

News from the Savannah River Site

U S D E P A R T M E N T O F E N E R G Y • A I K E N • S C 2 9 8 0 8

Principal Media Contact: DT Townsend
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC
803.952.7566
dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov

DOE Media Contact: Bill Taylor
803.952.8564
bill.taylor@srs.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS Nuclear Engineer Intrigues Students with “Journey to the Center of the Atom”

AIKEN, S.C. (Dec. 4) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employee Bill Wabbersen's has a sign in his office that reads “Never trust an atom. They make up everything.” This brings that light touch to initiatives designed to pique young people's interest in science.

“Our industry needs people to replace us in the coming years,” says Wabbersen, an SRNS Nuclear Engineer at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site (SRS). Though Wabbersen spends his workdays with the Savannah River Tritium Enterprise, many of his off-work hours are used to encourage students to follow him into the nuclear field.

Among his efforts is “Journey to the Center of the Atom,” a hands-on learning program he developed and presents to middle and high school students. “The ‘Journey’ is about understanding how stable and radioactive atoms work together to make the universe,” he explains.

In connection with the American Nuclear Society (ANS) national winter meeting in November, he taught a class for teachers, including one participant who travelled all the way from Japan, at the ANS Teachers Workshop. There, the teachers used the Isotope Discovery



SRNS nuclear engineer Bill Wabbersen (top left) uses his Isotope Discovery Kit to lead students on a “Journey to the Center of the Atom” at USC-Aiken's Ruth Patrick Science Education Center.

Kit developed by Wabbersen to experience hands-on classroom activities. The kit— which consists of an interactive periodic table and chart of the nuclides, along with plastic tiles representing various isotopes—allows students to learn by sorting and grouping the tiles.

Wabbersen has also taken the Isotope Discovery Kit to Chicago and Atlanta for other national teacher workshops. “The kit has traveled to San Diego for workshops and spent a whole summer at Penn State University supporting teacher workshops there,” he says. ANS is now producing kits for teachers around the country.

Since creating the kit in early 2012, Wabbersen has used it to lead the “Journey to the Center of the Atom” many times at the University of South Carolina-Aiken’s Ruth Patrick Science Education Center and at other events sponsored by the SRNS Education Outreach Program, local ANS chapter and the Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness. In connection with October’s National Nuclear Science Week, he and several colleagues led multiple sessions of the “Journey” for area high school students. The chairman of the event’s National Steering Committee observed one of Wabbersen’s sessions at the Ruth Patrick Center and wrote in response, “Bill is indeed a gifted and patient teacher...SRS and the Aiken community are so lucky to have a partner such as Bill in the community.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

Visit us on the web at www.savannahrivernuclearsolutions.com

SRNS- 2013 – 177