



Houston Public Media

TV 8 News 88.7 Classical 91.7

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friendswood and Pearland Co-Champions of Houston Public Media Spelling Bee Make Semifinals at 2014 Scripps National Spelling Bee

HOUSTON – (May 29, 2014) – Syamantak Payra, an eighth grader at Westbrook Intermediate School in Clear Creek ISD, and Shobha Dasari, a seventh grader at Pearland Junior High School West in Pearland ISD, made it to the semifinals at the 2014 Scripps National Spelling Bee in National Harbor, Md. this week representing Houston Public Media. They joined 44 other young spellers in the Semifinals, which was broadcast live this morning on ESPN2.

Payra tied for 37th place in the national spelling bee. He was eliminated in round five of the Semifinals after he misspelled the word “circumforaneous,” which means wandering from place to place. This is Payra’s last year to compete.

“I am extremely grateful for this awesome and enriching experience,” said Payra. “Though I’m disappointed with the outcome this year, the self-discipline and knowledge I’ve amassed through the last six years will stay with me through the rest of my life.”

Dasari tied for 32nd place. She was eliminated in round six after she misspelled the word “helophyte,” a bog plant.

“The best thing about participating at the national bee is meeting and learning from the other spellers,” said Dasari. “I didn’t do as well as I wanted to this year but I will do my best and try again next year.”

The Semifinals consisted of the computer-based Semifinals Test and two rounds of onstage oral spelling.

This was the second year for the co-champions of the Houston Public Media Spelling Bee to compete at the national level. Last year Payra tied for seventh place and Dasari tied for 19th place.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is one of the nation’s most prestigious academic competitions. This year’s competition began on Tuesday with 281 spellers from the 50 U.S. states, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Department of

Defense Schools in Europe; also, the Bahamas, Canada, China, Ghana, Jamaica, Japan and South Korea this week. More than 11 million spellers started at the local-level with the goal of participation the 87th annual Scripps National Spelling Bee.

“We are so proud of Syamantak and Shobha for their amazing tenacity and dedication,” said Lisa Trapani Shumate, executive director and general manager of Houston Public Media. “Both spellers have excelled year after year at the Houston Public Media Spelling Bee and it’s been a pleasure to watch them advance and experience the national spotlight at Scripps.”

As part of the organization’s commitment to education, Houston Public Media conducts, hosts and broadcasts the Scripps-affiliated local spelling bee competition annually. This year marked the sixth year that they have staged this prestigious academic competition. School enrollment for the 2015 Bee will begin in August.

For more information on the Houston Public Media Spelling Bee, visit www.houstonpublicmedia.org/spellingbee. For photos of Payra and Dasari at the 2014 Scripps National Bee, visit www.flickr.com/photos/houstonpubmedia.

###

About Houston Public Media

Houston Public Media (houstonpublicmedia.org) is comprised of TV 8, News 88.7 and Classical 91.7. With a combined weekly audience of more than 1.5 million, Houston Public Media is committed to delivering content that goes beyond the ordinary in the focus areas of news and information, arts and culture, and education. A community service of the University of Houston, Houston Public Media is supported by financial gifts from its members and the community through Houston Public Media Foundation, formerly known as the Association for Community Broadcasting, a non-profit 501(c)(3). Connect on Facebook at facebook.com/houstonpublicmedia and Twitter at twitter.com/HoustonPubMedia.