

Math skills wins Wallins 8th grader scholarship to University of Kentucky

Wallins Elementary School eighth grader Brett Roark won top individual honors and his team took second in the regional MATHCOUNTS competition held recently on the Campus of Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College in Middlesboro.

Sponsored by the Pine Mountain Chapter of the Kentucky Society of Professional Engineers, the competition featured schools from Harlan County, Bell County and Harlan Independent.

Roark, who won first place with a prize that includes a full scholarship to the University of Kentucky, admitted math isn't his favorite subject but was quick to add he enjoys it "a lot."

Along with his Wallins teammate Edmund Dye,

Roark advances to the state MATHCOUNTS competition. Additional scholarships are awarded to students winning at the state level at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green on Saturday, March 25.

Other individuals advancing to the state include Jackson Huff and Shane Lindsey of Harlan Middle School, Chase Huff, Laurel Nolan, Shelby Cornett and Abby Cornett of Bell Central.

The Bell Central team which won first place, advances to the state.

Also advancing is the Wallins team of Tony Reynolds, Caleb Hensley, Dye and Roark.

Roark was quick to give credit to his math teacher and MATHCOUNTS Coach, Jeff "Duffy" Roberts and to his elementary math teacher, Robert Simpson.

"If it wasn't for Mr. Roberts, I wouldn't have done so well," said Roark. "My elementary teacher helped prepare me a lot too."

Roark said he is considering engineering for a career. He isn't certain on the specific area of study he will pursue. He will leave his options open for the college or university he will attend, noting that when the time comes he will weigh all options.

After the awards ceremony ended, Roark said he was both "nervous and excited" having just won the scholarship.

Roark is a strong competitor on the school's academic team. He is on the basketball team, football team and a member of the Beta Club. He is the son of Brent and Kris Roark.

Roberts, the team coach, said, "I am proud of each of our students that participated in MATHCOUNTS. They all worked hard this year and I am pleased to see their efforts have paid off. I want to congratulate our team on finishing second overall and advancing to the state competition and to Brett Roark for placing first in the Pine Mountain Chapter of MATHCOUNTS."

Harlan Middle School's Tamanna Sajjani finished ninth in the competition.



Corey Napier, a member of the KSPE Pine Mountain Chapter, said the competition is for sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

“The MATHCOUNTS competition is designed to be completed in approximately three hours. Each competition consists of four parts: the Sprint, Target, Team and Countdown Rounds,” said Napier, a professional engineer for Vaughn and Melton Consulting Engineers Inc. “The Sprint Round has 30 questions, and students have 40 minutes to complete them. The Target Round consists of eight questions, which are distributed to the students two at a time. Students have six minutes to complete each pair of problems. The Team Round has 10 problems for the team to work together within the 20 minute time limit. The top 25 percent of individuals, up to a maximum of 10, proceed to the Countdown Round, an oral round in which students compete head-to-head.”

Napier explained MATHCOUNTS is a national math enrichment, coaching and competition program that promotes middle school mathematics achievement through grassroots involvement in every U.S. state and territory.

MATHCOUNTS is one of the most successful education partnerships involving volunteers, educators and industry sponsors and students.

The organization’s mission statement is to increase enthusiasm for and enhance achievement in middle school mathematics throughout the United States, he said. It is supported primarily by the Kentucky Society of Professional Engineers, the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics and the CAN Foundation.

For more information about MATHCOUNTS, visit mathcounts.org.

The Wallins Elementary School MATHCOUNTS team advancing to the state competition at Western Kentucky University Bowling Green are, from the left, Coach Jeff "Duffy" Roberts, Brett Roark, Tony Reynolds, Edmund Dye and Caleb Hensley.



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