



SUCCESS STORY

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Academy Student Conquers Virus, Aids Secret Service

On the day after the September 11 terrorist attacks, someone at Sunset Senior High School in Florida sent an e-mail message—containing a threat against the White House—to the U.S. Secret Service. When Secret Service agents descended on the school, they asked for technical help in identifying the culprit. Sunset High administrators recommended Joseph Chiu, a junior in the Cisco Networking Academy program and one of the most capable and trustworthy students in the school. Joseph helped the investigators search the message history and narrow the field of suspected computers. The perpetrator was eventually identified.

Joseph was also instrumental in eliminating the pervasive Nimda virus from Sunset High's computing infrastructure in 2001, when some 250 high school, middle school, and elementary school systems in the Miami-Dade district were infected with the virus. Joseph found a special patch that had to be included in the cleaning disk, and Sunset High was the first school to be cleaned without recurrences. In recognition of his "dedication, selflessness, integrity, and willingness to serve the community," Joseph was nominated for the Walter B. Arnold Jr. Youth Hall of Fame.

Now in his last year at Sunset High, Joseph is completing his Academy coursework and will take the CCNA examination once the school year is over. The school community will miss him and the positive impact he has had on its administrative network; in fact, Sunset High's network administrator, Jose Vilasuso, doesn't know what he'll do when Joseph graduates. "We have roughly a thousand computers here, and 12 labs," he says. "Our principal hired Joseph part time to help manage the school's computing and networking infrastructure. He has become my right-hand man, and I've learned a lot from him."

Joseph's Academy training comes in handy. "Recently, I was able to use my Cisco knowledge to help set up a new computer lab at the school," he says. "The lab wasn't wired, so we had to run raceways, install racks and switches, run cables to each station, and install phone jacks. The Academy classes help me by providing hands-on experience and a good understanding of how things work." Ms. Whittington and Ms. Samroo, the Cisco instructors, are grateful to Joseph for helping pave the way to including Academy students on the school's technology team. For them and other school faculty, this translates into providing a better learning experience for their students and a faster turnaround time for lab implementation, troubleshooting, and repair.



Joseph working in his school lab



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Sunset High's principal, Dr. Daniel Tosado, has high praise for the Academy program. "It provides excellent preparation for higher-level instruction down the road," he says. "At the same time, the students work on our network and provide a service to the school." He adds that the Academy curriculum is well constructed, the delivery mechanism is effective, and the support that Cisco provides is outstanding.

Tosado also has high praise for Joseph. "This young man is one of the best technicians we have in the school, and he has a work ethic that makes me proud to have him affiliated with us," he says. "His help in configuring and maintaining our network has been invaluable." What is also invaluable is the model that Joseph has set for other Sunset High students. Seeing their fellow classmate become such an integral part of the school administration shows that it is possible for a high school student to make a real difference in the community.

Next year, Joseph plans to attend Florida International University to pursue his computer science studies. He's not yet sure what career path he'll be following. But it will certainly include computer and networking technology, and Joseph is grateful for the firm foundation the Academy program has provided.