

On First Try, Newport Students Excel at National Youth Cyber Defense Conference

The team from the Newport Area Career and Technical Center did exceptionally well at the recent CyberPatriot competition, taking 2nd place.

By MARK SCHIELDROP (Patch Staff)
© May 8, 2015

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It was the first time the team of students from the Newport Area Career and Technical Center competed in the CyberPatriot — National Youth Cyber Defense Competition.

And it didn't stop them from excelling.

The team, led by Coach Monica Awde Wlodyka, won a state second place award and a spot in the Gold Tier Regional Round held earlier this year.

On Wednesday, the team was recognized with awards at the New England Institute of Technology in East Greenwich for their demonstration of "teamwork, critical thinking skills, and technical knowledge key to a successful career in cybersecurity," a Newport Public Schools release stated.

Congressman Jim Langevin, who was a primary author of the first comprehensive cybersecurity legislation to pass either chamber of Congress, was one of the guest speakers at the event which was organized by Meghan Martinez. Meghan is the Cyber Terrorism Program Manager of the Rhode Island State Police Computer Crimes Unit.

The team from NACTC included Christopher Kamps, Adrian Moreira, Seth Shackelford, Alexander Sink, and Spencer Tasso. Senior Spencer Tasso will be attending the University of New Haven next year, and will major in Computer Science. All of the students are members of the Academy of Information Technology at NACTC, which is taught by coach, Monica Awde Wlodyka

Robert Hewett, an employee of the Rhode Island Army National Guard and a member of the Computer Network Defense Team (CNDT) was the mentor of the CyberPatriot team at NACTC. Mrs. Awde Wlodyka reports that the success of the team would have been impossible without his guidance and wealth of knowledge.

Plans are already underway to enter one or more teams in the competition next year. Students from Thompson Middle School also participated in the middle school division this year and were coached by Amie Shinego.

Established by the Air Force Association, the CyberPatriot National Youth Cyber Education Program was created to excite, educate, and motivate students toward careers in cyber security and other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines critical to our nation's future.

CyberPatriot's core program – the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition – challenges teams of two to six students across the United States, Canada, and from DoDD schools abroad, to find and resolve cybersecurity vulnerabilities in simulated environments. In all, 2,175 teams registered to compete in CyberPatriot VII, including twelve teams from Rhode Island.

Photo Captions:

Photo 1 — from left, Robert Hewett, Adrian Moreira, Spencer Tasso, Christopher Kamps, Seth Shackelford and Alexander Sink.