

Parrott's networking skills led to college scholarship
by JASON EDWARDS, Harlan Daily Enterprise

Computers and technology are not just a hobby for Zach Parrott. The Harlan County High School senior recently turned his skills in both into a way to help pay for college.

Parrott competed at Spencerian College in Lexington in April and won \$6,500 in scholarship funds for a semester at Spencerian in the fall. He said when he heard about the competition he knew he had to give it a try.

"I had heard about the school when it visited our high school during a college day. So, I was interested in going and applied. When I applied they gave me paper that had scholarship day competitions you could do. I noticed one of them was Cisco and I was like, 'Hey I can do that.' So, I did," Parrott said.

He said winning money for his scholarship was a different feeling than being awarded a scholarship.

Parrott is in his fourth semester of networking, which teaches Cisco as a dual credit course with Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College. He said once he completed this semester he will have 16 college credit hours.

"I've always been interested in computers, the Internet and all of that stuff since I was young. I love it all. I grew up around it," Parrott said. "I was wanting to go into the computer information field. That is my planned major."

He said the Cisco course at Harlan County High School piqued his interest in pursuing it as a career and not just a hobby.

Career and Technical Education instructor Scott Pace said how important classes like this are because they bridge the gap between school and career.

"It is a great accomplishment, not only for him but for every student that reaches this point. He has been one of my most dedicated and dependable students and I am very proud of what he has been able to achieve," said Pace.

Competition at the college, Parrott said, was general knowledge information and the building of a network. Parrott said he had to compete against eight other students for the scholarship.

"I was nervous when I first went there, but once I saw what I had to do, I knew I could wrap this up easily," He said. "Where we had already done this so much in class, I knew I could do it all in about 20 minutes, easily. So, it was real easy for me."

Parrott received \$1,500 for participating in the competition, \$2,500 for computer engineering (Cisco) and \$2,500 for computer information systems. Parrott placed first in

both categories.

“It felt like I truly earned it,” said Parrott. “It wasn’t just some random luck of the draw or something like that, it just felt like I earned through what I knew.”

Parrott said students are around computers every day and that information will help them, even if they don’t go into that field for a career.

“Part of Zach’s success hinges on the fact that he had an opportunity and exposure to something that not only was he interested in, but allowed him to make that connection and truly see the value of what he was learning,” said Pace. “Technology is everywhere we turn, and will only continue to become a more integral part of our lives as we go forward. Challenging courses like Cisco give the students plenty of hands on technical experience and the confidence they need be successful.”

Parrott said computers weren’t just a hobby for him and a future career, but something he truly loved doing and learning.

“It can get you a really good paying job. It can get you knowing more about computers,” said Parrott. “Even if you don’t go into a job of it... you can fix it all by yourself without having to pay someone to do it for you.”