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For Immediate Release

SRNS Mini Grants reach \$975,000 total awards for innovative area teachers

AIKEN, S.C. – (May 28, 2024) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) continues to recognize innovative teaching methods by annually contributing thousands of dollars through the [Innovative Teaching Mini Grants Program](#). This year, 117 educators received their shares of \$75,000 at a celebration in Aiken, South Carolina.

Since 2009, SRNS has contributed over \$975,000 to support 4K through 12th grade educators from public, private and charter schools in Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Edgefield, Orangeburg, Columbia and Richmond counties.



During the Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Innovative Teaching Mini Grant reception held in Aiken, South Carolina, 117 educators from the Central Savannah River Area and Orangeburg County received their share of \$75,000.

SRNS Education Outreach Specialist Taylor Rice, explained, “As a former educator, this program means the world to me as it recognizes outstanding teachers for their dedication to student learning. SRNS continues to put educators first as they develop the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills we need in our future workforce.”

SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants fund the purchase of various project materials, hands-on kits and computer programs. A panel of 50 Savannah River Site (SRS) judges select the winners. Educators seeking classroom supplies are eligible for \$500 grants, while those enhancing STEM curriculums receive grants ranging from \$750 to \$1,000.

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“SRNS’ support is instrumental in nurturing students’ passion for STEM, paving the way for rewarding careers,” mentioned Kristina Istre, A.R. Johnson Health Science and Engineering Magnet School educator. “The funding will enable the introduction of an Aquaponics unit in my seventh-grade science class, teaching students how to create aquariums, address food deserts and cultivate soilless plants indoors.”

Stephany Griffin, an educator at Tall Pines STEM Academy, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to establish her classes’ first pollination garden. “My students can now study plant adaptations, reproduction, and the important role bees play in the world. I will continue to spread the word about SRNS Mini Grants and the significant impact it has on our school.”



Barnwell Elementary educator Tanya Anderson wins a door prize during the SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants Program reception. Anderson will use the funds to purchase financial literacy and budgeting materials for her classroom.



Mallory Walp, East Aiken School of the Arts, wins a door prize during the SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants Program reception. Walp is introducing Diplo Legos to her first-grade classroom, using SRNS grant funds.



SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grant recipient Wendy Schilling and her guest pose for a photo booth picture, during a reception in Aiken, South Carolina.

SRNS Executive Vice President and Chief Operations Officer for the National Nuclear Security Administration James (JC) Wallace noted more than 17,500 students from 68 schools are expected to benefit from this year’s grants.

“Educators shape our future workforce and ignite the curiosity of thousands of young minds daily, aligning with SRS missions for the next 50 years,” Wallace explained. “SRNS Mini Grants are a token of our appreciation for educators as they prepare students who may one day join our workforce and carry out our future national security missions.”

Greenbrier Middle School educator David Phillips and Cedar Ridge Elementary School educator April Barbin expressed the importance of grant funding to provide new opportunities inside the classroom.

“Our entire engineering program is funded by SRNS Mini Grants,” said Phillips. “The number of projects and classrooms SRNS has impacted across the Central Savannah River Area is truly remarkable.”

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“Last year alone, SRNS Mini Grant funding allowed me to purchase 3D printers, filament, and Edison robots for my classroom,” said Barbin. “My kids have learned how to work together, create and code in ways they would not be able to do without SRNS Mini Grants. This program creates thriving STEM students who are well-equipped for middle school and beyond.”



Cedar Ridge Elementary School students program Edison robots that were funded by the SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants Program.

SRNS Education Outreach Programs use unique SRS resources to enhance interest in STEM while supporting improvements in education. To learn more about the SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants, click [here](#).

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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