



# JAMESTOWN PRESS

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U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 5  
Jamestown, RI

www.JamestownPress.com

Volume 19, Issue 49

A weekly newspaper serving Conanicut Island

Thursday, March 29, 2007



John Ragland spells a word at the state spelling bee. Photo courtesy of The Valley Breeze

## Islander runner-up in state spelling championship

By Michaela Kennedy

Sixth-grade student John Ragland is somewhat of a celebrity about town, according to his middle school principal.

Ragland placed second in last Saturday's statewide spelling bee, which makes him the alternate Rhode Island representative for the Scripps National Spelling Bee to be held at the end of May.

The Lawn Avenue student toughed it out with 33 other top-ranking spellers in the state during the March 24 competition held at Lincoln Middle School. The only competitor able to outclass Ragland was an eighth-grader from John F. Deering Middle School in West Warwick, a girl who had been a runner-up in the previous year.

Ragland said it was a fun game, but nerve-racking as well. "There are about 100 people there you don't know, and you don't know how good the other spellers are," he said.

He added that no contestant got the number 13, "because it might be bad luck." Ragland's number was 16.

Jamestown School Principal Kathleen Almanzor is proud of Ragland's success, and called him "our expert." She said Ragland was "grinning from ear to ear" when he arrived at school last Monday morning. "John is a wonderful boy," she said.

Beth Weibust, the sixth grade English Language Arts teacher, praised Ragland's accomplishment, and commented how the experience has helped Ragland grow socially. "This year, he was interviewed on TV," she noted.

Weibust went on to say how spelling bees have "become a cool thing all of a sudden." She noted the excitement the other students shared with Ragland on Monday after the competition. The class watched a video of the match, and

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## Sole source aquifer bid gets water panel's okay

By Dotti Farrington

The Town Water Resource Protection Committee agreed March 22 to support the citizen petition for Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) designation if the petition removes reference to potential dangers of the aquifer.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser requested the change to avoid the appearance of taking any action that might compromise the town's plans to close the former landfill. They committee also did not want to jeopardize the possibility of building a highway barn at or near the landfill.

Petition supporters Pat Bolger and Ellen Winsor questioned the need or strategy to dilute concerns about the dangers to the aquifer, or

