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SRNS Earns High Grades for Reaching 260,000 Students and Educators While Investing Millions in Local Schools Prior to COVID-19 Pandemic

AIKEN, S.C., July 1, 2020 – With the close of the school year, public and private education as we know it will change. What will not change is Savannah River Nuclear Solutions' (SRNS) commitment to promoting excellence in education throughout the region.

“We’re not going to let the COVID pandemic deter our resolve to support local education at all levels,” said SRNS President and CEO Stuart MacVean. “It is a core value for SRNS. We’re here to support our students and teachers, now and in the future.”

MacVean explained that the challenge for the SRNS Education Outreach organization is to find new, innovative ways to support the successful programs of the past, while ensuring the health and well-being of future participants during the pandemic.

Kim Mitchell, SRNS Education Outreach Program, hopes to explore new ways to



In January, students representing one of 33 teams participating in the Future City competition attempt to persuade judges that their model city deserves first place during the daylong contest at the University of South Carolina Aiken. Not only would the first place team earn a trophy but also a trip to the finals in Washington, D.C.

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reach an audience by making multiple virtual platforms available to educators. “We’re confident that virtual reality technology can strongly and positively impact students and teachers alike. And, in time, if we return to business as usual, we can still use these tools to reach a much broader group of students and educators throughout the region,” she said.

Savannah River Site (SRS) virtual field trips are currently being evaluated. Virtual field trips would showcase science lessons at SRS and include multiple lessons that target specific grade levels. At this time, proposed lessons would include the health of a pond or soil, or an eco-hike.

“Statistics and feedback from school system administrators affirm that the SRNS Education Outreach Program has been highly successful while significantly affecting the entire region,” said Mitchell.

SRNS has provided more than five million dollars for education outreach since 2008, impacting more than 260,000 students and teachers throughout the seven counties near the SRS.

Over the last year alone, more than 30,000 students and educators, equivalent to the population of a small city, directly benefited from 12 SRNS Education Outreach annual programs and events prior to the closure of school buildings.

“Many of our programs involve large groups who are often in close contact with one another,” said Francine Burroughs, Manager, SRNS Workforce Services and Talent Management. “Fortunately, all but one of them this past school year were completed by the time COVID-19 became a reality in our day-to-day lives. We are looking for ways to



During “Teach-Ins” held in February, SRNS Chief Engineer Chris Harkins provides advice on how best to build strong bridges using cups and straws at Riverside Middle School, Evans, Ga. The event features interactive science and engineering-based demonstrations at 20 local middle schools.

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make the needed adjustments to be able to continue in the future, while ensuring the safety of our participants and volunteers.”

The education outreach programs provided by SRNS emphasize science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). These STEM-intensive programs include the Traveling Science Demonstration Program, Science & Technology Enrichment Program, Innovative Teaching Mini-Grants and various workshops, tours, talks and demonstrations.

Other programs test the depth of students’ knowledge and experience. They include the South Carolina Regional Science Fair, DOE Savannah River Regional Science Bowl and the Regional Future City Competition.

SRNS annually offers Mini Grants to provide financial support for area teachers through corporate funding. To date, more than \$700,000 has been contributed to support educators throughout the region.

To better reach local adults pursuing two-year degrees, SRNS has signed Memorandums of Understanding with local technical colleges and the University of South Carolina Aiken.

“It’s a new era for all facets of education and will require new ways to meet the needs of those who, year after year, find value in our outreach programs. There’s no doubt in my mind, we’ll get there. It’s too important,” said Burroughs.

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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