

Spelling bee to allow speller

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Scripps National Spelling Bee announced Tuesday it would allow northwest Missouri's top speller to participate in the national competition, even though she was disqualified last week.

"After further consideration, we've determined that Morgan Brown is eligible to compete in the 2008 Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C.," said Paige Kimble, director of the bee.

Morgan, 12, the first-place winner of the regional competition this month, was disqualified because her school did not enroll her according to a new rule requiring individual schools, rather than school districts, to register directly with the national bee.

Kimble, who said earlier Tuesday that Morgan's disqualification would not change, said bee officials changed their minds after a "thorough review."

Morgan said that when she first found out that she would be allowed to compete, it was something of a shock.

"My mom and I just jumped up and down and screamed," she said, adding that she had never completely given up.

"I was still holding out hope," Morgan said.

The problem arose because Morgan's school was registered as North Platte R-1 and should have been listed under the new rules as North Platte Junior High.

Diane Goold, the Newspapers in Education director for the St. Joseph News-Press, which sponsors the regional competition, said that for next year's contest she intends to be more vigilant as the applications start rolling in.

"My radar is going to be way up on getting these schools registered," she said. "And hopefully their radar will be up, and the bee will make sure that their communication is understood and everybody will be on the same page."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Melinda Olson, director of the Thomas County Community Foundation, left, presented Mrs. Shirley and her preschool class at Sacred Heart School with a grant of \$250 on pajama day, Feb. 27, at the preschool. This grant came from a portion of the proceeds from TCCF's Santa's Workshop held in December.

First Lady promotes reading

OLATHE, (AP) — First lady Laura Bush told students at an Olathe elementary school Tuesday that reading and community service are keys to living healthy and productive lives.

During a one-hour visit to Rolling Ridge Elementary School, Bush and Sen. Pat Roberts of Kansas visited a fourth-grade class and handed out the President's Volunteer Service Award to eight students who had contributed at least 75 hours of volunteer service within the last year.

The students volunteer service included such activities as reading to others, baby-sitting, collecting food for tornado-damaged Greensburg and working for Meals on Wheels.

"It's good news for America when our young people demonstrate such a strong sense of responsibility to their communities," Bush said. "We also know that young people who volunteer are more likely to avoid risky behaviors like drug and alcohol abuse and are more likely to lead healthy and successful lives."

Bush, a former librarian who has promoted literacy throughout her time in the White House, encouraged students to read as much as they watch television and to read a variety of books.

Judge orders sex offender to post sign

HUDSON (AP) — A Kansas judge has ordered a man who has admitted molesting a boy to post signs around his house and a decal on his car proclaiming that he is a sex offender.

Leroy Schad, 72, pleaded guilty in March 2007 of aggravated indecent solicitation of a child.

As part of his sentence, District Judge Ron Svaty ordered Schad to post the signs on his house and on his vehicle during his five years of probation and house arrest.

Hand-painted wooden signs reading "A Sex Offender Lives Here" are posted on all four sides of the his white house in this small central Kansas town of about 150 people. On his vehicle is a large decal with bold yellow lettering reading "Sex Offender In This Car."

The signs went up a few months ago.

"It's been pure hell," Schad said.

The loneliness and isolation im-

posed by the house arrest are the toughest to deal with, he said, adding that the signs on his car have sparked threatening gestures from other drivers that sometimes concern him.

Schad was originally charged with four counts of taking indecent liberties with a 9-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy on March 24 and 25, 2005. As part of a plea agreement, the charges were dismissed and he pleaded guilty to the lesser count of solicitation.

Schad admitted that he molested the boy but denied the other dismissed allegations. He said he took the plea deal to spare the children the ordeal of testifying and to "get this over with."

With no prior convictions, Kansas sentencing guidelines for the offense range from probation to about three years in prison. Schad's underlying sentence, if he violates probation, is 3 1/2 years.

Svaty declined to comment on his ruling, citing Kansas rules of

judicial conduct.

Defense attorney Joel Jackson said the signs were the judge's idea but declined to comment further.

Schad cannot appeal his conviction because he pleaded guilty, but he has appealed his sentence to the Kansas Court of Appeals. A ruling is pending.

"I know that was wrong," Schad said. "I know that I deserve something for that, but I don't think I deserve what I got."

Ron Keefover, spokesman for the Kansas Supreme Court, said he could not remember any other sex offense case with similar probation conditions.

"I'm sure there is nothing specifically that says a court may sentence in this manner, but I think that the court has latitude in terms of the conditions it sets," said Helen Pedigo, executive director of the Kansas Sentencing Commission. "I think the court has the ability to kind of be creative in

what they consider restitution to the community."

Schad has lived in Hudson since 1971.

"He's no problem," said neighbor Pete Witt. "I don't think anyone has any qualms about it. We have a lot more troubles with drugs in this town than we ever did with Leroy Schad."

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