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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRS Learning Program Teaches Students About Endangered Birds

AIKEN, S.C., (May 29, 2018) – The endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and threatened Bachman Sparrow were the recent subject of a two-day, in-depth project based learning program for students held at the Savannah River Site (SRS) for sixth-graders from the Tall Pines STEM Academy, a charter school located near Aiken, S.C.

A third day was dedicated to the creation and presenting of a media campaign. Each group of four to five students developed their own strategy on how to best communicate the plight of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman Sparrow to their classmates, and possibly later, other organizations.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Education Outreach personnel working with Ruth Patrick Science Center instructors explained the plight of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman Sparrow to the inquisitive students during their visit to SRS.

Moving through the forests of SRS, the students investigated adaptations that allow for success of animals in diverse and changing environments. This was followed by a U.S. Forest Service presentation demonstrating how manufactured wooden nests are installed within longleaf pine tree trunks, a necessary nesting site for the Red Cockaded Woodpecker to more rapidly increase their numbers.



The project based learning program had already resulted in several Tall Pines students decid-

Tall Pines Academy sixth grade students (from left) Gabey Marshall, Maia Stefanakos, Caroline Kidd and Madison Rich, creatively explain the plight of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker to classmates, all part of a 3-day project conducted by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Education Outreach personnel working with Ruth Patrick Science Center instructors.

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ing to use the cause of the endangered woodpecker as a points-producing theme for their FIRST Robotics team during a special segment of the multi-part competition.

A local Girl Scout leader, visiting the same robotics competition, was impressed with the team's theme and presentation; enough so, that she asked them to give the talk to members of her troop.

"The ripple effect of something like this is always amazing," said Francine Burroughs, SRNS Manager, Education Outreach and Talent Management. "We appreciate that this program is so effective due the fact that it is not a 'learn for the sake of learning' opportunity, but instead, is a 'learn in order to teach' process. These students are now advocates for environmental stewardship."

"It's important to protect endangered species," said Cameron Woiczehowski, a Tall Pines sixth grader. "Take the Red-cockaded Woodpecker for example. If they were completely gone the cockroach species would increase dramatically, and nobody likes cockroaches!"

Tall Pines Sixth Grade Teacher Melissa Kidd stated that area schools are fortunate to have the educational value provided by the Ruth Patrick Science Center, SRS and all other community partners. "They make it fun, but there is real learning taking place."

Kidd also noted that the comprehension and retention of information is significantly improved using project based learning as was confirmed through the recent study of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman Sparrow by Tall Pines students.

"We're expecting them to think in a very different way than they would normally have an opportunity to do," said Kidd. "SRNS sought us out to ensure we had the opportunity to experience, for free, the high-quality instruction and activities this program has to offer. This is all invaluable to me as a teacher."

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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SRNS-2018-685