

The U.S. Army, in collaboration with Booz Allen Hamilton, has created an innovative Web site and competition to increase interest among middle-school students in the areas of science, math, and technology. The unique Web-based competition at **eCYBERMISSION.com** encourages students to use science, math, and technology in unlikely ways to solve problems in their community while simultaneously competing for regional and national awards. The site helps students feel successful at solving math, science, and technology problems.

Army leadership has long recognized the importance of science, math, and technology to the Nation's global competitiveness and security. However, interest in these areas among today's youth has been steadily declining. In an effort to reverse this worrisome trend, Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki asked Dr. A. Michael Andrews II, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, to develop a premier competition to engage students who wouldn't normally be interested in these areas. Other motivators for the competition include the Army's strong desire to give something back to the Nation's communities and families and the support that **eCYBERMISSION.com** provides to the President's education initiative.

The first of its kind, eCYBERMISSION's key attraction for middle-school students is that it is entirely Web-based. The eCYBERMISSION Web site is highly interactive and provides student teams with a wealth of resources and support. For example, **CyberGuides** (Army volunteers who provide students online support and motivation) allow students to post questions and seek guidance. Also available on **eCYBERMISSION.com** are fun and exciting features such as **What's News**, which provides

ECYBERMISSION: INNOVATIVE WEB-BASED COMPETITION

students current events in the areas of science and technology, and **Cool Links** to related Web sites.

Ambassadors, who are volunteers from the civilian and military sectors of the Army, are key promotional resources for establishing eCYBERMISSION as a premier science, math, and technology competition. These dedicated individuals visit local schools to promote the competition and describe it to school officials, teachers, and students. Through the efforts of these volunteers, the competition can reach its goal to increase interest and involvement by middle-school students across the Nation in the areas of science, math, and technology.

Since its national launch on Oct. 1, 2002, eCYBERMISSION has rapidly caught the attention of students, teachers, and administrators across the Nation. Seventh- and eighth-grade students in the United States, its territories, and DOD Education Activity public, private, and home schools are eligible to participate in the competition. A total of 903 teams (3,228 students) registered to participate from each of the four competition regions (Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest/Pacific).

To participate in eCYBERMISSION, a team of three or four students identifies a community problem related to sports and recreation, arts and entertainment, health and safety, or

environmental issues. By focusing on these areas of concern, students realize through self-discovery that science, math, and technology play an important role in their daily lives. Once a problem is identified, team members develop a hypothesis, conduct research and experiments, and prepare their project for submission to **eCYBERMISSION.com**. Professional judges will then review and score team entries and determine regional winners online. First-place regional winning teams are then invited to a National Judging and Educational Event in Washington, D.C., where they present their projects in person to a panel of judges. Both regional and national winning team members receive U.S. Savings Bonds and other exciting prizes. Shinseki will present these awards to the national winning teams May 30, 2003, at the closing ceremony.

Registration for the competition's second year begins in fall 2003. Next year's competition will expand to include sixth-grade students. For more information on eCYBERMISSION, go to **www.ecybermission.com** or contact **missioncontrol@ecybermission.com**. To volunteer for the Ambassador Program, contact **ambassadorprogram@ecybermission.com**.