to see that each student was super prepared for the event.