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## **St. Michael School Student Wins Wake County Spelling Bee**

RALEIGH -- A Cary teenager won the right today to represent Wake County in the 2011 National Spelling Bee.

Catherine Wagner, 13, an eighth-grader at St. Michael School, a parochial school in Cary, beat out 77 other competitors to win the 2011 Wake County Spelling Bee. Wagner will be the first person from Wake County to participate in the National Spelling Bee since 1997.

"I didn't think I'd go on to be school champion," said Wagner, whose prize includes an all-expenses paid trip in June to Washington D.C. for the national competition. "This is unbelievable."

The competition lasted more than 4 1/2 hours and 23 rounds. The students, winners of their school competitions, mostly came from the Wake County school system with a small number of private schools and home schools also represented.

Wagner's winning word was talcum. Today's competition lasted so long that near the end the judges had used up the words that students memorized ahead of time. The list they switched to contained easier words.

Abijah Samuel, 11, a sixth-grader at East Cary Middle School finished in second place.

Michelle Dai, 10, a fourth-grader at Dillard Drive Elementary School in Raleigh finished in third place.

The main sponsor of the Spelling Bee was the Wake County parent group Partnership for the Advancement of Gifted Education. Wake had been without a spelling bee for years when *The News & Observer* and television station WRAZ withdrew sponsorship after 1997.

*The News & Observer*, *The Carolina Hurricanes* and N.C. State University, which hosted the event, were among this year's sponsors.