

Principal Media Contact: Caroline Reppert
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC
803-952-8367
caroline.reppert@srs.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRNS Challenges Local Students during “Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day”

Middle school girls learn that being a scientist or engineer is challenging, rewarding and even fun

AIKEN, S.C. (March 24, 2017) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), in partnership with the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center and the Society of Women Engineers, hosted eighth-grade students from schools throughout the greater Aiken-Augusta area for “Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day.” During the event, local teens could practice some of the traits that engineers use – working together, being creative, designing something and making it work, and at the same time, building it to meet the schedule.

The one-day event began with an activity called “Deal Me In,” a card game to help the girls identify traits that could match up with certain career paths in engineering. Then, volunteer Cathy Mussi from Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) Global Security presented an interactive discussion titled “Introduction to Radiation.” Mussi is a nuclear engineer at SRNL. In her role, she supports testing and training for detection devices and instrumentation to identify and measure radioactive material.

Mussi considers her job as the equivalent of having x-ray vision. She uses radiation to identify radiological materials that may be concealed inside other objects.

“It was very rewarding for me to present the topic of radiation to these eighth graders. Radiation is something that naturally occurs in the environment, yet people may



Savannah River National Laboratory mechanical engineer Annamarie MacMurray gives a robotics demonstration during Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day at the University of South Carolina Aiken. Watching the demonstration from far left are Kathleen Coleman, St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School; Raney Burnett, A.L. Corbett Middle School; Brenna Nunn, A.L. Corbett Middle School; Titianna Morris, Ridge Spring-Monetta Middle School; Emma Anderson, C.T. Walker Traditional Magnet School; Gabrielle Burton, Augusta Preparatory Day School; and Ashley Johnson, Augusta Preparatory Day School.

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misinterpret what it is or fear it,” said Mussi. “I was really impressed by all the students because they were very knowledgeable about the difference between non-ionizing radiation, such as microwaves, and ionizing radiation, such as CT scans.”

After Mussi’s presentation, the hands-on activities that topped the agenda for the day included participating in a robotics demonstration, building “puff mobiles” made from hard candy and paper, and racing to construct the tallest tower with only a single piece of newspaper.

“I really liked the puff mobiles because we could be creative and figure out on our own how to build the best car,” said Kathleen Coleman, eighth-grade student at St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School. “Before today, I didn’t know there were so many different types of engineers. I’ve always been interested in engineering, specifically mechanical engineering, because I like to put things together and take them apart.”

“Before this event, these young women may not be aware that certain career paths in engineering exist,” said Candice Dermody, Manager, SRNS Talent Management and Education Outreach. “In a few hours, they can interact with engineers from different disciplines, which may help inspire these middle school students to later pursue a career in engineering. Every year, I look forward to seeing the enthusiasm the students have for trying out activities and watching demonstrations.”

Students who have shown an interest in engineering were invited from schools in Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell and Edgefield in South Carolina, and Columbia and Richmond Counties in Georgia.

“I was involved with enrichment activities like this when I was their age, and that opened the door for me to be interested in engineering and the sciences,” added Mussi. “Education outreach programs as well as many influential teachers played an important part in choosing a career in nuclear engineering, and now I want to pay it forward to the next generation.”

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.

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