



## **SEVEN SEASONS OF SKILLS, TEAMWORK, AND CYBER SUCCESS**

As we launch our seventh consecutive season competing in CyberPatriot, we also celebrate the sixth edition of The Cyber Talon. Seven seasons may sound like a number, but for the Cyber Owls, it represents years of curiosity sparked, skills sharpened, confidence built, and young cyber defenders discovering just how far they can go.

This season, the Owls are fielding two teams, bringing together experience, fresh energy, and a shared passion for cybersecurity.

Our high school team features four committed competitors, including an exciting new Owl—Coder Girl. Her journey to the team began at a CyberTexas Foundation CyberPatriot Camp, where she met the Cyber Viking while he served as Lead Instructor. With a little encouragement from teammate Firewire, she joined the Owls and quickly proved she belonged. This season, she proudly earned her first CyberPatriot team shirt—and her place among the flock.

The middle school team continues the Owls' tradition of building strong cyber foundations early. With three team members—two returning and one new competitor, Pixie Dust—this group has jumped into the season with enthusiasm, determination, and a willingness to learn that defines what it means to be a Cyber Owl.

As CyberPatriot XVIII unfolds, both teams have been fully engaged—locking down systems, chasing vulnerabilities, solving problems against the clock, and learning to communicate under pressure. Every practice and competition brings new lessons, and every challenge strengthens their teamwork and confidence.

This season has already taken the Owls beyond the competition floor. The Cyber Owls Team Captain and Coach were recently featured on the National Cryptologic Foundation's #CyberChats podcast, sharing the story of the program and its impact. The momentum continued when the team captain, #1, was selected to attend the NIST National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) Annual Conference in Nashville as part of National Cyber Signing Day—a national-stage opportunity that highlights just how far Owl wings can carry you.

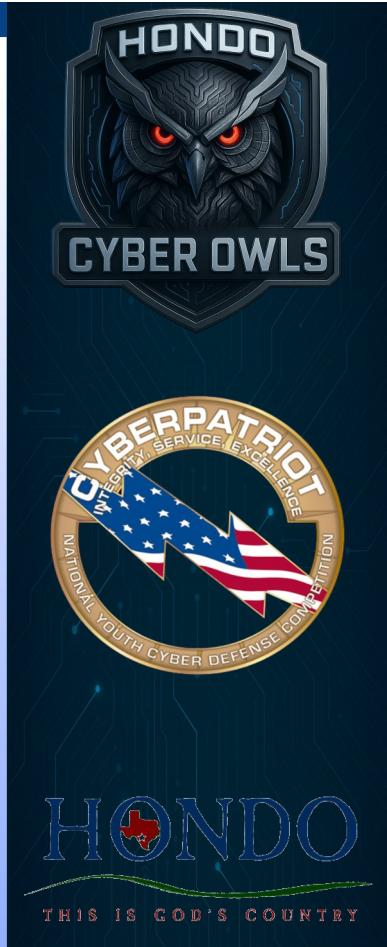
Strong teams are built with strong support, and the Cyber Owls are grateful to Inflow LLC, whose sponsorship provided dual monitors for every team member. That upgrade has made a real difference during training and competition, giving students a more professional, real-world cyber experience.

In this edition of The Cyber Talon, we'll take you inside the first half of the CyberPatriot season, share lessons learned along the way, and look ahead to what comes next. After CyberPatriot XVIII concludes, the Owls will shift gears into Capture the Flag (CTF) season, where creativity, strategy, and advanced problem-solving take center stage.

Seven seasons in, the Hondo Cyber Owls continue to prove that cybersecurity is about more than computers—it's about curiosity, teamwork, resilience, and believing in what you're capable of becoming. The flight continues.

Cyber Like a Viking!

Coach Frank "The Cyber Viking" Hall



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#### A SEASON OF GROWTH AND MOMENTUM FOR THE HONDO CYBER OWLS

The CyberPatriot XVIII season has been a powerful learning experience for the Hondo Cyber Owls, marked by perseverance, teamwork, and meaningful progress across our program.

This year, our High School team did not advance to the CyberPatriot XVIII Semi-Finals Round. While that outcome was not what we hoped for, the season provided invaluable experience. Students strengthened their technical abilities, improved communication under pressure, and gained a deeper understanding of what it takes to compete at a high level in cybersecurity competitions.

There is exciting news to celebrate as well. Our Middle School team, the Shadow Talons, advanced to the CyberPatriot Semi-Finals Round and will compete on January 24, 2025. Reaching this stage is a significant accomplishment and reflects the team's dedication, discipline, and continued growth throughout the season.

