

Sixth grader takes 12th in state spelling

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

With the number 91 and the word Sherman printed on a board strung around his neck, Dane Frazier, a sixth grader at North Elementary, carried on a family spelling tradition by taking 12th in the state spelling bee.

Frazier, 12, followed in the footsteps of his older brother Taylor all the way to Topeka for the 52nd Annual Topeka Capital-Journal All-Kansas Spelling Bee on Saturday, March 26.

He did, however, outgrow Taylor's shoes, as he placed 12th overall against 98 other spellers. Taylor, now 16 and a high school sophomore, took two trips to the state competition, one in sixth grade and one in eighth, but he was out in the second and third rounds.

"That was his goal," said Mary Frazier, the boys' mother, fifth-grade teacher at North. "He just wanted to do better than Taylor."

Although Dane's sister Jordan couldn't make it to the bee, plenty of relatives were on hand, including his father, Bill, his mother and brother. An uncle, John Swindell, from North Carolina drove to Indiana to pick up his 85-year-old grandmother, Louise Swindell, and drive her to Topeka.

Taking 12th place wasn't all easy for Dane. He said he has been studying since he first went to one of Taylor's bees four years ago.

He learned some of the tricks of the spelling trade there, he said, by watching kids ask for definitions and word origins.

Dane admits he hasn't hit the books as much as he could have, but he likes spelling so much he wants to start early, studying now for next year's bee.

"It was fun," he said. "I want to go back."

His mom said the competition is tough and they don't ever expect an easy win.

"We really get a kick out of it," she said, adding that some of the competitors have spelling coaches and tutors and take the bee seriously.

To keep themselves busy for the five-hour long bee, Mary said, the family had fun writing every word next to the speller's pictures in the program booklets. She said she did a lot of erasing to spell the word properly.

Looking through the books, she said, the family found several students that Taylor competed against still in the contest and going up against Dane. She said the winner of this year's bee, Kent Toland, spelled against Taylor in 2003. In 2001, Taylor spelled against Toland's older brother of Scott, who won that year and again in 2002.

Part of Dane's success at the bee, she said, has to do with stage presence, an area in which her son excels.

"Dane can handle a stage, he can handle a crowd," she said, adding

that some other contestants were too scared to speak up.

The other part, she said, comes from his teachers and his drive to do well. She said Dane's first grade teacher, Patty Thompson, used a "Sing, Spell, Read and Write" program that taught him the rules of spelling.

Thompson said the program allows students to learn through song, rap or just rhyming.

"I'm tickled pink for Dane," she said.

Dane said he did get a little nervous before the spelling started, but relaxed after his first word.

"In the first round, the practice round," he said, "my knees were shaking."

After that, he said, he decided the bee would be easy, and he made it farther than 86 other kids.

In the nine rounds Frazier lasted, he spelled "beautiful," "quaint," "altercation," "treacherous," "skewer," "misshapen," "dynamic" and "cari-bou." He misspelled "conglomerate" dropping into the 12th spot.

Frazier brought home a spelling bee T-shirt, a certificate and other souvenirs of the day. He said they did a little bit of shopping in Topeka, too, and he got a new pair of shoes out of the trip.

"It was a good experience," he said. "I loved it because I got pretty far."

He added a bit of advice to poor spellers everywhere.

"If you want to get far, you really have to practice. You have to study your words every day."



Frazier



Bowling raises money for bigs, littles

Angie Medrano, 13, tried her hand with a bowling ball Saturday afternoon at he Big Brothers Big Sisters Bowl for Kids' Sake at Bowladium Lanes. The annual event helps raise money for the program by asking each bowler to get sponsors to donate a certain amount per pin or a set amount. The all-day event included free Pizza Hut pizza and pop for bowlers. Each bowler got a prize, including free meals from local restaurants and other gift items, and a free bottle of water from Culligan.

Photo by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

Senator's aids talk about ag, energy and right-to-die

By Kathryn Burke
The Goodland Star-News

Two senior assistants for U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback told a small crowd gathered at an informal round-table Thursday that the senator was mourning the loss of a Florida woman at the center of a right-to-die controversy.

Robert K. Wasinger, chief of staff for the senator, said he was interviewed on CNN, MSNBC and other networks talking about the Terri Shiuvo case.

"It's obviously something he cared very deeply about," Wasinger said. He said Brownback thinks it is important to "err on the side of life."

The majority of the talk at the session, in the basement of Western State Bank building, was handled by Riley P. Scott, a legislative aide.

Wasinger and Scott sat down with about five people who came for the meeting, answered questions and discussed the senator's positions on issues.

Questions started with concerns

about farm aid being cut. People said the farm bill is facing deep cuts in the budget proposals set fourth by the president, the House and the Senate.

Scott said with all three bring fourth the similar proposals, cuts are inevitable. Farmers asked why they are having difficulty getting deficiency pay-

ments, which go to farmers in times of need. Linda Franklin, a state Farm Bureau board member, said it takes six weeks just to get an appointment at the Farm Service Agency county office and another two to three to receive payments.

"It's just such a massive thing," Scott said, noting that the Department of Agriculture is attempt to hand out \$3 billion in payments. "The FSA is swamped."

