



**Achieve  
Hartford!**  
A Compact for Education Excellence

**NEWS**

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*For Immediate Release*

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## ***Community Spelling Bee: A Victory for Hartford Schools***

**35 Teams Compete in Rollicking Evening Celebrating Education**

Achieve Hartford!'s Annual Community Spelling Bee October 22 unleashed 35 teams for a brain-tling competition uniting students, teachers and local businesses in support of education.

With School Superintendent Steven Adamowski serving as the timekeeper, community leader John Motley again wore the crown as "King of the Hive," welcoming and then alternately teasing, congratulating, and bidding farewell to three-member teams that misspelled words.

The winning team was The Spartans from SPARTA Insurance - and the final word spelled correctly was "mulligatawny," the stew of Indian origin. Among the six "swarms" of competing teams at the Theater for the Performing Arts in the Learning Corridor were 13 student or teacher teams, including those from Hartford Magnet Middle School, Bulkeley High, University High School for Science and Engineering, Classical Prep Magnet, Capital Prep Magnet, Covenant Prep, the Nursing Academy, and Avon High School. The finalists in the completion were:

- Two teams from Classical Magnet School: 8<sup>th</sup> grade students Theus McGee, Marco Aurelian, and Jordan Kunzika (The Mini Gladiators) and teachers Emily Goetz, Tricia Levesque, and Haley Troy (The Three Graces, named for the Greek goddesses of joy, charm, and beauty);
- Jean McDermott, Patricia Sullivan, and Ruby Rosenthal (The Spellkasters from West Middle School);
- Patricia DeFusco, Todd Alekshun, and Madhavi Gorusu, (Bee Tuff on Cancer from the Gray Center at Hartford Hospital);
- Tim Curry, Christy Pytel, and Nina Copeland (Beegles from Allied World Insurance);and
- Helen Williams, Joe Sacala, and Kevin Costello (the victorious Spartans from SPARTA Insurance).

"The Community Spelling Bee is a terrific way to bring together community and school supporters of our schools to celebrate and raise awareness of how much fun learning can be," said Achieve Hartford! Executive Director Jim Starr. "The teamwork we saw at the Spelling Bee is the same kind we need to accelerate the momentum for improving our schools."

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The winner of the Best Costume Award Friday night was the Trailblazing Ninjas team from Classical Prep Magnet School: Monique Ethier, Imani Bumpus, and Kimdinh Tran. Meanwhile, the Best Team Spirit Award was given to the YP Killer Bees team, which represented the Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs: Samantha Forbes, Glenn Anderson, and Borin Lohn.

Key supporters in logistics for the event included more than two dozen members of Trinity College's Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority, Achieve Hartford Community Programs Director Pat Salner said.

“In each of my four years at Trinity, our sorority has conducted weekly service projects in the community - but none is more enjoyable than the Community Spelling Bee,” Trinity senior and KKG President Kat Smith-Peterson said. Smith-Peterson, a biomedical engineering major, said her organization is continuously focused on service projects involving learning activities for Hartford children, including tutoring and Reading is Fundamental activities.

One of the teams Friday night featured mascots Howie the Hawk of the University of Hartford, Rocky the Rock Cat of the New Britain Rock Cats baseball team, and another student volunteer, St. Joseph College senior - and Blue Jay mascot - Gianna Gurga. Gurga said her mother taught school for 35 years and inspired her to become a teacher, too. “I have such a passion for learning that I want to help students have that passion for learning as well,” she said.

Sponsors of the Community Spelling Bee included: Aetna, Allied World Assurance Company, Bingham McCutchen, CM Smith Agency, Inc., Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Connecticut Light & Power, Global Partnership Schools, Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Goodwin College, Gray Cancer Center at Hartford Hospital, Hartford Courant, The Hartford Financial Services, Hartford Hospital, Hartford Wolf Pack Community Foundation, Joseph Merritt & Co, Landmark Partners, Motley Rice, New Alliance Bank, New Country MINI, Pita Group, Prudential Retirement, RC Knox & Company, Robinson & Cole, Reid & Riege, SPARTA Insurance, Travelers, Trinity College, University of Hartford, WFSB, Whalers Sports and Entertainment, WTIC NewsTalk 1080.

Other local leaders engaged as judges for the event included Hartford Board of Education Chair Ada Miranda, Hartford Teacher of the Year Corinne Clark, and Stan Simpson, Journalism director at the Journalism Media Academy at Weaver High School. Language columnist Rob Kyff, a.k.a. “The Word Guy” at the Hartford *Courant*, presented the words during the competition.

Achieve Hartford! is an independent, nonprofit organization of business and community leaders that focuses on student achievement and supporting effective and sustained school reform in the Hartford Public Schools. For more information on school reform and Achieve Hartford! please visit [www.AchieveHartford.org](http://www.AchieveHartford.org).

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