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Escambia County Public Schools Foundation Receives AT&T Grant for Students to Experience 'STEM@Work'

Students at Pine Forest High School will benefit from a statewide investment by AT&T this year - one that seeks to increase understanding of how classroom curriculum translates into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers.

For ten consecutive years, AT&T is working with the [Consortium of Florida Education Foundations \(CFEF\)](#) to provide experiential learning opportunities for students in school districts across Florida through "STEM@Work." Real-world application of STEM education concepts, problem-solving and critical thinking skills will all be key elements of the 42 separate projects to be organized and funded through CFEF member local education foundations, including the Escambia County Public Schools Foundation.

The Cyber Security Career Academy at Pine Forest High School in Pensacola, Florida is part of the school's Career and Technical Education program that provides high school students elective courses focused on a specific cybersecurity/IT career track. This program currently has over 100 students participating in various cyber/IT courses. Students take career academy courses during the regular school day but only receive a few hours per week of total instruction. Typically, this is not enough training to prepare students for professional level work upon graduation. Therefore, Pine Forest HS, in cooperation with Global Business Solutions, Inc. (GBSI), is proposing this plan for an after-school curriculum to help provide this additional hands-on training and accelerate workforce competencies. The curriculum will include lab activities, exercises, and mini competitions designed to enhance student knowledge, skills and abilities. The grant funds for this program will cover the cost of project books, and programmable project kits that will be reusable for another after-school session. GBSI will provide teacher professional development to the cybersecurity teacher at Pine Forest High School. The business partner and teacher will co-teach the subject matter and mentor students through hands-on lab exercises and coding challenges. In addition, they will co-teach a classroom of students at Pine Forest HS. After-school activities will be held once a week from 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. Topics will focus on real-world application of security concepts in a coding environment.

This training will improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of participating students in fundamental cybersecurity concepts and inspire them to pursue a career path in the cybersecurity field. The students will encounter coding challenges when learning the Raspberry Pi Python software, which is the core of this project. Furthermore, they will explore how software and hardware works together to put the "smart" in our smart devices.

“Industries engaged in STEM disciplines will create many of the high-value, high-wage jobs of tomorrow, and we also know that many jobs today – and even more tomorrow – will require education beyond a high school degree,” said Joe York, President, AT&T Florida. “CFEF and other organizations are key to ensuring that young people are exposed to the educational and skills development opportunities to prepare them for success in their careers.”

This year’s statewide grant brings the total investment by AT&T over ten years to nearly \$1 million. More than 75,000 students have been directly impacted through 476 projects involving 950 local workplace partners in 51 school districts throughout Florida.

“When I think back on my school years, the times I got to do something hands-on and outside the classroom are my strongest memories and some of those experiences influenced my career path,” said Mary Chance, president of the CFEF. “We are so grateful that AT&T continues to see the value of giving students experiences that allow them to experience how math and science are applied in careers through STEM@Work.”

About Philanthropy & Social Innovation at AT&T

AT&T Inc. is committed to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its community initiatives, AT&T has a long history of investing in projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; or address community needs. The company’s signature philanthropic initiative, [AT&T Aspire](#), drives innovation in education to promote student success in school and beyond. With a financial commitment of \$500 million since 2008, AT&T is leveraging technology, relationships and social innovation to help all students make their biggest dreams a reality.

About the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations (CFEF):

The CFEF is the membership organization for Florida’s school district-wide local education foundations. Established in 1987, the CFEF seeks to advance student achievement in Florida by increasing private sector investment and involvement in public education. The CFEF now has 64 member foundations with 1,100 business and community leaders serving as volunteer board members. Collectively, they raise more than \$64 million annually to support students, teachers and schools through a variety of programs. The CFEF has provided nearly \$52 million to local education foundations since 2001 through various private- and public-sector partnerships, including the State of Florida School District Education Foundation Matching Grant Program.