Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation Inc.

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Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Students Earn Top Places in Computer Science Competitions

Silver Spring, MD—A team of Montgomery Blair High School Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program students earned first place at the Philadelphia Classic (PClassic), which is a semiannual programming competition hosted by the University of Pennsylvania, last month. Traditionally an annual competition, this was the PClassic's inaugural fall contest. In fact, Blair participated in the PClassic for the first time last spring, when it captured second place.

To earn the top spot, the Blair team beat 83 teams of high school students from across the northeastern and mid-Atlantic regions. This daylong event tests the students' programming skills and problem solving abilities. After a morning practice session, students are given four hours to attempt to solve nine difficult programming problems in Java on a single computer per team. Teams are judged on their number of problems correctly solved, as well as speed.

The winning Blair team (with grade level) consisted of team captain Matthew Das Sarma (11) of Potomac and Megan Chao (12), Kiyoon Ko (11), Vijay Upadhya (11), and Scott Wu (12) of Rockville. Blair Magnet computer science teacher, Mr. Daniel Fowler, serves as Blair Computer Team sponsor.

Kiyoon Ko comments on the Blair team, "I feel like the team was very compact and cooperative—there was always a person generating sample data, someone on the computer writing down the codes, someone testing the programs, and someone getting a clarification on the problems. Our group was very efficient and was quite successful working as a team." Teammate Vijay Upadhya evaluates the experience, "The competition was nice. We worked well with the problems, and producing test data was very helpful. The results were really close, and it was a good experience!" Team captain Matthew Das Sarma enthusiastically looks forward, "In the past Blair only participated in the University

of Maryland programming competitions, but since last year, the computer team has been making an effort to compete in many more contests. Currently, we plan to compete in programming contests at the University of Maryland, Virginia Commonwealth University, Bloomsburg University, and University of Virginia, as well as the Spring PClassic and whatever else we can find!"

Besides the first-place Blair team, five other teams of Blair students were able to gain competitive programming experience at this contest. Along with congratulating the team, Mr. Fowler expresses his appreciation to the parents of Megan Chao, Ben Fineran, Robbie Fleischman, Jared Marx-Kuo, and Ishaan Parikh for providing transportation and chaperoning the students.

About The Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation

This organization was founded by a group of concerned students, teachers, administrators, and alumni in 2008. Its purpose is to promote science, mathematics, and computer science education by supporting the Magnet Program at Montgomery Blair High School in its efforts to develop resources and refine practices needed to provide a rigorous and enriched education for students, staff, and the community at large. The Foundation is incorporated in the state of Maryland and is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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