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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Savannah River Site and USCA Education Center Reflect on 40 Years of Partnership

Alliance continues to bring STEM offerings to students in kindergarten through 12th grade

AIKEN, S.C., June 12, 2023 – For almost four decades, DOE’s Savannah River Site (SRS) and the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USC Aiken) have partnered to bring science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education to area students.

“Few counties in the U.S. offer an education center of STEM programming like the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, which is designed to impact students throughout their academic years. Using a hands-on approach to teaching, science and math are experienced through interesting displays, features and events,” said Kim Mitchell, Education Outreach Lead with Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS). “It is a priceless asset to students of all grades, educators and the residents of communities throughout the greater Aiken-Augusta area.”

Contributions to the center’s endowment fund support excellent science-based education for all participants, Mitchell said.

“It’s an amazing facility with a small staff of dedicated and highly qualified individuals who continuously impress us,” said Mitchell. “We at SRNS truly enjoy working with them throughout the year on a number of projects and programs.”

Examples of the center’s programs include:

- DOE Savannah River Regional Science Bowl;
- Future City Regional Competition;
- Central Savannah River Area Regional Science and Engineering Fair;
- Science and Technology Enrichment Program;
- Traveling Science Demonstration Program; and
- DuPont Planetarium.

Gary Senn, the center’s director, said the partnership with the SRNS Education Outreach Program provides access to a variety of resources, including USC Aiken buildings at reduced or no cost. Senn joined the center’s staff in 1992.

In 1985, Bob Alexander, USC Aiken’s third chancellor, and Herb Eleuterio, a director at the site, developed the concept for a science center on a paper napkin, Senn said. At the time of the center’s inception, the U.S. was becoming increasingly aware of serious shortcomings in science and mathematics education following the U.S. Department of



Gary Senn, Director of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center, and Kim Mitchell, Education Outreach Lead with Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, assist second graders from Chukker Creek Elementary School in Aiken with a project.

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Education's 1983 publication, "A Nation at Risk." Alexander and Eleuterio committed to use their combined resources to improve the area's science and mathematics education.

"Since that meeting, the number of students who have visited our facility and participated in the programs and projects we share with SRNS would have to be incredibly high," said Senn. "For 40 years, we've partnered closely with SRNS, the U.S. Forestry Service at the Savannah River Site and other generous companies throughout the area surrounding our campus. I have no doubt that the total impact we've had on these students has been immeasurable, related to inspiring them to consider careers in STEM-related occupations."

The center is a cooperative effort between USC Aiken, industry representatives, the South Carolina Department of Education and schools in the Central Savannah River Area of South Carolina and Georgia.

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, located near Aiken, South Carolina.