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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Oct. 24, 2023

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Bonita Unified Student Earns Perfect Score on Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles Exam

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Bonita High School senior Nathan Kwan approached his Advanced Placement Computer Science Principles (AP CSP) exam with every bit of confidence needed to get a top score of "5." What Kwan never dreamed of doing was recording a perfect score.

Kwan is the second Bonita High student in three years to earn a perfect score on their AP CSP exam, an accomplishment so rare that less than 1% of AP CSP exam takers achieve this result. Bonita High Class of 2022 graduate Ashley Padres also received a perfect score on her AP CSP exam.

"Although I did well on the practice questions in class, I didn't think I would get everything right," Kwan said. "I was surprised at first, but I'm happy to have done so well on the exam."

AP CSP is an introductory college-level course where students learn to design and evaluate solutions and to apply computer science principles to solve problems through the development of algorithms and programs. Kwan said he enjoys the hands-on course for the opportunities to code solutions in a variety of ways to see the real-world applications of computer science, and to think outside the box independently.

The AP CSP exam is divided into two parts – a multiple choice quiz and an essay about a computer app developed by the student in class. Kwan, along with his classmate Natalie Tran, created a Whack-a-Mole-type game where dinosaurs would pop up on the screen, requiring the user to click on the icons before they disappeared.

"I am not surprised that Nathan did so well on the exam," Bonita AP CSP teacher John McGarvey said. "He puts in the work, asks the right questions and has the discipline to work hard. This combination of traits will serve him well in college and beyond."

Kwan was introduced to computer science while in fifth grade at Oak Mesa Elementary School, where he learned how to code using block-based language. Kwan remembers coding a game about the Boston Tea Party where the user had to throw crates of tea off a boat. Kwan, who is also a member of the Bonita Chamber Singers and the theater department, likes the balance of creative expression afforded between the various disciplines.

"In AP CSP, I was able to express my creativity in a different way. Although I love the performing arts, computer science involves a lot of problem solving and critical thinking in ways I haven't done before," Kwan said. "In addition, I've always loved math and science but computer science is something completely different and new to me."
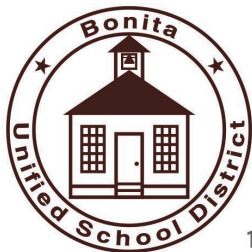
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In addition to the Chamber Singers and theater, Kwan is actively involved in numerous extracurricular activities at Bonita; he is the president of the school's Gender and Sexuality Acceptance (GSA) club, as well as a member of Key Club, California Scholastic Federation and the National Honor Society. Additionally, Kwan performs public service as a volunteer at Cal State University Los Angeles' SEA US, HEAR US research study group that seeks to understand the effects of COVID-19 on Southeast Asian American communities.

Kwan's musical talents were also recently recognized by the Southern California Vocal Association, earning him an invitation to sing in one of the association's regional Honor Choirs, an honor extended to approximately 250 skilled student performers this year.

Kwan hopes to attend Columbia University in New York and plans to major in biology or public health.

"Nathan Kwan is an outstanding scholar, a campus leader and an incredibly talented performer. We are all amazed at what he has already accomplished, and can't wait to see what the future brings for him," Bonita High principal Kenny Ritchie said. "Congratulations to John McGarvey, whose leadership and guidance in AP CSP has produced the incredible result of two students recording perfect scores on their exams. We are all very proud Bonita Bearcats."

PHOTO:

BUSD_CSP_KWAN: Bonita High School senior Nathan Kwan showcases the computer app – Whack-a-Mole-type game featuring dinosaurs – that he created as part of the AP Computer Science Principles (AP CSP) exam. Kwan earned a perfect score on the AP exam in 2023.

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