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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PHOTO CAPTION: Central School's Geo Bee finalists.

Geo Bee Inspires Curiosity and Competition

SIMSBURY, CT—In the 11th year of an exciting annual tradition, on February 2, 2017, eight Central Elementary School students in grades four, five, and six competed for the title of school champion in the National Geographic Society's annual Geographic Bee ("geo bee").

Begun in 1989 in response to concern about young people's lack of knowledge about geography, the geo bee "is designed inspire and reward students' curiosity about the world." This year students from 10,000 schools across the country are competing in the 2017 geo bee for a chance to win college scholarships and "the glory of being the National Geographic Bee Champion."

The event took place in the school's gym, with all students in grades 4 through 6 invited to watch the eight winners of the homeroom preliminary rounds compete. Sixth grade teacher Heather Donlon coordinated the event and outlined the rules. Fifth grade teacher Megan Leonard served as timekeeper, with sixth grade teacher Steve Petrella keeping score. The eight semifinalists were fourth graders Evan Harris, Peter Morand, and Momin Ali, fifth graders Garrett Dolin and Annie Wollmar, and sixth graders Kate Morrissette, Jameson Bodenbug, and James Cooper.

The final showdown was between Ali and Bodenbug. A tough question related to a marine protected area in Hawaii called Papahānaumokuākea was the final question that sank Ali, who sat down to applause from his classmates for his efforts. It almost sank Donlon, too, who said, "If they didn't include a pronunciation key, I have no idea what I would have done!"

As the Central School winner, Jameson will now take a written test that will be sent to National Geographic in order to determine his eligibility for the Connecticut State Bee, held at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) on March 31, 2017. If eligible, this would mark the second year in a row that Jameson has competed at the state level. The winner of the state competition will head to the national championship May 15-17 in Washington, D.C., and will be eligible for a \$50,000 college scholarship.

Besides Central School, other Simsbury elementary schools held geo bees in January. At Latimer Lane School, sixth grader Kieran Chandler is awaiting notification as to whether he will be competing at the state level. Other winners were Tootin' Hills fifth grader Noah Sprinsky, and Tariffville School fifth grader Chad Mairano.

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