

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Cyber Security students at the East Cooper CAS earn top spot in national competition

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Charleston, SC - Dr. Robert Brzenchek's Cyber Security students at the East Cooper Center of Advanced Studies (CAS) competed in the USAF-sponsored Cyber Patriot national competition in October and placed first in the Gold Tier in the state. The team is called The White Hats. White hat hackers, also known as ethical hackers, are cybersecurity professionals who identify and fix vulnerabilities in computer systems and networks.

Brzenchek, the Information Technology & Law Enforcement teacher at East Cooper CAS, said the win is a testament to the level of brilliance among the student body within Cyber Security. The team has also been invited to the semi-finals and will compete on January 25, 2025.

CyberPatriot is the National Youth Cyber Education Program created by the Air & Space Forces Association to inspire K-12 students toward careers in cybersecurity or other science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines critical to our nation's future. At the core of the program is the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition, the nation's largest cyber defense competition that puts high school and middle school students in charge of securing virtual networks.

"As a former Navy Intelligence Specialist and cyber practitioner, it's a full circle moment for me," said Brzenchek. "Some of my students have been accepted into prestigious universities to get an education in becoming the next generation to defend our nation from Cyber Security attacks on our homeland. The Cyber landscape shifts in each round and our team pivots to the challenges Cyber Patriot presents them. We are the tip of the spear in South Carolina."

Team members include Nathan Crouch, Emilia Nicoli, Maxwell Winters, Daniel Henry-Wragg, Mackenzie Eikenberry, and Drake Fletcher. Alternates are Lincoln Williams, Grant Taylor, Zachary Teachmen, and Evan Free. Assistant coaches are Neil Sullivan and Anna Calessa.

Brzenchek said that in cybersecurity, every second counts.

"We're not just fixing problems - we're preventing disasters," added Brzenchek. "It's not about if an attack will happen, it's about when. That's why we're always

prepared. A secure network is a well-oiled machine, and every missing link is a potential breach.”

As the Cyber Patriot Head Coach, Brzenchek is teaching his students that threats evolve constantly and to combat a threat, one must adapt, analyze, and outsmart them before they strike.

“The faster we respond, the less damage there is to repair,” he said. “We’re not just responders; we’re preventers.”

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.