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For Immediate Release

Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day

Middle-School students learn that engineering can be exciting

AIKEN, S.C., (Feb. 26) – On Saturday, March 1, Savannah River Site (SRS) engineers will continue to take small steps toward easing the current shortage of workers skilled in the engineering disciplines at the eighth annual Introduce a Girl To Engineering Day.

During this day-long event, to be held at USC-Aiken’s Ruth Patrick Science Center, approximately 37 girls from 18 CSRA middle schools will interact with SRS professionals, who will teach them more about careers in engineering.

“Girl Day,” as it’s known among engineers, is believed to be the only outreach of its kind aimed at and organized by a single profession. Women engineers and their male counterparts will reach nation-wide to as many as one million girls with workshops, tours, on-line discussions, and a host of activities that showcase engineering as an important career option for everyone.

According to Barbara Smoak, Manager, WSRC Education Outreach Program, the focus on female middle-school students is by design. “Unfortunately, due to a variety of myths and misconceptions, it’s not unusual for girls to lose interest in a career involving engineering. We want to reverse that trend, and we believe the Introduce a Girl to Engineering Program is a powerful tool that will help us reach this goal.”

Currently only 20 percent of engineering undergraduates are women. Only ten percent of the engineering workforce are women. For years, false notions of girls’ innate inability in math, lack of science preparation in high school, and assumptions about the effects of historical and institutional discrimination, have been offered as causes for the startling disproportion.

(more)

The WSRC Team:

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Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day – Page 2

In short, girls have to perceive they can be engineers before they will pursue a career in engineering. According to the National Engineers Week Foundation, nothing conveys that message as effectively as mentors and role models, and no program more effectively brings girls and role models together than Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day.

A 2005 study found that exposure to role models is essential to drawing young women into the profession. Girls react positively to first-person stories about how engineering “makes a difference” and offers a monetarily and personally rewarding career.

In addition, Introduce a Girl To Engineering Day will include games to help the students discover where their interests lie, as well as interactive, hands-on activities to show them how their natural problem-solving abilities form the basis for many engineering skills.

Last year about 40 girls from CSRA middle schools participated in the Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day.

The CSRA Society of Women Engineers is helping to sponsor the local event, with support from Washington Savannah River Company and its partners; USC Aiken - Ruth Patrick Science Education Center; Washington Safety Management Solutions and CSRA – American Society for Engineering Management.

More information about Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day can be found at:

<http://www.eweek.org/site/News/Eweek/girlsday.shtml>

SRS is owned by the U.S. Department of Energy and operated by a team of companies led by the Washington Savannah River Company.

Note to Editors: See attached map for directions. Reporters are welcome to attend the event.