

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Teacher, Finalist for \$100,000 Grant in National Competition

AIKEN, S.C., (December 18, 2018) – A 2018 Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Mini Grant Award recipient is a finalist for a \$100,000 grant in a national competition.

For 29 years, Valerie Mundell has sought to find ways to bring out the best in her emotionally troubled students, creatively inspiring them to recognize their potential while helping them advance academically.

“It requires thinking outside the box,” said Mundell, a teacher within Richmond County’s Sands Hill Program. “Conventional approaches are largely ineffective. They need to be active and engaged, receiving positive reinforcement when each appropriate opportunity appears.”

Mundell credits much of her recent success to a Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Mini Grant for \$500 awarded to her earlier this year.

“The SRNS Educational Outreach program is amazing. They do so much to positively impact teachers throughout the region,” she added. “The grant received from them greatly helped my students and inspired me to take a chance and put the work into applying for a \$100,000 grant from Farmers Insurance.”

Mundell is one of 15 national finalists, five of whom will receive a grant that could have a huge impact on their students and the schools they represent.



Richmond County teacher Valerie Mundell uses unconventional methods to reach and teach her emotionally challenged students within the Sands Hill Program.

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For several months now, Mundell has been experimenting with the use of Fitbit activity trackers as a mathematics-based teaching tool, encouraging students to stay active and counting their steps during various activities.

“We’ll use them for counting, rounding numbers and other learning applications,” said Mundell. “It also helps them monitor their heart rate. They know when it gets high, it’s time to examine their emotions and consider what’s needed to calm down.”

Mundell frequently uses drama, asking students to perform in positive roles and settings to reinforce desired attributes and attitudes while modeling productive, respectful and responsible behavior for others.

“We created our own civic outreach program, The Dream Team Drama Club, where we offer short plays to groups of senior citizens living nearby,” said Mundell. “The children are thrilled to perform for them, and the seniors greatly enjoy the entertainment and special attention.”

Since 2009, SRNS has donated over \$500,000 to enhance local education through the annual SRNS Innovative Teaching Mini Grants program.

Each year, over 100 educators from the greater Aiken-Augusta area receive grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,000.

The program recognizes and supports projects that enhance elementary and middle school science, mathematics and technology programs.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is 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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