

Hardyston Township Middle School Finishes First and Second in Sussex County Middle Schools Academic Bowl

In what may be considered as the 32nd Annual Sussex County Middle School Academic Bowl, the two teams representing Hardyston Township took first and second. The event, held Friday, June 2 at Hardyston Township Middle School in Hardyston, New Jersey saw eleven teams of seventh and eighth graders come together to compete for the perpetual trophy. The Hardyston Middle School team A was first, with team B second. The team representing Newton was third and team B from Sparta was fourth.

Steeped in tradition, the Sussex County Middle School Academic Bowl is an excellent example of the county's continuing commitment to education. Sussex County had a broad representation of teams who participated in this year's event: Sparta Middle School, from Vernon, the Glen Meadow Middle School, Newton Halsted School, Hamburg, Hopatcong, Sussex Charter School and Hardyston Township. The schools from Glen Meadow, Vernon, Sussex Charter, and Hardyston each had two teams in the challenge.

Each year, the Academic Bowl tests our county's sharpest middle school students' reflexes, teamwork skills and sheer knowledge in a fun and competitive atmosphere, which followed a television game show format, using questions and buzz-in devices. Each round drew from questions on subjects that ranged from general history to mathematics, science, literature and language arts, and the performing arts. This year, retired educators volunteered to read the questions for each round, sharing their expertise and adding an appreciated level of formality to the match rounds. The full day of competition was exciting for all who participated.

The first place Hardyston team consisted of Nadine Boukhari, Jacob Conklin, Veronica Conklin, Emily McCallum, and Katrina Veal. The second place team, Hardyston Middle School Team B included Gian Accardi, Dominic Chiochhi, Caroline Kula, Nick Paddock, and Claudia Pignataro. Mrs. Patricia Rosendale coached both teams, along with the support of Mr. Robert Rosendale. Throughout the day and evening, students from Hardyston's eighth grade class operated the buzzer and timer equipment, acted as scorekeepers, and helped to manage the event.

Beginning just before nine in the morning, the teams met in head-to-head in match round challenges, eleven rounds in all. In addition, each team also had the opportunity of a collaborative round in which all team members could discuss and respond to the questions. Many of the match rounds were hotly contested with students buzzing in quickly and responding to the questions, leading to a number of very close scores.

The top scores achieved during the day determined the final rounds held Friday evening. The final four met for a consolation round for third and fourth, followed by the final round, both rounds were held in the cafetorium in front of the other teams, families, and friends in the audience. Lieutenant Colonel William Pohlmann, ret. a resident of Sussex County, moderated the evening's matches. The air was charged with nervous energy and anticipation as questions were traded off between the two teams. The round was not determined until the final questions; one question separated the teams, with Hardyston Team A taking the lead in the scoring.

The first place team took home the perpetual silver bowl trophy, along with both a team trophy and individual trophies and medals for each team member. The second place team received a team trophy, individual trophies and medals for the members for their accomplishment.

Hardyston Township Middle School is making plans to host the 2017 challenge along with a challenge for younger students and anticipates an even more excitement to follow.