



Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation Inc.



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Team of Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Students Earn Second Place at National Science Bowl

Silver Spring, MD—A team of five Montgomery Blair High School Science, Mathematics, and Computer Science Magnet Program students earned second place on May 2 at the 2011 National Science Bowl, which was held at the National 4-H Center and the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. Members of the team include Andrew Das Sarma (captain) of Potomac, Alexander Briese of Silver Spring, Diwakaran Ilangovan of Gaithersburg, and Sandra Yan and Samuel Zbarsky of Rockville. Each team member was awarded a \$750 scholarship from the US Air Force, and Montgomery Blair's science department received a \$1,000 check from the DOE. Since the inception of the contest in 1991, Blair's team has ranked in the top five teams multiple times and even won first place nationally in 1999. Blair magnet math and science teacher, Mr. Tran Pham, has served as the team's longtime coach.

This national competition, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), tests students' knowledge in all areas of science. This year over 13,000 students competed for a spot at the national contest, attending their regional competition first. After this initial round, only 69 high school teams were invited to the National Science Bowl. Each team was comprised of four members, an alternate, and a coach. With a format similar to the game show *Jeopardy*, the goal of this competition is to encourage high school students to excel in science and math and to pursue careers in these fields.

With a 14-1 record entering the final round of the national competition, the Blair team members won their match against last year's champion team from Mira Loma, CA in front of an audience that included all the other participating science team members. With both final teams' records including a single loss, a tie-breaking game followed, during which the Blair team secured their second-place spot.

Coach Pham praises the team, "I am really proud of this year's team, which is new at the national level. None of the other competing teams probably expected them to be in the top 16. However, their teamwork surprised these other teams. In addition, their seriousness at learning,

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competition, plus sense of humor made them one of the most popular teams at the 2011 National Science Bowl.”

Blair team captain Das Sarma credits the Blair magnet, “The existence of the Magnet was critical to our success because of the broad nature of science bowl. Because it covers math, physics, chemistry, biology, earth science, astronomy, and energy sciences, it's impossible for any one individual to know enough to be competitive. A successful team needs members who are talented in each of those respective fields—a mix that the Blair magnet hosts every day.”



The Montgomery Blair Magnet National Science Bowl 2nd place team, from left in green, Andrew Das Sarma (captain), Alexander Briese, Diwakaran Ilangovan, Sandra Yan, Samuel Zbarsky and Coach Tran Pham with, from left, Air Force Captain Darren Long and DOE Office of Science Director Dr. William Brinkman, along with their jumbo award checks. Photo courtesy of Mr. Dennis Brack, DOE.

About The Montgomery Blair High School Magnet Foundation

This organization was founded by a group of concerned students, teachers, administrators, parents, 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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