Student teams showcase year-long computing projects

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The Supercomputing Challenge is project-based learning geared to teaching a wide range of skills including computational thinking and computer programming

NOTE TO EDITORS: Media are welcome to attend the awards ceremony from 9 a.m. to noon, April 24 at the Church of Christ, 2323 Diamond Drive, Los Alamos.

LOS ALAMOS, N.M., April 19, 2018—More than 200 New Mexico students and their teachers will come together April 23-24 at Los Alamos National Laboratory to showcase their computing research projects at the 28th annual New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge expo and awards ceremony.

Media are welcome to the ceremony at the Church of Christ, 2323 Diamond Drive, Los Alamos, Tuesday, April 24, 9 a.m. to noon.

“One of the goals of the year-long competition is to teach student teams how to use powerful computers to analyze, model and solve real-world problems,” said David Kratzer of the Laboratory’s High Performance Computing Division, Los Alamos coordinator of the Supercomputing Challenge. “Participating students improve their understanding of technology by developing skills in scientific inquiry, modeling, computing, communications and teamwork, and they have fun doing it.”

The Challenge is project-based learning geared to teaching a wide range of skills: research, writing, teamwork, time management, oral presentations, computational thinking and computer programming. Any New Mexico elementary-school, middle-school or high-school student is eligible to enter the Supercomputing Challenge. Kratzer said the challenge also provides a pipeline of potential future employees for the Laboratory.

While at the Laboratory on April 23, students will present their projects and take part in tours, talks, and demonstrations with Laboratory scientists.

During the awards ceremony on April 24 student projects will be recognized, and plaques and cash awards will be given out; scholarships also will be awarded to high school seniors.

Kratzer noted the support of nearly 80 Los Alamos employees and another 50 individuals from Sandia National Laboratories, universities and business, 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. He added that now, after 28

years of the program, several students are second-generation participants; one or both of the students' parents took part in earlier Challenges.

More information about the New Mexico Supercomputing Challenge, including lists of student projects and sponsors, is on the Supercomputing Challenge web page.

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