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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kimberly High School Students Earning Accolades at National Computer Science Contests Hosted by Universities

Kimberly, Wis. – November 4, 2019 – Jacob Farrell, a junior at Kimberly High School, was involved in two different national computer science competitions organized by universities. Both teams he belonged to earned a top place in the competitions.

The Kimberly High School team, comprised of students Jacob Farrell, Gavin McGowan and Isaac Yang, participated in New York University's Tandon School of Engineering CSAW Red Team competition. The KHS team is one of the 11 high school teams from the U.S. that advanced to compete during the in-person finals.

Jacob Farrell, Gavin McGowan and Isaac Yang, pictured left to right, advanced as a team to compete at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering CSAW Red Team finals.

CSAW Red is the high school version of the collegiate CSAW competition. It is a Jeopardy-style capture the flag competition based on cybersecurity. Challenges are designed to encourage learning and skill-building in the areas of reversing, web security, forensics, crypto and pwning.

This year, more than 420 teams competed in the Red Team Competition, with 29 of them winning coveted slots at the CSAW final rounds at NYU Tandon, Ibero, Grenoble INP-Esisar and NYU Abu Dhabi. To view the high

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school teams competing at the CSAW finals, including the 11 teams who will compete at NYU Tandon, visit https://csaw.engineering.nyu.edu/RED/finalists.

The in-person final rounds will take place at NYU in November. The high school teams will be tasked with infiltrating and analyzing the findings of the operation without getting caught. Teams must submit a written report to the panel of judges who will assess the investigative strategies employed by the student teams. CSAW RED is developed by Marcus Barbu and John Cunniff of the NYU's OSIRIS Lab.

Jacob also belongs to a picoCTF team, called redpwn, with students from Tigard High School (Tigard, OR), Whitefish Bay High School (Whitefish Bay, WI) and Interlake High School (Bellevue, WA). This team took first place in the picoCTF competition.

The picoCTF contest is a free computer security game targeted at middle and high school students. It is a capture the flag style game with 121 challenges created by Carnegie Mellon's internationally-acclaimed competitive hacking team, the Plaid Parliament of Pwning.

"Taking first in Carnegie Mellon's picoCTF is my most valued accomplishment to date, and placing so well puts me that much closer to being able to attend my dream college, CMU's School of Computer Science," said Jacob. "I have a team that I do these computer science related competitions with, made up of high school students from all over the United States, and it's through them that I heard about CSAW Red and picoCTF."

The picoCTF game consists of a series of challenges centered around a unique storyline where participants must reverse engineer, break, hack, decrypt, or do whatever it takes to solve the challenge. The challenges are all set up with the intent of being hacked, making it an excellent and legal way to get hands-on experience. The 2019 competition had over 39,000 participants who completed over 345,957 problems between September 27 and October 11, 2019. With their win, these students will receive a paid trip to Carnegie Mellon for the awards ceremony, and they will split the $6,000 prize among the team members.

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Kimberly High School students are seeing success with higher level computer science coursework by earning awards at competitions and Advanced Placement credit. One notable computer science achievement within the Kimberly Area School District is that student interest has spurred the creation of computer science related clubs at every District school serving students in fifth through twelfth grade. Jacob Farrell had an active role in the creation of the Computer Science (CS) Club at Kimberly High School.

"The Computer Science Club is basically the culmination of my passion for CS and desire to meet with other people who are also interested in CS," said Jacob. "I saw our school was lacking a CS related extra-curricular so I sought to make one. CS Club is in its early stages so nothing is concrete with our activity planning, but I hope to get around to doing some programming related club competitions and interesting lectures."

When asked what advice he would share with other students who are considering exploring computer science but aren't sure if it's something they would be good at, Jacob shared, "For anyone thinking about CS as a potential hobby or career path, it's best to jump right in and start searching for beginner resources online." He added, "When I first started learning CS, it was the continuous gratification of learning new things and making connections between my learnings that kept me enticed. Everybody has to start somewhere when they are building a new skill. Nobody was good at riding a bike right away and likewise nobody is born a proficient programmer."

About the Kimberly Area School District

The Kimberly Area School District is a progressive public school district committed to providing the best possible education available to students. Its responsibility is to help lead the way in developing well-rounded students and future citizens. The District wants every student to be given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts and co-curricular activities. It encompasses approximately 17 square miles and serves over 5,000 students in one 4K center, four elementary schools (5K-4), two intermediate schools (5-6), one middle school (7-8) and one high school (9-12). To learn more about the Kimberly Area School District, call (920)788-7900 or visit www.kimberly.k12.wi.us.

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