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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five Idaho student teams earn eCYBERMISSION honors

BOISE, Idaho (June 3, 2020) — Students from Rexburg, Burley, and Weiser earned top honors in Idaho's first annual eCYBERMISSION competition, a national Web-based STEM challenge for students in grades six through nine.

The Idaho STEM Action Center partnered with the U.S. Army Educational Outreach Program and the National Science Teachers Association to bring the popular competition to the Gem State. They hosted three regional showcases in eastern, northern, and western Idaho in late February and early March.

The teams were challenged to explore how science, technology, engineering, and math apply to their world while working as a team to solve problems in their communities.

Scribbled Mushrooms from Madison Junior High School in Rexburg took first place among Idaho's ninth-grade teams. BJHS STEM Leaders from Burley Junior High School in Burley earned first place among the state's eighth-grade teams. And Danger-Zone from Weiser Middle School in Weiser garnered first place among Gem State sixth-grade teams.

Zoobies from Weiser Middle School in Weiser was awarded second place among Idaho's eighth-grade teams, and eighth graders Mechanical Caterpillar from Bear Lake Middle School in Montpelier earned an honorable mention.

Thirteen teams from throughout the state took part in Idaho's inaugural event, including six in grade six, one in grade seven, four in grade eight, and two in grade nine. More than 4,000 teams nationwide compete in the annual challenge, which the Army and NSTA launched in 2002. Teams must score at least 300 points to be considered for a state placement.

The Army is giving each student on a first-place state-winning team a Series EE U.S. Savings Bond worth up to \$1,000 in matured value. It is also giving each student on a second-place state-winning team a Series EE U.S. Savings Bond worth up to \$500 in matured value.

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In addition, the STEM Action Center is awarding the advisors of first-place teams \$750, second-place teams \$500, and honorable-mention-earning teams \$250 to further STEM learning and engagement. The advisors can use this money for STEM education in their classroom or support eCYBERMISSION at their school next year.

According to STEM Action Center executive director Dr. Angela Hemingway, competitions like eCYBERMISSION are important to the state's future.

"Just like with IDX [the Idaho Exhibition of Ideas] and ISEF [the regional Idaho Science & Engineering Fairs], our eCYBERMISSION students are engaging in a real-world research-based competition, which will serve them well as they transition into the workforce," Dr. Hemingway said. "Plus, eCYBERMISSION is a virtual competition. There are important lessons to be learned from it in this time of COVID-19 regarding how students can work in small groups to conduct unique, relevant research and have the opportunity to present their findings in a virtual venue."

In addition to facilitating critical and creative thinking, problem solving, innovation, and collaboration, she said STEM skills are needed for 17 of Idaho's 20 fastest growing jobs and that STEM jobs pay more than twice as much as non-STEM jobs.

"The state anticipates 20 percent job growth in STEM careers — including health care, computing, engineering, and advanced manufacturing — by 2026," Dr. Hemingway said. "Currently there are nearly 86,000 STEM workers statewide, and the Idaho Department of Labor predicts we may have 105,000 STEM jobs by 2026 — a 19,000-job increase just six years from now. It is critical we build the STEM talent pipeline so Idahoans have the knowledge and skills required to fill these high-demand STEM jobs now and in the future."

She said these jobs will represent about \$7 billion in personal income and about \$352 million in tax revenue if Idaho's workforce is poised to fill them.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center was created in 2015 because Idaho citizens are not entering the STEM pipeline fast enough to meet current and future Idaho workforce needs. Its goals are to increase access to STEM opportunities, align education and workforce needs, and amplify awareness of STEM throughout Idaho. The organization is working with industry, government, educators, and students to develop new resources and support high-quality professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce that ensures Idaho's continued economic prosperity.

Visit STEM.idaho.gov for more information, and visit <https://STEM.idaho.gov/support-us/foundation> to make a tax-deductible donation to the Idaho STEM Action Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to enhance the investment the state has made in Idaho's STEM community. Contributions provide greater access to STEM camps for children, student competitions, and many other life-shaping programs.