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The Big Teen Discovery on Cybersecurity

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On October 9, 2025, I volunteered at the Cupertino Cybersecurity Public Awareness Event, and it turned out to be an amazing experience. Before the event, I knew almost nothing about cybersecurity and was just a regular teen. But the event opened my eyes to how vulnerable we can all be online—especially senior citizens—and how important it is for people of all ages to stay informed and protected.

One thing that really stood out to me was how many senior citizens were there and that too, they were engaged throughout the event. Many of them stayed the entire time and asked in-depth questions during the Q&A. It made me realize that they might already understand how at-risk they are to scams and online threats. Older adults are often targets of fake tech support calls, phishing emails, or emotional scams, and their strong interest in learning how to avoid this shows just how serious they are about staying safe. Watching them participate so actively made me reflect on how important it is for communities to support and educate our older generations.

As a teen, I had always assumed that because I grew up with computers and phones, I was naturally good with technology. But this event made me realize that being tech-savvy doesn't automatically mean being safe. I learned that even small devices like Bluetooth speakers or smart toilets can be hacked if they aren't secured properly. Teens often think we know everything about our devices, but the truth is, we're just as vulnerable, especially if we don't understand how things really work behind the scenes.



My volunteer tasks of passing out flyers, helping with the mic during the Q&A session, and inviting people in may seem small, but it gave me the chance to stay present and really listen. I learned that cybersecurity isn't just about protecting devices; it's also about protecting people emotionally. One panelist shared how scammers target lonely individuals by pretending to

form relationships, then slowly manipulate them into giving away money or personal information. That really stuck with me and showed how online safety is also about mental and emotional awareness.

Overall, this volunteering experience helped me go from knowing nothing to understanding how real and serious online threats can be. This event helped me realize how cybersecurity affects real people, not just in a technical way, but in a personal and emotional way too. I came in thinking it wasn't really my problem, but I left knowing it's everyone's problem. Whether you're a teenager who thinks you're too smart to get scammed, or a senior citizen just trying to stay safe, we all have something to learn. I'm grateful for the experience and hope more young people get involved in events like this since it's a great way to grow and give back at the same time.