High School Esports Program Awarded $500,000 Grant from PA Department of Education

PAsmart Advancing Computer Science & STEM Education Grant awarded to the Emerald Foundation will connect video gameplay and meaningful learning for PA students

LANCASTER, Pa. (PRWEB) February 13, 2019 -- Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera announced today that the Emerald Foundation has been awarded nearly $500,000 in a PAsmart Advancing Computer Science & STEM Grant for its “Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Esports” program.

“Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Esports” will infuse STEM learning into a passion students currently embrace: video gameplay. The North America Scholastic Esports Federation (NASEF), founded by the Samueli Foundation and managed on the east coast by the Emerald Foundation, was created to provide opportunities for ALL students to use esports as a platform to acquire critical communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills needed to thrive in work and in life. This new program in Pennsylvania will bridge the gaps between the highest and lowest performing students through highly engaging instruction, ongoing opportunities for team collaboration, creative problem-solving, and competitive fair play.

This esports initiative, launched as a scholastic club, will target a minimum of 300 high school students in fifteen after-school programs in Lancaster and Lebanon counties. All clubs will have the opportunity to compete virtually with others across North America, as well as gain free access to educational toolkits, webinars, virtual coaches, and other support. The grant also provides funding for a traveling esports arena enabling schools to host regional competitions.

Supporting the esports game player is an ecosystem of positions critical to the success of the club, including theory crafters, analysts, event organizers, IT support, web developers, streamers, fandom art, shoutcasters and more. The Emerald Foundation is partnering with organizations like the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and Industry to connect students through the continuum that extends from STEM / computer science interest to workforce development.

As the next phase in Governor Tom Wolf’s PAsmart initiative, more than $30 million in grants was secured to invest in education and workforce development. By expanding classroom instruction and professional development in the fast-growing fields of STEM and computer science, this funding will also provide opportunities for training with in-demand careers, emerging industries, and underserved populations.

“The Emerald Foundation is thrilled to be a recipient of this award,” said Joseph E. Besecker, Founder and Chairman of the Emerald Foundation. “In partnership with the Samueli Foundation, we believe that the NASEF esports program is one of the most important initiatives of our time as it helps our students in a way that hasn’t been done before. Video games are wildly popular with our youth, and this program gives them learning opportunities through their play while introducing them to relevant career options. Merging learning and socialization provides an important new bridge between students, parents and teachers.”

Judd Pittman is Special Consultant to the Secretary of Education on STEM at Pennsylvania Department of Education. He said, “Esports are enticing to today’s youth, and structured participation has great benefits. The NASEF program helps teens feel more connected to their school, drives better classroom performance, and teaches important skills for work and life. We are thrilled to support this work which leverages student interests
for quality learning and job preparedness.”

About the Emerald Foundation

The Emerald Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2010 by Emerald Asset Management CEO & Founder Joseph Besecker and Martha Besecker. The Emerald Foundation has historically contributed funding to worthy charitable, non-profit organizations that focus on education, youth, and healthcare research. Learn more at https://emeralde.org/. Founded in 1991, Emerald Asset Management subsidiaries provide equity-focused portfolio management services to institutional investors and to individual investors via separate account management and the Emerald Mutual Funds.

About the North America Scholastic Esports Federation

The North America Scholastic Esports Federation is working to ensure that ALL students possess the knowledge and skills needed to be society’s game changers: educated, productive, and empathetic individuals. NASEF is on a mission to provide opportunities for ALL students to use esports as a platform to acquire critical communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills needed to thrive in work and in life. The Federation’s core values are intertwined through all aspects of education and play: learning, opportunity, community, diversity, and respect.

Under the Samue1 Foundation’s leadership, the Federation is led by partners from the Orange County Department of Education, OC STEM Initiative, Connected Camps, Connected Learning Lab, UCI Esports, UCI Henry Samueli School of Engineering, and the UCI Bren School of Information & Computer Science.

Learn more at www.esportsfed.org. Members of the press can find videos, infographics, and leadership profiles in the online press room. Join online conversations on Twitter @NASEFedu, on Facebook and Instagram, and see matches streamed live on our Twitch channel.
Contact Information
Terry Kraft
Emerald Foundation
http://www.esportsfed.org
+1 (717) 314-4760

Claire LaBeaux
North America Scholastic Esports Federation
http://www.esportsfed.org
(925) 337-0244

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