

LAMORINDA WEEKLY



Wednesday, February 20, 2008 ■ Volume 01; Issue 27 ■ www.lamorindaweekly.com

It's Bee Season!

By **Andrea A. Firth**

It has been the subject of a best-selling novel (*Bee Season* by Myla Goldberg), a long-running Broadway musical (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*), an academy award nominated documentary (*Spellbound*), and a film and Starbucks favorite (*Akeelah and the Bee*)—the Spelling Bee persists as a fascination and a tradition across America and here in Lamorinda. In this age of computer spell check where words are rewritten with correct spelling before the typist has lifted her fingers from the keys, what's the attraction to the old-time Spelling Bee? "It's fun to watch," explains Elaine Frank, principal of Rheem School in Moraga, "It's really exciting." And for the kids who compete, she notes, "It's a real challenge."

Over the past two weeks, area schools have hosted competitions to identify their best spellers. With words such as mononucleosis, penitentiary, epiglottis, deterge, and cauliflower, Lamorinda students in 3rd through 8th grades have demonstrated their mastery of the English language or at least the sequence of its letters. The winners of the local Spelling Bees will head next to a county-wide contest held in March. The county winner



OIS Spelling Bee Finalists, Orinda

Photo Ron Langer



Rheem School Spelling Bee, Moraga

Photo Ann Ralph

then has the opportunity to participate in the Scripps National Spelling Bee that is held in Washington, D.C. in May.

What makes a super speller? Is it extensive reading, acute visual memory skills, the

ability to breakdown words phonetically, a superior knowledge of the origin of words? It's hard to say and even harder to spell. Whatever it is—it's a mystery and a gift.

Lamorinda Spelling Bee Winners

Elementary Schools	Student	Grade
Camino Pablo	Callan Beaver	4th
Los Perales	Uma Gaffney	4th
Rheem	Quinn Cuddiny	3rd
Sleepy Hollow	Brooke Presten	5th
Intermediate Schools	Student	Grade
Joaquin Moraga	Caroline Bell	7th
Orinda	Molly Fiero	6th
Stanley	Ryan Smolkin	8th