**Have a High School Student in Your Life? If So, Listen Up!**

North Carolina high school students have an amazing opportunity to explore potential careers in cybersecurity and computer science while competing for scholarships and prizes as part of the free online CyberStart America competition.

Students do not need knowledge or experience in information technology or cybersecurity to participate.

Registration is now open at [www.cyberstartamerica.org](http://www.cyberstartamerica.org/). The deadline to register is **March 15, 2024**.

**What Is CyberStart America?**

CyberStart America is a series of free challenges in which young men and women act as “cyber protection agents” to solve cybersecurity-related puzzles and explore related topics, such as code breaking, programming, networking and digital forensics.

**Why Is CyberStart America important?**

Cybersecurity is a critical issue facing both North Carolina and the United States with the potential to impact businesses as well as areas of government, such as defense, communications and financial systems.

As the threat of cyberattacks continues to grow, however, there is a shortage in the cybersecurity workforce. For example, according to [according to CyberSeek](https://www.cyberseek.org/heatmap.html), there are more than 23,450 openings for cybersecurity jobs in North Carolina (as of February 2023). Nationally, the number of openings is 755,000.

Introducing high school and college students to potential careers that can help put them on cybersecurity and IT career paths can help build a diverse and talented cyber pipeline to address future challenges. One way is through CyberStart America, a free, hands-on learning experience for high school students that acts as an on-ramp to a cybersecurity career.

Emily Chen, of Cary, was named in 2021 a National Cyber Scholar with Honors by the National Cyber Scholarship Foundation. She ranked among the top 30 of more than 30,000 U.S. high school students who competed in the CyberStart America competition.

“Prior to this program, I honestly had no idea I could pursue a career in cybersecurity,” Chen said. “I've gained skills that made me realize it's something I really enjoy doing. If you're hesitant, I just say give it a try. It's free. You just have to sign up.”