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SRNS Supports Allendale Students through National STEM Coalition Challenge

AIKEN, S.C., (August 17, 2018) – A Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) loaned executive recently played a major role towards helping a team of organizations representing Allendale, S.C., win the 2018 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) Coalition Challenge, sponsored by US2020. The Allendale Team will share the \$1 million-dollar prize with seven co-winners from across the country. The prize money will be used to implement innovative learning strategies and bring hands-on STEM mentoring and maker-centered learning to underrepresented students throughout Allendale County.

US2020, a division of Citizen Schools, is working to dramatically increase the number of STEM professionals mentoring and teaching students through hands-on projects with a focus on serving underrepresented communities, especially girls, underrepresented minorities, and low-income children.

“The South Carolina Promise Zone and the Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization (SRSCRO) have facilitated the formation of a strong team, where the true winners will be the students in Allendale Schools,” said Sandra DeVoe Bland, Promise Zone Coordinator and loaned Savannah River Nuclear Solutions executive to the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance. As a loaned executive, Bland’s



Sandra DeVoe Bland (left), Promise Zone Coordinator and loaned Savannah River Nuclear Solutions executive to the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance; Wilbur Cave, Allendale Alive; and Mindy Metts, Savannah River Site Community Reuse Organization, represented the Allendale Team on how best to improve the Allendale school system for the 2018 STEM Coalition Challenge Collaboration in Pittsburgh, Pa., and sharing a \$1 million-dollar prize. The Allendale Team supports the development of college and career-ready scholars as part of the Allendale Education Transformation program.

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contributions were instrumental towards the creation of this partnership between schools and business and capturing of the vision on how their share of the \$1 million-dollar award will help shape the academic future of the Allendale County school system.

In 2017, the US2020 Allendale Team was formed by Bland, the Promise Zone and SRSCRO to help students become proficient in science, technology, engineering and math.

Bland proposed a two-generational approach focusing on the student as scholar and the use of a designated individual, known as a “router,” to facilitate the infusion of high impact, STEM-based programs into the school system. She merged the two processes by building on a new mentoring initiative and the existing Clemson Emerging Scholars program.

The innovative approach targets elementary, middle and high school student with a progression from robotics to coding. The robotics focus for elementary schools reminds student scholars that learning is fun. Coding is introduced through the “Girls Who Code” curriculum and is open to all middle school students. The Clemson Emerging Scholars program will expand to include a mentoring component where the high school students will mentor elementary students and track with them.

More than fifteen organizations and numerous supporters have joined the Allendale Team coalition with the goal to connect students with STEM-rich experiences related to careers found at local businesses and industry. Bland will continue to support the initiative along with SRNS’s Educational Outreach team.

The Allendale Team supports the development of college and career-ready scholars as part of the Allendale Education Transformation program. Bland noted that about 40-60 percent of the Allendale County students do not go to college and need viable career tracks, plus a set of practical soft skills. Through mentoring and a wholistic two-generation approach, the students benefiting from the 2018 STEM Coalition Challenge award will be set for success by early exposure to positive role models and innovative experiences that bridge gaps in learning.

The Allendale Team was originally selected from 92 applications across 35 states, representing more than 1,800 nonprofits, companies, school districts and local government partners. The effort came about as part of the SRSCRO’s regional Nuclear Workforce Initiative that focuses on developing regional career pathways for STEM industries.

Winners were selected based on several factors including: their potential for impact, approach to partnership building, creative engagement strategies and sustainability planning. The \$1 million prize will provide financial support, staff support and consulting for two years for each of the winners.

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According to Bland, since SRNS became the management and operating contractor in 2008 at the Savannah River Site, more than 200,000 students and teachers throughout the eight counties near SRS have benefitted from their dedicated efforts to enhance learning. “Our company believes heavily in the value of supporting a wide variety of education outreach programs that have had a direct impact on area students, as has been demonstrated many times through the years in Allendale County,” she said. “I’m pleased to have had a role in this ongoing commitment to facilitate educational and economic growth in the counties represented by the SouthernCarolina Regional Development Alliance.”

As one of eight regional economic development alliances in South Carolina, SouthernCarolina Alliance markets multi-county industrial parks, industrial buildings and sites encompassing over 14,000 acres of industrial property for development.

SCA assists existing industries with expansions and new industries with start-ups, serving as a liaison to state government, including the S.C. Department of Commerce, S.C. Department of Revenue, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, and other agencies involved in licensing, permitting and labor issues. The Alliance has assisted these industries in the execution and funding of environmental and engineering studies and site preparation, as well as public relations.

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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