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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Williston DIG STEM Festival: Rural Kids Learn About Global Opportunities

AIKEN, S.C., (May 2, 2018) – More than thirty organizations came together recently to provide a day of hands-on experimenting and learning at the third annual DIG (Dreams, Imagination & Gift) STEM Festival in Williston, S.C.

Hundreds of area students spent hours browsing through high tech machines and other intriguing devices found at dozens of exhibits and interactive demonstrations in this science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) wonderland.

Steven Brown, President and Founder of DIG, sees the success of a STEM festival in a rural area like Barnwell County the proof that his vision is now reality. “It’s all about exposing small town kids and teenagers to STEM,” said Brown. “This festival gives them the opportunity to get excited and motivated about potential STEM-based degrees and careers. We want them to believe in themselves, and participating in this festival can be a catalyst, an important step in that direction.”

The list of exhibitors featured many well-known companies and organizations including BOEING, GE Power, Ruth Patrick Science Center, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), SCE&G and the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division.



*Hundreds of children and teenagers visited the Savannah River Site (SRS) experiments and demonstrations at the recent DIG STEM Festival in Williston, S.C. SRS engineers Puneeth Kumar (center) and Shawn Carey (right) explain the properties of static electricity and invisible magnetic fields.*

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One clever demonstration featured a large plexi-glass box filled with several rows of set mouse traps, each with one ping pong ball balanced on top. On the count of three, five students each dropped one ping pong ball through holes in the clear plastic top, setting off a rapid and impressive spray of ping pong balls flying in all directions. The process provided an easy to understand example of what happens inside a nuclear power reactor when it's operating.

Former Williston resident and structural engineer with SRNS Shawn Carey said, "It's great to see the kinds of people I grew up with out here learning about the benefits of STEM, academically and as a part of potential future careers with local companies like those found at the Savannah River Site."

The day also featured a STEM competition, inflatable play equipment, live music and the Roper Mountain Science Show from Greenville, S.C.

"It's a lot of fun here," said Jordan McDonald, a sixth-grade student from Aiken's Tall Pines Academy. "There's so many things to play with and make, lots of hands-on stuff. Though the slime was my favorite activity. It's so much fun to make, but really messy."

According to Brown, DIG is a tax exempt, non-profit organization whose goal is to motivate, mentor, encourage and enable rural children and youth to excel and make their dreams and imaginations a reality.

"DIG seeks to provide a service to the community to aid in social and economic growth and development," said Brown. "DIG aims to establish a sense of community pride and ownership by providing an organization that gives residents an opportunity to play a major role in developing their own youth. Statistics show that when a community is involved by volunteering, residents feel secure, personally invested and tend to do more for the well-being of the community."

*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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