As the Shadow Talons prepare for the Semi-Finals, our High School team members will play an important mentoring role, helping support and prepare the Middle School team for the next round. This cross-team collaboration highlights the strength of the Hondo Cyber Owls program and reinforces our focus on leadership, teamwork, and shared success. Once the CyberPatriot season concludes, the Owls will shift their attention toward expanding technical skills and exploring new challenges. Training will dive deeper into Windows security, Linux administration, and Cisco networking, while also beginning focused preparation for Capture the Flag (CTF) competitions.

CTFs offer an exciting way for students to apply what they've learned, discover new techniques, and think creatively under pressure. These competitions build problem-solving skills that directly translate to real-world cybersecurity environments and future career paths. As we move forward, the momentum built this season will continue to shape our growth. I look forward to seeing everyone back at practice as we prepare for the next chapter of learning and competition.

- Coach Hall

## **CYBER OWL PRIDE: TEAM CAPTAIN JESSICA COUNSELMAN HONORED AT NATIONAL CYBER SIGNING DAY**



The Hondo Cyber Owls proudly celebrated a major milestone as our team captain, Jessica Counselman (#1), was honored as a 2025 National Cyber Signing Day (NCSD) honoree for her outstanding achievements, leadership, and future aspirations in cybersecurity.

On Monday, December 8, 2025, Jessica traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, where she was formally recognized during the live National Cyber Signing Day ceremony held as part of the NICE K12 Cybersecurity Education Conference. The ceremony took place at the Nashville Music City Hotel and highlighted exceptional K-12 students from across the nation who had taken meaningful early steps toward cybersecurity careers.

This national recognition reflected Jessica's dedication, discipline, and passion for cyber defense—qualities she consistently demonstrated as the leader of the Hondo Cyber Owls. Her selection shined a spotlight not only on her individual accomplishments, but also on the strength of our team, our mentors, and the supportive community that continues to invest in student success.

### **Celebrating the Future of Cybersecurity**

National Cyber Signing Day celebrated students who had committed to pursuing cybersecurity pathways through higher education, training programs, and industry opportunities. Jessica was recognized alongside an impressive group of students from across the United States, representing universities, academies, and school districts nationwide. Together with the advisors and families who supported them, these honorees represented the future of the cyber workforce.

### **A Moment of Pride for Hondo**

For the Hondo Cyber Owls, this recognition was about more than a single ceremony. It marked the journey of a student who grew into a confident leader, represented Hondo on a national stage, and inspired fellow teammates—especially younger Owls—to aim high and believe in what is possible through teamwork, perseverance, and dedication.

Jessica represented Hondo with pride, and our entire Cyber Owl community celebrated her achievement. This was truly a moment of pride for our team and our town.

For more information about the program and to view past ceremonies, visit National Cyber Signing Day at [nationalcybersigningday.org](http://nationalcybersigningday.org).

**"JESSICA COUNSELMAN REPRESENTED HONDO ON THE NATIONAL STAGE AT NATIONAL CYBER SIGNING DAY, SHOWCASING THE LEADERSHIP, DEDICATION, AND FUTURE PROMISE OF THE HONDO CYBER OWLS."**



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## HONDO CYBER OWLS TAKE TO THE AIRWAVES ON #CYBERCHATS



The Hondo Cyber Owls recently took flight beyond the competition arena and into the podcasting world as Team Captain Jessica Counselman and Coach Fredrick Hall were featured on #CyberChats Episode #63, presented by the National Cryptologic Foundation.

The episode, titled “Hondo Owls in the Cyber Sky: Coaching, Competing, and Connecting in a Hyper-Connected World,” highlights the heart, hustle, and mission behind the Hondo Cyber Owls CyberPatriot program.

In this episode of #CyberChats, listeners are taken inside the fast-paced world of cyber competitions. Coach Hall shares what it’s like guiding middle and high school students through the intensity of CyberPatriot, balancing technical skills with teamwork, strategy, and resilience. From long practice nights to high-pressure competition rounds, the conversation reveals how coaching is as much about mentorship as it is about cybersecurity.

Jessica Counselman, Team Captain of the Hondo Cyber Owls, offers a powerful student perspective. She speaks candidly about the excitement—and pressure—of defending systems as a teen cyber defender. Her leadership and calm under pressure shine through in the episode, reflecting why she has earned recent recognition for her dedication both inside and outside the competition arena. Jessica’s story is a reminder that CyberPatriot isn’t just about points on a scoreboard; it’s about personal growth and confidence.

A central theme of the episode is our hyper-connected world. From smartphones and smart TVs to smart fridges and beyond, ubiquitous connectivity shapes how students learn cybersecurity today. The discussion explores how the Owls train not just for competition scenarios, but for real-world environments where technology is everywhere—and security matters more than ever.

