



Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval

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NEVADA PARTNERS WITH SANS INSTITUTE TO OFFER CYBERSECURITY CHALLENGE TO YOUNG WOMEN IN HIGH SCHOOL

CARSON CITY, NV – Governor Brian Sandoval today announced the launch of GirlsGoCyberStart, an innovative opportunity for young women attending high school in Nevada to discover their talents in cybersecurity and learn about careers in the field through a no-cost online game of discovery called CyberStart.

“The new Nevada economy is innovation and technology-based, and every industry requires talented cybersecurity professionals. I’m excited to offer this opportunity for young ladies in the Silver State to explore the world of cybersecurity,” **said Governor Sandoval.**

Last summer, Nevada was one of seven states that piloted CyberStart, a program designed to inspire the next generation of cybersecurity professionals while helping youth find out if a career in cybersecurity is right for them. Of more than 3,500 students that participated in the pilot nationwide, the top scorer was a student at the University of Nevada, Reno. Unfortunately, only 5 percent of the students who participated in the first round were young women. Hence, SANS is partnering with Nevada and other states to launch a program specifically for the many talented young women in high school.

“As a female technology leader, I am excited and inspired for this terrific opportunity for young female cyber enthusiasts in Nevada to utilize and build additional skills in this area. We need more women technologists and cyber is a fun and exciting career,” **said Shannon Rahming, Enterprise IT Services Administrator and Nevada’s Chief Information Officer.** “The entire state will be the recipient of the talents provided by our future lady cybersecurity experts and we look forward to having these skilled students join the ranks of other cyber specialists in the State of Nevada.”

Young women in high school in Nevada who excel in the GirlsGoCyberStart challenge will have the opportunity to win computers and other prizes as well as a trip, with a parent, to the 2018 Women in CyberSecurity Conference in Chicago. The three schools in Nevada that have the most participants will win awards of \$2,500, \$1,500 and \$1,000.

“The need for cybersecurity professionals is growing in Nevada, both in State government and in the private sector. This challenge is a great opportunity for students who might be interested in a career in cybersecurity and want to know what it is like and whether they are good at it,” said Brian Mitchell, Director of the Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation and Technology (OSIT). “In Nevada, the projected growth rate in the number of jobs requiring cybersecurity skills through 2022 is 30 percent. These jobs have an average wage of about \$85,000.”

All young women in grades 9 to 12 are invited to play. Participating students do not need prior cybersecurity knowledge or programming experience. All that is required is a computer and an internet connection. Girls may play alone or in teams of up to four people. Each player starts as a “cyber protection agent” responsible for protecting an important operational base. The student chooses and solves challenges, earning points along the way. A cyber protection agent field manual provides answers to questions that may arise and hints help when players get stuck. When the player has solved a sufficient number challenges at one level, a new level opens up and new challenges appear – for a total of 31 layers. Experienced players call CyberStart “addictive” and note that everyone can excel, not just a few superstars.

When asked why the SANS Institute is partnering with Nevada in GirlsGoCyberStart program, SANS Director of Research, Alan Paller said, "Because the nation desperately needs more highly-skilled cyber professionals, and we have new evidence that CyberStart radically improves the quality and preparation of people entering the cybersecurity field. Further, the two best cyber intrusion analysts I have ever met were named Vicki and Judy, but women are woefully under-represented in the technical side of cybersecurity. By opening CyberStart to tens of thousands of high school girls we may be able to help the nation identify the next generation of talented people who will excel in this critical field."

Information on how to participate

Young women in high school in Nevada will be competing with students in Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and American Samoa this February.

Registration will begin on January 29 and ends on February 16, 2018. The first 10,000 young women in high schools in these states who have registered may play the game online from February 20 through 25.

An introductory web site with answers to other questions potential participants may have, a fuller description of the game, and a sample challenge is now available online at GirlsGoCyberStart.com.

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