

For Immediate Release: June 6, 2011



Howard County Students Win National High School Network Security Competition

Maryland High School Students Demonstrated their Knowledge, Critical Thinking and Hands-on Trouble Shooting Skills and Showcased their Ability to Design and Configure Network Security and Trouble Shoot in a Virtual Environment

Clarksville, MD. Three Maryland high school students won the 2011 National High School Network Security Competition. All three students attend Career and Technical Education programs at the Applications and Research Lab in the Howard County Public School System. Team members and their teachers received training and mentoring through CyberWatch in preparation for the finals competition. Daniel Linebarger, John Myers, and Brian Zhang took top honors where they competed against other regional high school team winners from Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas in the finals.

Teams of high school cyberwarriors across the US tested their knowledge, critical thinking and hands-on trouble shooting skills, showcased their ability to design and configure network security and perform troubleshooting in a virtual environment at the final event. The competition has been designed to test students' knowledge, critical thinking skills, and problem solving abilities. This is accomplished through a three-part structure:

- Part I is comprised of a quiz bowl in which students have 30 minutes to complete 50 web-based questions.
- Part II is a project in which students have 45 minutes to demonstrate their ability to design and configure 12 items in network security using the simulation software, Cisco's Packet Tracer.
- Part III is a trouble-shooting exercise where students solve problems in a virtual environment, NetLabs.

The competition is partially funded by the National Science Foundation and is hosted through the Center for Systems Security and Information Assurance (CSSIA), an NSF funded Regional Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Resource Center for Cyber Security and Information Assurance. Activities were developed with partnering industry and academia, like CyberWatch, to create an innovative skills-based competition environment to support the capacity building necessary to meet the critical national need for Cyber Security professionals. Skills based competitions also provide a valuable opportunity for instructors to promote their information technology and network security programs.

Each school can have up to 10 teams of 4 students. All students must have attended an institution that offers the Cisco Networking Academy's IT Essentials, CCNA Discovery or Exploration, CCNA Security, and/or similar content areas. The competition process begins with internal school and district competitions with winners moving up to one of four regional competitions: Midwest, Northeast, Southeast and the DC-Metro/Mid-Atlantic Region.

The DC-Metro/Mid-Atlantic Regional Competition is organized by CyberWatch – an Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Center, led by Prince Georges Community College, and was held on May 10, 2011. Teams from both Howard and Baltimore County took home awards, including the National winners of Daniel Linebarger, John Myers, Brian Zhang and senior Matthew Christopher.

According to Dr. Davina Pruitt-Mentle, CyberWatch K12 Division director, "The High School Network Security Competition is an exciting event that gives students and teachers an introduction to Cyber Defense Competitions. The extensive professional development and "real-time in-class" mentoring from our partner college and university

faculty helps bridge the instructor knowledge gap and highlights a great collaboration between higher education, K12 and industry. In addition, the ability to participate virtually is particularly inviting in today's economic times”.

For information about the DC Metro/Mid-Atlantic Region High School Network Security Competition and other CyberWatch events, visit <http://www.edtechpolicy.org/cyberk12/index.html> or contact Dr. Davina Pruitt-Mentle, dpruitt@umd.edu. More information regarding the High School Network Security Competition can be viewed at <http://cae2y.morainevalley.edu/Compete/>

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