

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Virgin Islands Female Students Make Semifinals In International Cyber Security Competition

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ST. THOMAS -- Many national and international organizations such as Code.org, GirlsWhoCode, and BlackGirlsCode, and the National Center for Women and Information Technology have recognized the critical importance of getting girls involved in computer science. This year, the territory can be proud of some of its own young ladies learning the skills and overcoming challenges to solve complex problems in cyber defense, according to a press release All Saints Cathedral School issued last week.

If you read the 2015 year-end news summaries, you may have noticed that last year was called "the year of hacks". Many high-profile hacking attacks hit the news in a big way, even at the national government's Office of Personnel Management, when sensitive data

including fingerprints was stolen for more than 21 million federal employees and their family members.

The IRS, 15 million T-Mobile customers, and even a trusted password manager (LastPass) all were successfully attacked. It also became apparent that terrorist organizations are using technology to advance their causes on the cyber front. In future years, lives will literally depend on how well the next generation of cyber defenders prevent such disturbing events.

Currently in its second year, the VI Kings Cyber Patriot Team at All Saints Cathedral School is the first and only Virgin Islands team participating in the cyber patriot program. The cyber patriot program of the [U.S. Air Force Association](#) annually hosts the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition.

The competition puts teams of high school and middle school students in the position of newly hired IT professionals tasked with managing the network of a small company. In the rounds of competition, teams are given a set of virtual images that represent operating systems and are tasked with finding cybersecurity vulnerabilities within the images and hardening the system while maintaining critical services. Teams compete for the top placement within their state and region, and the top teams in the nation earn all-expenses paid trips to Washington, DC for the national finals competition where they can earn national recognition and scholarship money.

Competing at the middle school level, the 2015-2016 cyber patriot team consists of six USVI girls in grades 6-8, Coach Rebecca Hoffart of All Saints Cathedral School and Technical Mentor Dr. Marc Boumedine of UVI. Team practices are held twice a week at All Saints Cathedral School. Many of the team members also received cyber patriot training in Cyber Camp VI, organized by the University of the Virgin Islands and supported by a grant from the Cybersecurity Consortium of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration Minority Serving Institutions Partnerships Program.

Last year's VI Kings team narrowly missed making the competition semifinals, despite being the first Virgin Islands team ever to represent in this international event. This year's team has gone one better and has officially achieved placement in the semifinals.

The VI Kings Cyber Patriot Team at All Saints Cathedral School thanks the Genius Cove for its generous sponsorship and other supporters for helping us show VI girls that using technology now can lead to development of important lifelong skills. This program benefits the development not only of the individual team members but also the future of Information Technology, especially cyber security, in the U.S. Virgin Islands.