Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson hosted his Third Annual All-State Coding Competition this year, but for the Haas Hall Rogers Coding Team, it was their second coding competition ever. The three-person team placed second, bested only by Arkansas School for Math, Science and the Arts-who had at least one team finishing in the top three the previous years. "I am extremely proud of our team for finishing so high in only their first year in this prestigious statewide competition. This is a monumental achievement for Haas Hall Rogers and a clear indication of the academic strength on our campus.", Larry Henry, Headmaster Haas Hall Academy Rogers.

Bradley Baltz (11th), Lucas Jaggernauth (10th) and Austin Parket (9th) were approached by their Computer Science teacher, Mr. Taghavi, about entering the Regional Coding Competition. Although coding competitions are extremely competitive and teams work year round to prepare, these kids decided to give it a try. "The governor is doing a great job motivating many students to learn computer science." noted Jaggernauth about the competition.

For the competition, each three-person team is allowed use of one computer they bring with them and are not allowed internet access unless required as part of a challenge. The competition is made up of two sections. Section 1 is comprised of 100 multiple choice questions and Section 2 is seven coding challenges of increasing difficulty. For the final coding challenge, the teams used Arduino--an open source electronic platform--to program a series of lights to turn on and off based on the position on a red board. Bradly Baltz, the oldest member of the team, is proud knowing, "This is the first step of many towards our school's success in computer science."

Each of the three scholars on the team were awarded $1,000 dollars, to be deposited in a 529 college-savings plan, for their achievement. Haas Hall Academy Rogers received $6,000. Baltz, Parker and Jaggernauth were also presented with a trophy by Governor Asa Hutchinson, which is proudly displayed at their school. Parker noted "The trophy serves as a great reminder of our accomplishments, but the scholarship and the donation toward the school are the best part."

Gov. Hutchinson has made computer-science education a priority in Arkansas since he was elected. Earlier this month, representatives from more than 30 states gathered in Arkansas for the first ever National Computer Science Summit. The main objective was to share ideas on how to better prepare teachers and students in the field of computer science.

Mr. Taghavi and his students are great examples of how the added emphasis on STEM in our educational system will benefit education, industry and the growth of our state for years to come.