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**Montgomery Blair High School Team Takes Second Place at
Maryland Envirothon Competition**

Silver Spring, MD—A team of students from the Montgomery Blair High School Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program represented Montgomery County and placed second among 18 teams participating at the 2012 Maryland Envirothon Competition, which was held at St. James School in St. James, MD last month. Furthermore, in the 22-year history of the Maryland Envirothon, Blair has had multiple First and Second Place teams and has even placed among the top five teams in the national contest which follows this state competition.

Members of the team, named Team Rocket, are all rising seniors and include Sharon Chen and Kiran Matharu of Potomac, Vivienne Chen and Lisha Ruan of Rockville, and Tatyana Gubin of Gaithersburg. For their win, each team member was awarded \$300 cash. In addition, the team received two paintings, one for their Second Place ranking overall and the other, along with a giftcard, for earning the highest score in the area of forestry.

To prepare for the Envirothon competition, the students studied the state's natural resources, learning to identify and categorize plants and animals, perform soil surveys, estimate wood yield from trees, and resolve natural resource issues. Professionals in the fields of soil science, wildlife management, forestry, and environmental engineering volunteered to instruct the students in the areas of wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and soils. Each year there is a special focus environmental issue as well, with this year's topic concerning Non-point Source Pollution and Low-impact Development, which the students also studied.

Blair Magnet chemistry teacher Mr. Tran Pham has served as sponsor of all of the school's Envirothon teams for the past 19 years. He and Blair Magnet biology teacher Ms. Angelique Bosse served as chaperones for the team at this year's competition.

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Ms. Bosse compliments Team Rocket, “I was very proud of the team and happy to be there to support them and to celebrate their success. The all-female team was extremely dedicated, knowledgeable, and supportive of each other. Despite the extreme heat, one team member’s illness, and some other challenges, they really pulled out an impressive tie for first place, in which they were eventually relegated to runner-up following the tie-breaker.”

Team captain Tatyana Gubin reflects on the team’s experience, “Envirothon stands apart as a competition because, unlike many science competitions that are memorization and trivia-based, it is focused on hands-on, practical knowledge that gives you a deeper understanding of the environment. We are proud of Team Rocket’s success in our first appearance at the state competition and are grateful for the excellent training that made it possible from Mr. David Plummer and Mr. Eddie Franceschi of Montgomery County’s Soil Conservation District, as well as from our sponsor, Mr. Pham and chaperone, Ms. Bosse.”



Members of the Montgomery Blair Magnet Second Place Envirothon team, holding paintings that were part of their award, from left to right: Vivienne Chen, Lisha Ruan, Sharon Chen, Tatyana Gubin, and Kiran Matharu. (Photo courtesy of Mr. Tran Pham)

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

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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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