Perhaps most importantly, the episode highlights how the skills learned by the Hondo Cyber Owls go far beyond competition. Teamwork, communication, leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving are woven into every practice and every challenge. These are skills that stay with students long after the competition clock stops.

The Hondo Cyber Owls are honored to have been invited onto #CyberChats, and we extend a heartfelt thank you to the National Cryptologic Foundation for the opportunity to share our story. From a simple idea to a thriving team of passionate cyber defenders, this episode captures what it truly means to soar in the ever-connected cyber sky.  

 Episode #63 is available now on Spotify—be sure to tune in and hear the Owls’ journey for yourself!

## the cyber viking syslogs: staying safe in roblox: protecting our cyber vikings crew members

Roblox remains one of the most popular online gaming platforms for middle and high school students, including many of our own Cyber Vikings and future cyber defenders. With millions of players worldwide, it's a place where students can collaborate, create, solve problems, and build real digital skills. But like any online community, it comes with important safety considerations — especially as more students dive in daily.

Roblox has recently strengthened its safety features, giving families better tools than ever to keep young players protected. One of the most important updates is the new age verification system, which uses secure ID checks and facial matching to confirm whether a player is truly 13 or older. This helps keep younger players in age-appropriate environments and makes it much harder for adults to pose as kids. Verified accounts also gain access to more advanced communication features, while unverified accounts automatically receive stricter protection.

Social features like chatting, adding friends, and joining groups remain core parts of the Roblox experience, but they also open the door for unwanted contact if settings aren't properly managed. Taking a moment to adjust privacy and contact settings can dramatically reduce risks by controlling who can chat, join games, or send friend requests. Roblox's newer behavior-based moderation tools also scan for unsafe conversations, bullying, and suspicious interactions, giving players an added layer of protection behind the scenes.

Scams are still one of the biggest issues young players encounter. Offers for "free Robux," special items, or "admin commands" almost always lead to account theft. Roblox now flags many of these scam attempts, but players should still be reminded never to enter their password anywhere except the official Roblox website and to avoid clicking off-platform links that promise rewards.

Roblox has also upgraded its family safety tools with an improved Parent Controls Dashboard. Parents can manage spending limits, control chat settings, review game access, monitor playtime, and receive weekly safety summaries. For younger Cyber Vikings, enabling Account Restrictions Mode creates a much safer experience by allowing only Roblox-approved games and applying stronger communication filters.

Despite all these protections, communication at home remains the most powerful tool. Encourage students to talk openly about what they see online — whether it's a strange message, an uncomfortable interaction, or something that simply doesn't feel right. Knowing they can turn to a trusted adult is the foundation of safe digital play.

Helping our Cyber Vikings build safe habits now prepares them for future success in cybersecurity, school, and beyond. Roblox may be a game, but the awareness, decision-making, and online behavior they develop there are skills they'll use for life.

If you ever need help reviewing Roblox safety settings, feel free to reach out. Stay safe, stay aware, and — always — Cyber Like a Viking! 

**"ROBLOX  
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## HONDO CYBER OWLS

### CYBERPATRIOT TEAM

WE MONITOR NETWORKS BY SOARING THROUGH CYBER-SPACE HUNTING FOR PREY. WE USE OUR TALONS AS A DETERRENT TO PROTECT OUR DATA. USING ADVANCED DETECTION TECHNIQUES, WE SPREAD OUR WINGS AND LAUNCH PRECISE COUNTER MEASURES TO DEFEND OUR NETWORKS AGAINST CYBER ENEMIES. WE FIND, CAPTURE, AND ANNIHILATE ALL CYBER THREATS. WE ARE THE CYBER OWLS!

## HONDO CYBER OWLS

### CYBERPATRIOT TEAM

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ANGELA M. HALL—  
CHIEF EDITOR OF THE  
CYBER TALON



## ABOUT THE HONDO CYBERPATRIOT TEAM



### The Vision

The vision of the Hondo Cyber Owls CyberPatriot program is to promote cyber awareness, computer security practices, and cyber ethics. All of these are essential attributes for creating a secure network infrastructure, teaching the students how to detect threats, and how to defend against cyber-attacks in a safe virtual environment.

The skills and knowledge the students will gain from participating in this program will give them an advantage to obtain information technology certifications, scholarships in computer related fields of study, and ultimately provide an opportunity to start a great career in information technology and cyber security.

### The Mission

The mission of the Hondo Cyber Owls CyberPatriot program is the proper instruction and implementation of information technology principals and cyber security practices. All students will be taught how to use various operating systems, interconnecting network devices, and how to secure the entire infrastructure. The students will also be taught how to properly use tools and methodologies to assess and troubleshoot problems that range from inoperable workstations to misconfigured networking equipment. These are the skills that will be necessary to compete in the CyberPatriot competitions and will enable us to advance to each round and ultimately to the national finals.