



U.S. Student Overcomes Challenges to Succeed

U.S. academy graduate Bryan Donlan is well on his way to a successful networking career, despite the challenges presented by his developmental disorder.

At an early age, Bryan Donlan was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome, a developmental disorder that affects one's ability to interact socially. This didn't interfere with his pursuit of excellence, and by the age of 15, he graduated from high school and earned his Cisco® CCNA® certification.

Donlan enrolled in the Cisco Networking Academy® in 2003 at Sanford Regional Vocational Center in Maine while he was a sophomore at Wells High School. After becoming the first student to complete all four CCNA courses, a task he accomplished in just six months, Donlan passed the CCNA certification exam on his first try. "Bryan craves being challenged intellectually," says his mother, Karen Donlan. "The Networking Academy curriculum was so different from the courses he was taking in high school. It was the first time he really felt challenged."



In March 2004, Donlan competed in the statewide SkillsUSA competition in Maine and won the gold medal for Internetworking. "This was the first time he competed in anything," says Mrs. Donlan, "and it was a thrill for him to be recognized for such an achievement."

"Though social interaction was sometimes challenging for Bryan," Mrs. Donlan says, "he excelled in the Networking Academy because he understood the technical language and was able to communicate with his classmates on the same level."

After completing the Cisco courses, Donlan enrolled at the Maine Math and Science Academy in Limestone, Maine. After graduating in June 2006, he accepted a full scholarship from the University of Maine in Orono, where he is majoring in computer science.

During school breaks, Donlan is a part time computer technician for the Wells-Ogunquit school system. He also manages a computer repair business, fixing personal computers and troubleshooting home networks.

After graduation, Donlan plans to pursue a master's degree to expand his technical abilities and satisfy his thirst for knowledge. He still communicates with his elementary school computer teacher, Cheryl Oakes, who describes him as a voracious reader who was always fixing problems. "He's brilliant and just needed people to believe in him," says Oakes. "His parents made sure he had the right opportunities to succeed at the highest level."

To learn more about the academy at Sanford Regional Vocational Center, visit <http://home.gwi.net/~srvclab1/>.