

## News Release

### Dobbs Ferry Middle School's New Cyber Defense Team Scores Another Victory In CyberPatriot Competition

**Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. December 17, 2015**— The Dobbs Ferry Middle School's new after-school club, the Cyber Defense Team, just competed in Round 2 of the National Youth Cyber Defense Competition or CyberPatriot VIII, and have qualified to move on to the semi-finals in February.

Comprised of five technically-talented students, the Cyber Defense Team competes against 460 registered teams in the Middle School Division. These teams compete in a series of online qualifying rounds that challenge them to find and fix security vulnerabilities in a variety of operating systems. The Dobbs Ferry Middle School team is presently ranked 23 in the nation after two rounds of competition. The team's Round 2 score of 248 out of a possible 300 points (only 35 points behind the highest score in the country), was the highest score of any New York State Middle School team.

Organized by Dobbs Ferry parent and coach Matt de Ganon, the Cyber Defense Team is made up of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, including his 11-year-old son Timmy. "I am so proud of the work ethic of these kids, who practice twice a week in the Middle School MAC Lab," said Mr. de Ganon. "We got the team organized only shortly before Round 1 in mid-November. Even though we were true underdogs, our team was able to find and fix 15 out of 16 vulnerabilities in the competition system. That earned us a Round 1 score of 94 out of 100. I consider this an outright victory as it was our first time out. The team worked collaboratively, used their critical thinking skills and focused to solve the problems."

CyberPatriot is the National Youth Cyber Education Program created by the Air Force Association (AFA). Its goal is to inspire high school, middle school and elementary school students toward careers in cybersecurity or other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines critical to our nation's future and to help students be safe online. Teams compete for the top placement within their state and region, and the leading teams in the nation earn an all-expenses paid trip to Washington DC for the National Finals Competition. Corporate supporters of CyberPatriot include the Northrop Grumman Foundation, AT&T, Cisco, Microsoft, Facebook and Symantec. For more information on this program go to <https://www.uscyberpatriot.org>

The numbers of students competing in the nation's premiere youth cybersecurity contest have more than doubled in two years. More than 3,300 teams representing all 50 states and several US territories and military bases have registered for the 2015-2016 CyberPatriot National Youth Cyber Defense Competition. That's up 55 percent from the prior year and more than double the number of teams from the 2013-2014 contest. Dobb Ferry Middle School's Cyber Defense Team is the only middle school team in Westchester.

While Coach de Ganon's team ranks 25 out of 308 teams in the Middle School Division (top 8%) after the Round 2 competition, his team is not resting on their laurels as they gear up for the semi-finals in two months. "I was so impressed with each team member," he said. "Benny dived in and started tackling the Windows Vista image. Robbie was heads down focused on finding each

vulnerability in Windows Server 2008. Rhys scored valuable, last minute points, methodically going over the Vista Read Me file again and again. Timmy tackled the Linux image singlehandedly, and then played clean up on Server and Vista. And Luca, our 5<sup>th</sup> grader who trains with the team, but can only observe during competition and was still exhausted from his bout with Strep, cheered (and jeered) his teammates to work harder.”

“The new Cyber Defense Club has many pluses for students,” said Middle School Principal Patrick Mussolini. “It engages them in learning about careers in cybersecurity and other STEM disciplines, helps students understand the importance and principles of cybersecurity and equips students to better protect themselves on the Internet, not to mention it’s really fun!”

**For more information, please contact:**

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