

Winning spells scholarship money for bee victors

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Krishna Chandra is like any other 9-year-old who likes to play tennis, baseball, and watch cartoons.

Except, this fifth-grader came in first in a Massachusetts senior spelling bee — and then placed third in the national finals held recently at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Mass. The senior-level bee was for children ages 9 to 12.

"I thought his performance was pretty good," said his dad, Venkat Chandra. "A little bit of luck and he would have come second."

About 165 South Asian children, winners from all the various contests around the United States, participated in the spelling bee. The North/South Foundation, a national non-profit group, organized the event with the help from its 27 regional volunteer coordinators across the United States.

The foundation also held regional spelling bees in both New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The events also included a junior spelling bee for children under age 9, a vocabulary contest for children under age 16 and a "brain bee" — which covers facts related to the brain — for high school students.

Krishna, a student of Bancroft Elementary School in Andover, Mass., was one of four children — out of the original 55 — taking part in the last round.

However, he and two of the other finalists misspelled "Metempsychosis," so lost their chance for the first place.

The run-off for second place continued for a few more rounds. Raghav Srinivasan of New Jersey then took second place with Krishna and Suhas Rao, also from Massachusetts, tied for third.

About 450 people attended the event, said the foundation's Samit Bhattacharya.

These included Krishna's grandparents, visit-

ing from India. However, the large audience did not make him nervous.

"I thought I could not handle the pressure, but he was wonderful," said Krishna's mother, Prema. According to her the contest proved to be very educational. "He was learning new words in the process — which was an invaluable experience."

While he did not win, Krishna had a good time at the contest. "I enjoyed it," he said. "Some of the participants were my friends."

Krishna and Suhas received \$600 in scholarships, to be shared equally as the third-place winners. They also received trophies and certificates.

Sai Gunturi, a 12-year old from Texas, was the winner in the senior category; Aditya Nagaraja, a 7-year old from New Jersey, won the junior's; Anand Oza, 15-year old from Fremont, Calif., won the vocabulary and Tabby Khan, 15-year old from Atlanta won the brain bee contest.

The first- and second-place winners of the

senior spelling and vocabulary contests received scholarships of \$2,000 and \$1,000, respectively. The first-, second- and third-place winners of the junior spelling bee received scholarships of \$1,000, 500 and 250 respectively. The brain bee winners were presented with trophies. These scholarships will be redeemable in the winner's freshman year of their college.

Krishna's father took a week off from work to help his son prepare for the finals. Training included looking up words in the dictionary and references from the foundation's Web site.

For the future, Krishna hopes he can do better. "[I would like to] be the first and get the trophy at the nationals."

The event was co-sponsored by AID Boston Chapter and the Sarode Foundation.

For information about the foundation, call Dr. Murali Gavini at 301-947-2702 or Samit Bhattacharya at 860-446-1445 or visit www.northsouth.org.