Students descend on Los Alamos National Laboratory April 26-27 for Supercomputing Challenge Expo and awards ceremony

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Research by student teams to be showcased

LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, April 21, 2010—More than 250 New Mexico middle- and high-school students and their teachers are at Los Alamos National Laboratory April 26 and 27 for judging and the awards ceremony in the 20th annual New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge.

Of the 98 teams that began the competition last fall, about 70 of them are expected to present at the Expo, said David Kratzer of the High Performance Computer Systems group and the Laboratory coordinator of the Supercomputing Challenge.

“The mission of the Supercomputing Challenge is to teach teams of middle- and high-school students how to use powerful computers to analyze, model, and solve real-world problems,” Kratzer said.

The goal of the yearlong competition is to increase knowledge of science and computing, expose students and teachers to computers and applied mathematics, and instill enthusiasm for science in middle- and high-school students, their families, and communities. Any New Mexico high-school or middle-school student is eligible to enter the Supercomputing Challenge.

Laboratory personnel can visit the Santa Clara Gallery on the second floor of the J. Robert Oppenheimer Study Center on Monday afternoon (April 26) to view posters that describe students’ computational science projects.

Check the Supercomputing Challenge Web page later this week and again on Monday morning to find out when teams will be presenting.

While at Los Alamos, students will present their projects and take part in tours, talks, and demonstrations with Laboratory scientists and researchers. Student projects will be recognized during an awards ceremony from 9 to 11 a.m. a.m. April 27 at the Church of Christ, 2323 Diamond Drive in Los Alamos.

Kratzer noted the support of nearly 100 Los Alamos employees who volunteer to work on the Supercomputing Challenge. “Without the support of these volunteers we couldn’t provide the first-class event we do for the students who have worked so hard to get to this point. I am grateful for their assistance,” he said.

The Supercomputing Challenge was conceived in 1990 by then Laboratory Director Sig Hecker and Tom Thornhill, then president of New Mexico Technet Inc., a nonprofit company that in 1985 set up a computer network to link the state’s national laboratories, universities, state government, and some private companies.

More information on the New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge, including a list of student projects, is on the Supercomputing Challenge Web page.