

The Middletown

VALLEY

Vol. 22,
No. 23

June 9,
2011

Citizen



50¢

Serving Middletown, Boonsboro,
Myersville, Keedysville, Wolfsville,
Braddock Heights, and
South Washington County

The Citizen — 8

Brian McGiffin wins first in state in international math competition

by Barb Dye

Brian McGiffin, a fourth-grader at Myersville Elementary, placed first in the state of Maryland in the international Math Kangaroo competition. He attended an awards ceremony at Fallsmead Elementary in Rockville on Thursday, May 26, where he was acknowledged for his achievement.

He earned a perfect score on the 24-question test that he took on March 17, along with 987 other fourth-graders across the United States. Brian said, "I was kind of nervous, but I felt ready. I was pretty sure I got them all right."

While he placed first in Level 4 in Maryland, it's not yet known if he tied for first in the country, as not all states have reported their scores. Last year he placed third in Maryland and 12th in the U.S.

In preparation for the test this year, he took five or six practice tests, which are available online, by doing a few problems every day—usually while eating breakfast. He said, "I like going math when I'm eating, because I don't like just eating." In other words, math gives him something to do. And he likes it. He said, "It's fun. I like it more than spelling, because if you forget a word, you just don't know it. But in math, you can figure it out and get the right answer."

Brian also likes sports, particularly lacrosse (he's been playing



since kindergarten) and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (he's done this since second grade). When he's not playing sports or doing math just for fun, Brian said that he also likes "to play with my friends, Legos, and read." Right now, he's creating a Lego Temple of Darkness of his own design and enjoying the Artemis Fowl series by Eoin Colfer.

As his prize for placing first in the math contest, Brian received a \$25 gift card to Target, a stuffed toy kangaroo, a medal, and a certificate. And after the awards ceremony, his mom and dad took him out for a celebratory gelato, which happens to be one of his favorite treats.

Math Kangaroo began in Australia in the 1980s and quickly

began to gain support around the world. The first tests in the United States were given in 1998 to 32 students. Since then, participation in the U.S. has grown steadily—in 2010, 4,300 students competed and in 2011 that number increased to 6,487. This year in Maryland, 211 students competed.

Students have 75 minutes to complete the multiple choice test. Levels of the test correspond with school grades—that is, first grade is Level 1, second grade is Level 2, and so on. Students in grades one through four take a 24-questions test, and students in grades five through 12 take a 30-question test. A student may participate at a level equal to or higher than his or her grade level at school. While Brian took his test at his current grade level, his practice tests were always a level or two higher.

Only two sites in Maryland offered the test this year: Fallsmead Elementary in Rockville and McDaniel College in Westminster. But Brian's mom, Stacey McGiffin, would like to see that change. She said, "I am looking into what is involved in having a Frederick location for next year's Math Kangaroo contest."

The date for next year's Math Kangaroo competition has already been set for Thursday, March 15, 2012. To find out how your child can participate and for more information, visit www.mathkangaroo.com.