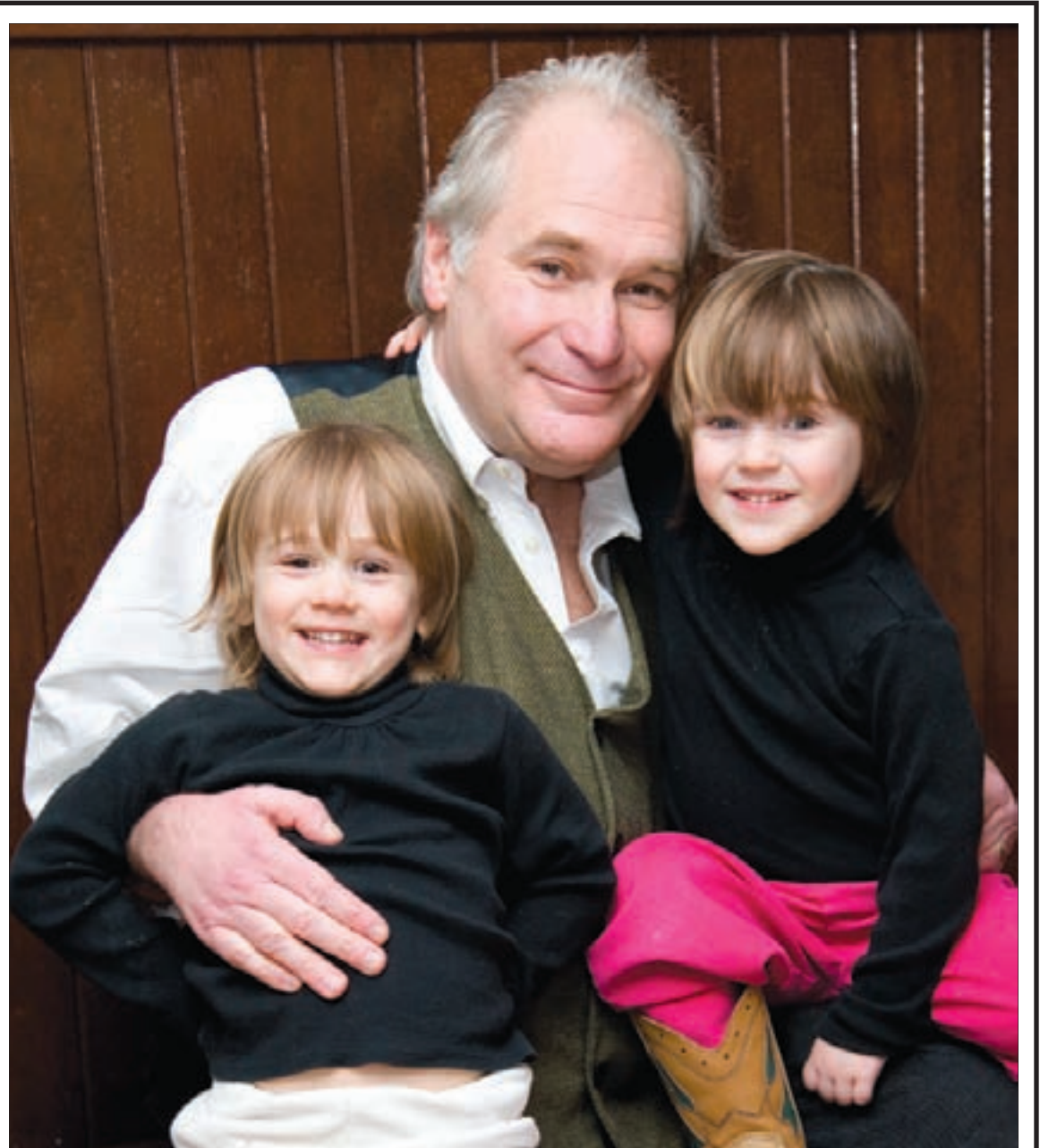
to dilute the importance of the designation. They specified that other threats to the island's aquifer exist, such as groundwater problems at Jamestown Shores and salt water intrusion into water supplies.

They nonetheless agreed to discuss the petition wording change with Doug Heath of Boston, a hydrogeologist and the regional coordinator of the SSA program of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

### Federal role

Heath spoke at a committee meeting in February to explain the designation process and its significance. He said it mainly had implications for such major, federally funded projects as airports

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David Long hugs his twin daughters, Sophie, left, and Jesse, right, who will turn 3 on April 20. Photo by Jeff McDonough

## Long finds fatherhood a full-time job

By Michaela Kennedy

David Long thrives on pioneering. These days he's well into the role of stay-at-home dad, caring for his twin daughters who will soon be 3 years old.

It is a transformed lifestyle for Long, who is also the president of the Jamestown Town Council.

Long joined a rock band upon

graduation from high school. He toured with the band for 18 years, playing original music and working as a part-time stand-up comic along the way. The band cut a couple of independent albums and enjoyed modest name recognition.

Long found himself facing extensive surgery at a time when the group signed a major record deal and was forced to drop out of the

band. Long, then his 30s, moved home to Jamestown in 1986, and worked as a sales manager. Years later, he was forced to stop working altogether for health reasons.

"When I got into my forties, I began thinking I might end up a confirmed bachelor," he remembered. But the fifties became

See "Fatherhood" on page 11



### Hot dog derby award

Cub Scout Ian Archibald shows off his Pinewood Derby "Best of Show" car and trophy Saturday. He got into the spirit by donning his hot dog hat. See the Pinewood Derby story on page 15.

Photo by Adrienne Downing