The discussion turned to energy after Wasinger and Scott mentioned they visited a new ethanol plant in Campus, near Oakley, earlier in the day.

Gerald Franklin, Linda's hus-

band, said with agriculture in jeopardy, an energy bill backing ethanol would help farmers out.

"If we don't get an energy bill," he said, "I don't know how we're gonna do it."

Wasinger was optimistic about getting a bill eventually.

"For too long, our foreign policy has been dictated on our need for foreign oil," Scott said.

Franklin asked what they could do to push an energy bill along.

Wasinger answered that Brownback already is working on the measure. He suggested visiting other congressmen. The Franklins traveled to Washington recently to promote agriculture, and Wasinger said that is one of the best ways to support bills.

Crop insurance was another concern for Linda Franklin. She said since the farm bill is being opened up for cuts, the government should consider changing the rules to make insurance rules more fair for the farmer. She said with drought issues facing people here, insurance allowances for dryland are better, but switching puts the irrigated yield in jeopardy.

"We've heard concerns with crop insurance before," Wasinger said adding the farm bill still needs work.

One person asked about keeping the Canadian border closed to cattle imports because of the discovery of cases of "Mad Cow disease" there. Riley said the issue is in the courts right now, but when it came before Brownback he voted against it.

Wasinger said closing the border with Canada sends the wrong message to Japan and other countries that are blocking U.S. beef exports, based on one cow imported here from Canada.

He said closing the border would only prevent livestock from coming to America, but processed meat could still come across.

"The border's not really closed," he said. "They're slaughtered there and then shipped here."

Scott said Brownback, a former Kansas secretary of agriculture, supports export of food and medicine to Cuba. He said the country did \$300 million last year alone in trade and although Cuba is a sensitive subject because of social differences, the senator supports certain types of trade.

Wasinger said looking forward in Washington, people are starting to gear up to look at Supreme Court nominees.

Wasinger said the president's

plan for Social Security reform seems to be catching on.

"I think it does have a fair amount of momentum," he said.

He criticized Democrats for politicizing the issue by using scare tactics and saying the elderly already on the program will face cuts. He said the truth is, the Social Security program is facing a crisis.

"Social Security is going bankrupt," he said. "We've got a real crisis on our hand in the next 10 to 12 years."

Keeping people in rural areas and recruiting others is the goal of another initiative the aides reviewed. They said the New Homestead Act, sponsored by Sen. Brownback, would give tax incentives for investment in counties losing 10 percent of their population or more over 20 years. Sherman County along with most of northwest Kansas qualifies for the act.

"The center of America," Scott said, "our heartland, is hollowed out."

Although the program isn't a fix-

all, he said, it would help draw people to rural areas the same way the first Homestead Act did.

"It was right then," he said, "and it's right now."

Gerald Franklin said getting a good farm bill would solve a lot of the migration problem.

Wasinger and Scott talked about health care, too, saying the coming crisis in the Medicare program might be worse than Social Security.

"Health care prices are going out of control," Wasinger said.

Scott and Wasinger said they report information on these talks back to Brownback and take everything into account in Washington. Earlier in the day they visited Hays, Campus and Colby before coming to Goodland. The pair headed back to Hays for the night and they were scheduled to go south to Great Bend on Friday.

"It's important to get out and see what people are thinking," Wasinger said.

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Ambulance crew in right place at right time

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

When you're injured in an accident, you want an ambulance to get there, and fast.

Sometimes, though, people get help quicker than they would even hope for.

That's what happened for a Wyoming family who crashed on I-70 near Mingo, between Colby and Oakley, about 4:40 p.m. Mountain Time Wednesday. A Goodland ambulance crew, on their way back from Hays, came on the accident and stopped to help before the Colby ambulance that had been called.

The Goodland ambulance had taken a patient to Hays, said Emergency Medical Services Director Bruce Gleason. The crew stopped at the wreck and helped take patients

to Citizens Medical Center in Colby.

It arrived before the Colby ambulance, he said, but the Highway Patrol was already there. Two technicians, Greg Nemechek and Wendy White, and a student ride-along, Nikki Gavin, were in the ambulance, Gleason said.

While the stop was unusual, it's what technicians are taught to do.

"We've never really had to do that before," Gleason said. "We still have a duty to respond. If we didn't stop, we would have committed a serious infraction."

The crew wouldn't have to stop if they had a patient on board, he said; that patient's safety would have first priority.

The patrol reported Ron Lee Blain, 43, Douglas, Wyo., was driving a 1982 Chevy pickup west-

bound on I-70 when the trailer he was pulling began to fishtail, causing him to lose control. The vehicle slid sideways and overturned once, coming to rest in the north ditch on its wheels four miles northwest of the U.S. 83/I-70 junction.

Passengers in the vehicle were Ashley Green, 3; Anna Wright, 80;

and Carla Blain, 43, all of Douglas. All were wearing seat belts.

Mrs. Blain was not injured, but Mr. Blain, and Wright were both taken to the hospital. Green was taken for a checkup. They were treated and released, said Gwen Young, executive assistant at the hospital.

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