

# Hawkers sending record number to national speech and debate contests

By [Gail Schontzler Chronicle Staff Writer](#) Apr 12, 2019



The Hawk speech and debate team poses for a photo. Top row from left: Macy Thompson, Christly Bright-Agindotan, Kamila Ponce, Nic Kuntz, Jackie Olexa, Elsa Horgan. Second row from left: Esmie Hurd, Megan Mahoney, Amelia Hartshorn, Michelle O’Shea. Front row from left: Katie Gregoire, Josh Nguyen, Jackson Raecke, Kiki McMahon and Rikki Johnson pose for a photo on Tuesday at Bozeman High. [Rachel Leathe/Chronicle](#)

**Whether it’s the tragic life of Zelda Fitzgerald or the zaniness of the “Fantastic Mr. Fox,” Bozeman High School’s speech and debate students can bring any topic to life.**

**Bozeman’s best speech competitors will perform April 26 for the public at Meet the Hawk, a fundraising event to send 19 students to the National Speech & Debate Association Tournament in Dallas.**

Bozeman's team killed the competition at the speech meet held to qualify for the national tournament. Hawkers won a state record 16 slots out of about 40 total Montana students who will represent the state, said Adam Thane, Bozeman's head coach.

Acing the national qualifier was a big comeback after the disappointment of placing third in January at the state championships in Kalispell, where hometown favorites Glacier and Flathead high schools finished first and second.

That meant no four-peat for Bozeman, which had won the state championship three years in a row.

Several Hawkers missed the state championship because of illness, Thane said, but the team was back up to full strength at the national qualifier, held in February in Billings.

"Our kids didn't like getting third at state because of whooping cough," Thane said, "so they went to the qualifying tournament and a different kind a whooping happened."

Not only did Bozeman win a record 16 spots on the Montana team, but also it was recognized for winning the most points in both debate and speech events, the first time any team won both those honors, he said.

Partners Rikki Johnson and Kiki McMahan, both 17, compete in duo interpretation. At the fundraiser they will act out their 10-minute version of one of their all-time favorite movies, "Fantastic Mr. Fox," a comedy by director Wes Anderson.

They act out the roles of several characters — Mr. and Mrs. Fox, Badger the lawyer, Rat and others — and perform some stage combat.

Johnson said her favorite line is, "We all have something different about us but there's something fantastic about that, isn't there?"

“I love theater and acting and seeing all the other pieces,” she said.

On the serious side, Elsa Horgan, a senior, will perform her dramatic interpretation piece based on the play “The Last Flapper” by Williams Luce, about the last day of Zelda Fitzgerald’s life. The beautiful wife of famed writer F. Scott Fitzgerald and a writer herself, she struggled with mental illness and died in an insane asylum fire in 1948.

“It’s a beautiful piece,” said Horgan, who performs in Zelda’s Southern accent. “She talks about the first time she met Scott. He stole parts of her works and diaries, (yet) she still loves him.”

Macy Thompson, 16, will offer an original perspective with her 10-minute speech on typography, her entry in the informative speaking competition. She said she likes challenging, unexpected topics.

Thompson said she discovered that different type fonts can have a big impact – saving on ink, helping dyslexics to read, persuading readers and even solving crimes.

“I love sharing things I find interesting,” she said, and prompting people to think, “Wow, that’s so cool!”

“I love the people on this team,” Thompson added. “It’s a really great group of friends.”

This year 122 Bozeman High students went out for speech and debate, Thane said, and about 48 traveled to the national qualifier.

The team has to raise about \$30,000 to fly 19 students and six coaches to Dallas for the national tournament in June.

Other Hawkers going to nationals are Christly Bright-Agindotan, Willow Craighead, Parker Summerhill, Jackson Raecke, Megan Mahoney, Esmie Hurd and Amelia Hartshorn, Kamila Ponce, Aiden Farmer and Irene Liang. Five students are going to compete in the World Schools Debate

Championship: Nic Kuntz, Jackie Olexa, Michelle O'Shea, Katie Gregoire and Josh Nguyen.

Meet the Hawkers will be held downtown at the Masonic Temple, 14. S. Tracy Ave., with doors opening at 6:30 p.m. and entertainment at 7 p.m. Debaters will serve as emcees.

The event is free and open to the public. Fundraising events are a silent auction and raffle. The grand prize is a ski package including a season pass to Showdown, Red Lodge, Discovery, 10-day passes to Bridger Bowl, a two-day pass to Big Sky and two nights at Huntley Lodge, all for the 2019-2020 ski season. For more information, visit the parent support group web page, <http://hawkerparents.weebly.com>.

Gail Schontzler can be reached at [gails@dailychronicle.com](mailto:gails@dailychronicle.com) or 406-582-2633. Follow her on Twitter @gailnews.