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RISHI DAMARLA WINS REGIONAL SPELLING BEE SPONSORED BY WFCU CREDIT UNION

WINDSOR, ON — Rishi Damarla is the champion of the Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent regional spelling bee sponsored by WFCU Credit Union. His winning word was “grout” meaning mortar fluid thin enough to be poured and used for filling in spaces as in the joints of masonry or brickwork. The competition involving 28 spellers from 14 local schools lasted 50 rounds.

Spellers competed at the Chrysler Theatre on Saturday, February 23, 2019. Jim Crichton, Anchor CTV News Windsor served as the host for the day, while Craig Pearson, Managing Editor at the Windsor Star, served as pronouncer for the competition.

The judges who tracked every word and verified spelling accuracy were Beverly Becker, National Director Local Marketing Post Media, Jason Ilijanic, Director Commercial Services WFCU Credit Union, Melissa Schultz, Program Director AM800, and Veronique Mandal, Coordinator of Journalism and Media Convergence programs at St. Clair College. Spellers studied the 2019 School Spelling Bee Study List and Spell It!, a 1,150-word list provided by the Scripps National Spelling Bee and Merriam-Webster.

“WFCU Credit Union is committed to providing opportunities that allow youth in our area to challenge and develop their skills,” said Eddie Francis, President and CEO, WFCU Credit Union, “the Spelling Bee promotes literacy and language arts in a fun and engaging way that helps students improve their language skills, and develop and build their self-confidence, a skill that will help them achieve their goals and excel in all areas of their lives.”

Damarla now advances to compete in the 2019 Scripps National Spelling Bee in the Washington, D.C. area, and broadcast on ESPN channels May 29-31. In addition to the expenses-paid trip to the national finals for him and a parent, Damarla also wins these prizes:

- **The Samuel Louis Sugarman Award** is a 2019 United States Mint Proof Set provided by Jay Sugarman, chairman and CEO of iStar Financial, in honor of his father. Damarla will receive the prize in June.
- **The Britannica Online Premium** is a one-year subscription for the premier online resource from Encyclopædia Britannica.
- **The Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online** is a one-year subscription for the official word source for all levels of competition for the Scripps National Spelling Bee.
- **\$200 WFCU Credit Union Educational Scholarship** to be used towards post-secondary education.

“The calibre of spellers in our region is remarkable,” said Marty Gillis, Chair, WFCU Credit Union Board of Directors. “The students that competed truly exemplified the spirit of the Bee through their poise, dedication and comradery,” adding that although there could only be one winner, each of the students that competed should be extremely proud of the accomplishments they achieved in making it to the regional competition.

This is the first year WFCU Credit Union has sponsored the regional Bee event. The competition encourages students to set goals and dedicate time to study and prepare. Participation also provides an opportunity for students to gain experience in public speaking and performing under pressure.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee provides the list of words for the regional competition. The Bee reaches an estimated 11 million students across North America and in other parts of the world with the classroom materials it provides to enrolled schools. The purpose of the Bee is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn concepts and develop correct English usage that will help them all their lives.

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About WFCU Credit Union:

WFCU Credit Union has been recognized as a leading, progressive financial institution headquartered in Windsor and Essex County since 1941. Proudly serving Ontario residents, community organizations, small businesses, commercial entities and public institution for over 77 years, WFCU Credit Union is the sixth largest credit union in Ontario, operating nine retail locations and one digital entity, Omnia Direct. Through these service channels, in combination with online and mobile banking, telephone banking and ATM services, WFCU Credit Union has become the financial institution of choice for 43,480 Members across Ontario including 39,310 Personal Members in 19,051 households, 2,783 Businesses and 1,387 Organizations. Currently, WFCU Credit Union has \$4.9 Billion in Managed Assets and Member Service Totals of \$6.6 Billion. WFCU Credit Union membership is open to anyone who lives and/or works in Ontario. For more information on WFCU Credit Union please visit wfcu.ca.

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About the Scripps National Spelling Bee:

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program. Visit spellingbee.com for more information about the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which is administered on a not-for-profit basis by The E.W. Scripps Company.

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