

Delaware's Launches Girls Go CyberStart Challenge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2019

Media Contact:

Christina Dirksen, Strategic Communications Manager, DTI
(302) 739-9736 w Christina.Dirksen@state.de.us

GirlsGoCyberStart offers innovative online cybersecurity program, plus prizes and recognition for Delaware's young women in grades 9-12

DOVER, Del. – Governor John Carney and Chief Information Officer (CIO) James Collins today announced that Delaware is again partnering with the [SANS Institute](#) on an initiative to empower high school girls by providing an opportunity for them to discover if they have an interest and aptitude for a career in cybersecurity. High school girls in grades 9 through 12 are invited to participate in the Girls Go CyberStart challenge in which they will compete for prizes and to win the opportunity for 50 additional students in their school to play, extending the competition. \$200,000 in scholarships for high school juniors and seniors who do well in the game has also been made available. In Delaware, at least 10 high school girls will each win \$500 scholarships to help them pay for college.

Girls Go CyberStart is a free, innovative, online game of discovery that guides participants through a variety of challenges and puzzles which tests decision-making skills and introduces concepts such as open-source intelligence, cryptography, and web application and more, to spark an interest in the field of cybersecurity.

In 2018, 287 girls represented 113 teams from 26 Delaware high schools that participated in Girls Go CyberStart. The goal for 2019 is to increase those numbers even more.

“We know that women are underrepresented in STEM fields and we must empower our young women through creative initiatives like Girls Go CyberStart,” said **Governor John Carney**. “We are excited to again be partnering with the SANS Institute and we want to encourage our young women in high school to take advantage of this opportunity to explore career options in this vital field.”

“Girls Go CyberStart is a really fun way for young women to try their hand at cybersecurity and parents like it because it’s free,” said **CIO James Collins**. “We have to be purposeful about creating opportunities that empower and inspire that untapped potential. We are grateful that the SANS Institute recognizes the importance and value of a diversified workforce and partners with us to achieve that goal.”

“The GirlsGo competition really impacted my view of cybersecurity and has caused me to consider a job in the field,” commented **Olivia Lundstrom**, a member of Padua’s 2018 Cyber Sister team. “I loved how fun and challenging it was to play, and it taught me a lot about cybersecurity that I would have never known had I not played.”

Students interested in participating do not need any programming or cybersecurity experience; only access to a computer and internet connection. Young women in high school in Delaware who excel in the GirlsGoCyberStart game will have the opportunity to win computers and other prizes from SANS.

“This is a phenomenal opportunity for young women to explore a high-demand career area. Since no past experience is needed, there are no barriers to keep even more of our high school students from participating,” said **Secretary of Education**

Susan Bunting.

Young women in high school in Delaware will be participating alongside students from across the nation. Registration will begin on February 18 and Girls Go CyberStart play will open on March 20.

When asked why SANS is partnering with Delaware in GirlsGoCyberStart program, **SANS Director of Research, Alan Paller** said, "Because the nation desperately needs more highly-skilled cyber professionals, and we have evidence that CyberStart improves the quality and preparation of people entering the cybersecurity field. Women are significantly underrepresented in the technical side of cybersecurity. By opening CyberStart to thousands of girls in high school, and to all college students, we hope to help the nation identify the next generation of talented people who will excel in this critical field."

Additionally, male and female college students will also be able to play this year in a companion program called Cyber FastTrack, which opens for registration on February 18. Play will begin on April 5. Cyber FastTrack allows students who excel in both the CyberStart Game and CyberStart Essentials (an online course that extends the learning of CyberStart Game) to be eligible to win \$2.5 million in scholarships for advanced cybersecurity training and to be introduced to employers for internships and jobs in the field.

For more information about cybersecurity, Girls Go CyberStart, or Cyber Fast Track please visit digiknow.dti.delaware.gov, girlsgocyberstart.org, and cyber-fasttrack.org.

###

About the Delaware Department of Technology and Information

The Department of Technology and Information (DTI) is the state's central IT organization, chartered to deliver core services to other state organizations and exercise governance over the technology direction and investments of the state. DTI provides enterprise services that enable other organizations to effectively fulfill their missions.

www.dti.delaware.gov

www.digiknow.dti.delaware.gov

About SANS Institute

The SANS Institute was established in 1989 as a cooperative research and education organization. SANS provides cyber security training and certification to professionals at governments and commercial institutions world-wide. Renowned SANS instructors teach over 50 different courses at more than 200 live [cyber security training](#) events as well as online. At the heart of SANS are the many security practitioners, representing varied global organizations from corporations to universities, working together to help the entire information security community.

<https://www.sans.org>