

The Bulbuk family from Novi took home more than \$67,000 during their five-game run on Family Feud.



# Novi Family Scores Big on Family Feud

## Bulbuds take home more than \$67,000 during five-game run

“It’s time to play the Family Feud!” Imagine how awesome it would feel to compete on one of television’s most popular game shows. Now imagine winning over \$67,000 in prize money on that same show.

“Not bad for a couple days of work,” Mike Bulbuk said with a giant smile. “The whole experience was awesome.”

Over a two-day filming period last May, the Bulbuk family of Novi were game show gladiators, winning five straight rounds on “Family Feud.” When it came to answering survey questions such as “Name something that’s round and red,” or “What’s the longest you’ve gone without checking your e-mail,” the Bulbuds proved to be in a league of their own.

### Meet the Bulbuk family

Mike Bulbuk, 60, recently retired from a long and rewarding career in the postal service, where he spent the last several years as head supervisor of the Novi branch. He’s married to Karen, a paraprofessional at Novi Woods Elementary School.

His son, Drew Bulbuk, is a 2005 Novi High School graduate who recently took a job with Hexagon Manufacturing Intelligence in Delaware. Drew’s wife, Allison, will forever be known in the Bulbuk family for coming up with the word “stobble” when asked to name a word that rhymes with wobble.

Mike’s nephew, Jason Bulbuk, is a Southfield attorney who answered “orange” when asked to name a fruit that comes in a

variety of colors. He’s married to Danielle – whose mom was a contestant on Bob Barker’s “The Price is Right” in the ‘90s.

### The auditions

Whether it’s ping pong, euchre or board games, the Bulbuds love to compete. On any given night, the family would sit around the television to play along with contestants on “Jeopardy” and other game shows. They quickly realized they were good at it.

“I grew up with three brothers and we were competitive with everything,” Mike said. “When it gets in your blood, it’s in your blood.”

When they heard about auditions taking place for “Family Feud” at the Cobo Center in Detroit, they jumped at the opportunity. They filled out an application and were invited to audition. It’s here that Danielle shared some inside knowledge about game shows that she picked up from her mother.

“She told us even when you’re waiting in line, the producers are looking at you to see if you’re the right type to be on their show,” Mike said. “So rather than just standing there, we played games and interacted with each other. We tried to stand out from the crowd.”

They played two games against another family during the auditions. A few weeks later, they were invited to appear on the show. Only five family members can compete on the show, so Karen agreed to cheer from the sidelines.



The Bulbuk family poses for a photo with Family Feud host Steve Harvey, who Mike said was an “absolute gentleman.”

## “Survey says!”

The family flew to Atlanta in May to appear on the show. They arrived on a Monday, along with 12 other families from around the country, and were admittedly disappointed they weren't chosen to play on the first day. Even so, they played guessing games in their hotel room to stay sharp.

“The producers put you up in a nice hotel and they pay for the flight,” Mike said. “Once you get there, they take away your phones so you can't talk to the outside world. They make you take a vow of secrecy.”

The next 24 hours were night and day for the Bulbuk family.

There are no factual answers in Family Feud. All the answers are based on survey answers, including the fast money rounds. The only real prize money in the show comes from winning “Fast Money” rounds – in which two members from the winning team are asked to answer several questions in rapid fire succession. If they earn enough points, they can win \$20,000.

By Tuesday night, the family had won four games and \$42,000 in cash, mainly through winning two rounds of fast money. On Wednesday, they won their fifth game in a row, which earned them a 2017 Jeep Cherokee. Instead of



While the show said the Bulbuks were from Detroit, they made sure to let it be known they were actually from Novi.

wobble, the most popular survey answer was the word bobble.

As for Jason answering “orange” when asked to name a fruit that comes in a variety of colors, Mike said there's been a lot of teasing over the past few months.

“Anything that has to do with a color, of course we say it's orange,” he said.

Mike said Steve Harvey, the show's host, was an absolute gentleman and a lot of fun to be around. At first the announcers introduced the family as the Bulbuk family from Novi ... then it was the Bulbuk family from Detroit or “D-Town,” presumably to appeal to a wider audience.

“But we were representing Novi,” Mike said. “That's our hometown and that's who we were playing for.”

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**Mike Bulbuk**

taking the vehicle, they decided on the cash option of \$25,000, figuring it would be easier to split up the cash.

“You can only play five games and then you max out,” said Mike. “They used to have a Tournament of Champions in the '70s with Richard Dawson, but they stopped doing that a long time ago.”

It was in the Fast Money round that Allison came up with the word “stobble.” While husband Drew did slightly better by rhyming hobble with

## Homecoming

The shows didn't air until late October, which meant the Bulbuk family had to stay tight-lipped about their winnings or they'd forfeit the cash. Prizes aren't paid out until 90 days after the shows run.

“Everyone back home tried to get us to spill the beans,” Mike said. “The guys at work would say, ‘Hey Mike, we saw a new car parked across the street ...’ But we knew we had to keep quiet – and we did.”

When the shows finally aired, the family became overnight celebrities. Mike was interviewed by the United States Postal Service headquarters, and the segment was shared with over 80,000 postal employees.

“I started getting emails from all over the country,” he said. “I was hearing from old friends and other employees who were rooting me on. One guy said he was an avid baseball fan who missed the World Series just to watch us play.”

He attended the University of Michigan-Rutgers football game at Ann Arbor on October 28, and a parking lot attendant recognized him from the show. Mike said he wasn't too surprised by the instant popularity, given America's love affair with television game shows.

On October 30, the date of the final show, a viewing party was held at the Ascension Brewery Company on Grand River in Novi. The place was packed and there was even a “Family Feud” game set up inside the restaurant so other teams could try their luck against the Bulbuks.

And while there might have been some good-natured feuding on the show, friendships were built that will last forever. Drew and Allison attended a family reunion party that was held by one of their opponents, the Claxton family out of Baltimore. There's also a “Family Feud” reunion being planned for this summer with some of the participants.

“I'm sure we'll get out the board games,” said Mike. “We made some really good friends down there.”