FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 28, 2023

CONTACT: Lauren Creiman
(909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified Tech Innovation Students Make Strides as Cyber-sleuths

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – San Dimas High School Tech Innovation students are not only able to take a computer apart, identify what needs to be repaired, replace the worn parts and put it back together as good as new; they can also look inside the operating system, find vulnerabilities that enable hackers to access the hard drive, and patch up the holes so that users can feel confident that their computer files are safe and secure.

In an international cybersecurity "Capture the Flag" (CTF) challenge hosted by Carnegie Mellon University this spring, San Dimas cyber-sleuths displayed their considerable skills, with three teams finishing in the top 10%, including a team of all freshmen, and one team of senior girls that finished in the top 8%. The competition is open to a large range of participants, from middle and high school to college students.

"I am very proud of what my students have been able to accomplish," San Dimas High Tech Innovations teacher Leslie Leaming said. "Cybersecurity is just one part of our curriculum, and we spent about three months prepping for the competition, which includes 50 challenges, each one tougher than the last. Our kids are competing against students from academies and colleges. For them to do so well, it's really fulfilling as a teacher."

San Dimas Class of 2023 Cindy Tian and Crystal Li of Team Malloc led the way, finishing in the top 8% of the field and narrowly beating out their classmate rivals, Team SidewalkPinecones, helmed by freshmen Sagan Carter, Ryan Delgado and Wyatt Lockwood. Katrina Bosler, Charley Aldana and Samantha Macias rounded out the Saint competitors as part of Team Qwerty.

"It was definitely challenging but we were able to tie with more experienced seniors, which made it fun and worth it," Carter said. "When I told my grandmother, she said that she was super proud."

Tech Innovations students learn how to build a virtual PC online, then draw on that knowledge to begin constructing a physical computer from scratch, using parts supplied by San Dimas High School. Once they have mastered how to put a computer together, students learn about computer repair, using CompTIA A+ certification curriculum, the industry standard for launching IT careers.

San Dimas High, which provides Chromebooks to every student, sends the broken laptops to Tech Innovation students when they need repairing, providing them with vital practical experience in computer repair.

Carnegie Mellon's Capture the Flag competition takes place over several days, with competitors completing as many of the 50 challenges as they can. Using two virtual operating systems, Linux and Windows, students are placed in a virtual bubble so that they can search for solutions without compromising an actual computer, using penetration testers and other standard cybersecurity industry techniques.
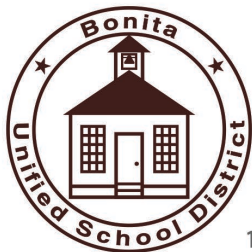
MORE

"The students really love the competition, especially when competing against each other," Leaming said. "These are real-world skills they are learning, which will allow them to find employment right out of high school if they want. Once Tech Innovations students have learned the basics of cybersecurity, they are more vigilant in their online presence."

PHOTO:

BUSD_SDHS_CYBERSECURITY: San Dimas High School Tech Innovations students displayed their cyber-sleuthing skills during a "Capture the Flag" challenge hosted by Carnegie Mellon University this spring, with three teams of students finishing in the top 10% in a contest open to middle school, high school and college students across the U.S. Tech Innovations teacher Leslie Leaming is seen here with two of her AP Computer Science students, Ayanna Garcia and Caitlin Ou.

# # #

★ BOARD OF EDUCATION

Glenn Creiman, President
Greg Palatto, Vice President

Chris Ann Horsley, Clerk
Jim Elliot, Member

Derek Bahmanou, Member
Matt Wien, Superintendent

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ do.bonita.k12.ca.us/