



# Zaila Avant-garde declared champion of the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee

July 8, 2021

**CINCINNATI** – Zaila Avant-garde, a 14-year-old speller from New Orleans, is the champion of the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Zaila (zah-EE-luh) Avant-garde earned the prestigious title in round 18, when she correctly spelled “Murraya” which is defined as “a genus of tropical Asiatic and Australian trees having pinnate leaves and flowers with imbricated petals.”

Adam Symson, president and CEO of The E.W. Scripps Company (NASDAQ: SSP), presented the championship trophy moments before ESPN signed off from the 93rd Scripps National Spelling Bee, which took place at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Florida.

“Zaila demonstrated incredible mastery of the English language with poise and perseverance. The excellence of all of our competitors, their hard work and commitment to learning, and their distinct stories, capture hearts and minds across the globe,” said Symson. “We take great pride in the way the Scripps National Spelling Bee, like so many of its spellers, adapted through difficult circumstances over the last year to safely bring back America’s favorite and longest-running educational competition.”

Avant-garde is the first Black American to be crowned winner of the Bee. This was her second time participating in the national finals. The first was in 2019. An eighth grader at Clover Lane Homeschool, she was sponsored by New Orleans Chapter of The Links.

On her path to the 2021 championship moment, Avant-garde was one of 209 national qualifiers this year and advanced through three levels of virtual competition: The Preliminaries on June 12, the Quarterfinals on June 15 and the Semifinals on June 27.

The Finals of the 93rd Scripps National Spelling Bee took place on Thursday, July 8, at 8 p.m. ET with 11 Finalists. Avant-garde competed in a suspenseful nine rounds: eight spelling rounds and a word meaning round. The total number of rounds in the competition was 18.

The champion receives:

- **From Scripps:** \$50,000 cash prize, commemorative medal and the Scripps Cup, the official championship trophy of the Scripps National Spelling Bee
- **From Merriam-Webster:** \$2,500 cash prize and reference library from the Bee’s dictionary partner
- **From Encyclopædia Britannica:** \$400 of reference works, including a 1768 Encyclopædia Britannica Replica Set and a three-year membership to Britannica Online Premium

Chaitra Thummala of Frisco, Texas, and originally from San Ramon, California, representing Bay Area Regional Spelling Bee, placed second in the competition and will receive \$30,000. Bhavana Madini of New York, representing NYC Regional Spelling Bee, placed third in the competition and will receive \$15,000.

As the country continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and communities and industries update associated guidelines, the in-person portion of the competition at ESPN Wide World of Sports was not open to spectators. Spellers and Bee officials followed health and safety protocols, including masking and physical distancing, throughout the event. Scripps also has consulted on COVID-19-related health and safety protocol with medical experts at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center to facilitate a responsible experience for all.

Each year, the Scripps National Spelling Bee reaches more than 11 million students participating in spelling bees held in classrooms, schools and locally sponsored events around the country.

Photos from the 93rd Scripps National Spelling Bee Finals are available on the Scripps National Spelling Bee's official Flickr page at [flickr.com/scrippsbee/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/scrippsbee/).

### **About the Scripps National Spelling Bee:**

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the nation's largest and longest-running educational program, having launched in 1925. The purpose of the Scripps National Spelling 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. Visit [spellingbee.com](https://www.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.

### **About Scripps**

[The E.W. Scripps Company](https://www.ewscripps.com) (NASDAQ: SSP) is a diversified media company focused on creating a better-informed world. As the nation's fourth-largest local TV broadcaster, Scripps serves communities with quality, objective local journalism and operates a portfolio of 61 stations in 41 markets. The Scripps Networks reach nearly every American through the national news outlets Court TV and Newsy and popular entertainment brands ION, Bounce, Grit, Laff, Court TV Mystery, Defy TV and TrueReal. Scripps is the nation's largest holder of broadcast spectrum. Scripps runs an award-winning investigative reporting newsroom in Washington, D.C., and is the longtime steward of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Founded in 1878, Scripps has held for decades to the motto, "Give light and the people will find their own way."

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