

# Platteville, Cassville win first Civics Games regional

## Teams will converge on state finals Feb. 23

BY DAVID TIMMERMAN  
NEWSEditor@TDS.NET

“I was pretty sure we were done.” Cassville High School sophomore Moria Kasper-Theisen was pretty blunt on thinking that when her teammates lost to Platteville High School in the first round of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation’s first-ever Civics Games Regionals at UW-Platteville Saturday, she thought they were done. But due to some luck, and a couple of teams not showing up, they got a second chance and rode a waive to be the runner-ups of the day, and will be going to the Finals Feb. 23.

Kasper-Theisen, along with senior Melody Hampton and Cassville High School juniors Ezra Okey and Kendra Rouse finished second, right behind Platteville High School seniors Liam Reinicke, Alex Sonsalla, Spencer Olds, and junior Jacob Sherer - the team that beat them in the first round.

Reinicke, the captain for the Platteville squad said when he heard of the competition, which was put together by the statewide newspaper association to create more awareness in civics and community involvement,

he jumped at the chance. “I have always been interested in civics, and when I heard of the competition in school, I knew a couple of my friends are interested also, and we thought we would represent our school.”

They spent two months preparing, including going against other teams in school wide competitions to see who would represent Platteville.

“We each specialized in certain areas, and we have a background in civics,” noted Alex Sonsalla.

While they prepared, nothing can quite get you ready for actually being there. “It was a little nerve-wracking on stage at first, the lights shining down, and there is a stage and stuff,” Reinicke continued, adding “once the first question hit, the nerves went away.”

“It was an enjoyable experience,” Sherer noted.

Platteville faced Cassville in the opening round, which, too stumbled a little while getting their legs under them. Still, the group was motivated from their own love of government and history to get involved.

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Moria Kasper-Thiesen, Ezra Okey, Melody Hampton and Kendra Rouse pose triumphantly after being runner-ups in the inaugural Wisconsin Newspaper Foundation’s Civics Games Regionals in Platteville Saturday.

# Civic Games

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"I really love government and knowing how things work, and I wanted to learn some more and have a little bit of fun while doing it," Cassville Captain Melody Hampton said.

Kasper-Theisen said she tried out for the team to make her dad proud. "I get these 15-minute spiels on the government randomly, or the history of Wisconsin," she quipped. "Hey Moria, did you know...."

Cassville had eight people try out, but a number of factors whittled them down to their four-person team. Before the first round, they talked about keeping the nerves at bay, about channeling that feeling, and taking things they learned from team sports or forensics, and using it to be calm.

That didn't kick in until the fourth question, and Cassville went down to Platteville in the first, four questions right compared to Platteville's seven.

Fate was shining down on Cassville, however, as a couple of teams failed to show up due to weather, and there were already an odd-number of teams.

The losing team that had the most points would get another shot.

But by the end of the first round, both Cassville and Belleville had 40 points, and

a tie-breaker was used. Both teams were brought out for a sudden-death question.

As the question was being asked, it was first asking which counties were hosting the five regional taking place, but when a Belleville player asked for clarification, it turned into which county was the Platteville regional was being held in.

A no-brainer for the kids from Cassville right? But Belleville had rang the buzzer, and got the question clarified to be Platteville, and Melody could see their chances slipping away.

"This is it and we are going home," she remembered thinking.

But Belleville got it wrong, and the Cassville group chimed in and kept moving forward.

They then took on students from La Crosse Logan, and trounced the largest group of the regionals. Belleville returned, and they were narrowly slipped past.

That brought back Platteville, which continued to dominate through the finals.

With Reinicke at the bell, Platteville took the top prize, answering a number of questions about taxes.

That was not about studying for Reinicke. "I hear my parents complain about property taxes in Platteville, so I figured that is where they get most of their money. And I know there is a state income tax because I had a job and I had to pay money out of my paycheck for it, so it was personal."

Hampton commended Platteville on their quickness and knowledge. "They are quick with the bell, and they know their stuff."

Both teams are going to be studying extensively for the state finals, which has \$2,000 scholarships on the line for the winning team members.

There was a three-judge panel for the event - retired Lancaster Mayor Jerry Wehrle, Dodgeville Chronicle Publisher Pat Reilly, and 49th State Assembly Representative Travis Tranel.

"Anytime there is an opportunity for people to be involved in civics or discussions in government, community, its always an inspiration to me," Tranel said why he participated. He noted he got the bug for civics in school, and he wanted to let the students know that it is not that difficult to get involved in any way.

"It's much simpler to be involved than they realize."

