

First Literacy Spelling Bee raises over \$250,000 to support adult literacy in Massachusetts

By **Breanne Kovatch** Globe Correspondent, Updated April 9, 2022, 10:18 p.m.



A team from Eaton Vance were crowned the 2022 First Literacy Spelling Bee champion. COURTESY OF FIRST LITERACY

The 32nd annual First Literacy Spelling Bee drew 27 teams this year, comprised of three players each, and raised more than \$250,000 to support adult literacy in Massachusetts.

The teams competed on Thursday to spell out such tricky words as tuyere, saurischian, and phytohemagglutinin, according to a news release from First Literacy, a Boston-based nonprofit.

A team from Eaton Vance, a Boston-based investment management company, was

crowned the 2022 Spelling Bee Champion, First Literacy said. Those who tuned in via

watch parties got to see the teams spell out a total of 30 words during the bee, which had both live and recorded components for the first time ever, First Literacy said.

Usually, the teams are [made up of people](#) from top investment, legal, and software industries in Boston. But this year's spelling bee unique: anyone could join who was able to form a team of three members, the organization said.

"The First Literacy Spelling Bee has traditionally been a corporate event held in person at State Street in Boston," First Literacy Executive Director Terry Witherell said in the statement. "This year, with the competition being on a virtual platform, it was easier to open the event to more people, and it was a great opportunity to further increase awareness of First Literacy's work to improve adult literacy throughout Massachusetts."

Teams were charged a minimum entry fee of \$3,500. The funds raised will be used to help adults with low literacy in Massachusetts. An estimated 17 percent of Massachusetts adults are at risk for difficulties comprehending and using print material, First Literacy said.

The organization provides free professional development workshops, scholarships for adults pursuing higher education or vocational training, and grants for new programs to help fully support adult learners, the statement said.

State Street, which has supported First Literacy's work since 2010, was awarded the first-ever First Literacy Champion Award, the statement said.

"The Spelling Bee is our largest fundraising event," Jeffrey Beale, chairman of the board at First Literacy, said in a statement. "We are grateful to all those who make this event a success. I always say that adult literacy is a problem that can be solved, and the funds that are raised from the Bee bring us closer to helping ensure that adults throughout Massachusetts have access to high-quality educational opportunities."

Breanne Kovatch can be reached at breanne.kovatch@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@breannekovatch](https://twitter.com/breannekovatch).

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