



Bee contestant can do it all

By William Croyle • wcroyle@nky.com • May 4, 2010

EDGEWOOD - If there is anything Szofia Komaromy-Hiller can't do, she hasn't found it yet.

"One of my goals in life is to be a well-rounded person and excel in everything I do," she said. "School is fun for me. I'm very motivated to do well."

The 14-year-old eighth grader from St. Pius X School has two glass cases of awards she's earned during her grade school career, but she'll need several more cases to accommodate the honors just from the past few months.

In that time she has won awards in religion, math, science, literature and music, including a state championship at the Kentucky Science & Engineering Fair and gold medal for humorous writing in the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

She also scored in the top five percent of seventh grade students nationwide who took the SAT through a Duke University program, earned the top scholarship from Notre Dame Academy for her entrance exam score and played Dorothy in St. Pius X's production of "The Wizard of Oz."

She even found time to win the regional spelling bee.

Szofia, along with Bridgetown (Ohio) Middle School eighth-grader Matthew Luczaj, will represent the region in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. from June 2-4.

"Going to D.C. is so humbling," Szofia said. "I just feel so blessed to be a part of it."

Szofia was born in Utah and moved to Los

Angeles when she was 3 years old. She lived there for eight years before moving to Toronto, Canada for a year. She came to St. Pius X in sixth grade.

Her father, Gabor, is Hungarian, and her mother, Maria, is Ecuadoran. Szofia speaks English, Spanish and Hungarian fluently. She plays the flute and piccolo, and plays piano at weekend Masses. She takes an Algebra I Honors class at Covington Catholic High School, and is on St. Pius X's academic team.

Szofia said her one weakness might be gym class. "That's not my forte," she said. Yet she jogs regularly and swam competitively in California.

"She excels in everything," said Tanya Bartlett, seventh grade language arts teacher who coordinated the school's spelling bee. "She's not afraid to try new things and, if she needs help, she asks for it. Whatever she does, she commits to it 100 percent."

Her 10-year-old brother, John, recently started a fan club for his sister. "I go to all of her events," John said. "I like to cheer her on."

Maria attributes her daughter's success to "a heart that welcomes what everything around her has to offer."

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Maria said she and Gabor taught Szofia at a young age that school will be part of her life for many years, so she might as well always do her best to succeed in every aspect of it.

After Notre Dame Academy and college (she's already considering UCLA), Szofia plans to follow her father into the science field. Gabor is a clinical chemist. Szofia wants to be a chemical engineer or epidemiologist.

But for the next month, her focus will be on the spelling bee. Her study guide is a 500,000-word dictionary she won at the regional level. Her strategy is not to memorize, but to pick words that interest her, learn their meanings and origins, give her usual 100 percent effort and let the chips fall where they may.

"I hope to spell all of the words right, but I also know I'm always just one letter away from being out," she said. "I just want to have the best experience there that I can."



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The Enquirer/Tom Miller
Szofia Komaromy-Hiller, an eighth grader at St. Pius X School in Edgewood, sits with several awards she has won on Wednesday, April 28th. Komaromy-Hiller became the Region 1 (Indiana/Kentucky) Champion of the Scripps Regional Spelling Bee after defeating 70 other participants. She will go on to represent Region 1 at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. in early June.

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