Meet our new President and CEO
Stuart MacVean

This month
Farewell to Carol Johnson • SRS Environmental Report • National Lab Day • Virtual Reality Training
Yogi Berra once said: “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

And so it’s time for me to take another path, to get back on the retirement road I left in order to serve as the President and CEO of Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.

And what a ride it’s been!

I’ve seen H Canyon come back to life, running operational units that have long been still. And I’ve seen the pride in the faces of the people who work there.

I’ve seen L Area receive shipments of spent nuclear fuel from this country and across the world, holding them safely and securely against proliferation threats. And I’ve seen the dedication in the faces of the people who work there.

I’ve seen K Area vaults expand, the D Ash Basin closed and the Savannah River National Laboratory reach out across the globe to share innovations. And I’ve seen the satisfaction of a job well done on the faces of the people who work there.

From administrative employees to workers in risky cleanup projects, I’ve watched their faces. Their patriotism, commitment and dedication—all reflected in faces that mirror pride. Concern. Determination. And love for their communities and coworkers.

Stuart MacVeans is now the new SRNS President and CEO. He and I, along with the SRNS Executive Team, have discussed the shape of the next chapter of this company, and I’m excited to see that future of success and challenge unfold.

And now, I bid you farewell. The goal of SRNS is: “We make the world safer.” As my husband Mike and I head out across this great nation, I can look out across the towns and fields, and know that, along with the thousands of SRNS employees, we have truly made the world safer.

I hope you enjoy this edition of “SRNS Today.” As always, thank you for your interest in Savannah River Nuclear Solutions.
What do you count as your greatest achievement while in leadership at SRNS?

Q: I think probably one of the greatest achievements has been the Focused Improvement Transformation initiative, which really took Continuous Improvement here to a new level. It was particularly important for me because of the workforce engagement that’s necessary for the process to work when people who are directly involved in business practices come together to solve problems within their respective areas. The innovation, creativity and solutions that come from that really drive positive change. For me, just bringing that in and seeing it flourish and continue to grow across the Site is one of the things that fit together.

What will you miss the most about SRNS and the Site?

Q: Well, that’s an easy one. It’s the people. It’s all of the people. Those who I worked with on a daily basis, but also people out in the facilities and across the Site who have very demanding and challenging work. And I value what every person brings to the Site’s mission. I’ll miss the many long-term friendships and relationships with people who were here when I was here before and the people who I’ve met over the past two and a half years.

What advice would you give to anyone considering a career here at SRNS?

Q: Well, I think first of all there’s so much diversity to the Site. You can be in a support function, directly supporting the work, or you can do something completely different. You can learn tons here or you can come and work day in, day out from that perspective, there are opportunities for every type of person who might want to come to work here. We work in some of the most complicated engineering facilities in the country. You can learn tons here or you can come and work day in, day out at a good job. We have everything from really challenging job opportunities to just good, steady employment. It’s important for people to recognize that we need everything from educators to accountants and everything in between. We need every discipline. We’re not just an engineering and operations company.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with Stuart as he assumes this role?

Q: Good luck. Farewell. Have fun. Seriously, I think the most important thing is to respect the people you work with. Engaging people, respecting their capabilities and understanding that bringing different people together will definitely get you a better answer than just coming up with the answer yourself.
SRNL employees take home six awards at IdeasAmerica

SRNS employees won six awards at the 74th annual IdeasAmerica Training Summit in Atlanta, Ga. The awards, presented by IdeasAmerica IAI, recognized different facets of the SRNS incentive-based employee suggestion program, Individuals Developing Effective Alternative Solutions (IDEAS).

“The SRNS IDEAS program is about people working together to remove non-value added work while keeping safety considerations at the forefront,” said Norm Powell, Senior Vice President, SRNS Business Services. “Our award winners are truly ambassadors of Continuous Improvement, and I want to extend my thanks to them for successfully applying their knowledge and experience to make their work safer and more efficient.”

SRNS Site Services (SS) employees David Dixon and Tommy D. Gleaton received the Silver Award in the “Green Idea of the Year” category for their suggestion, “Cleaning Diesel Engine Exhaust Particulate Filters.” Dixon and Gleaton developed an innovative solution for cleaning filters for diesel trucks known as “Tier 4” filters, which are required by the Environmental Protection Agency’s emissions standards. The process can effectively and safely clean the Tier 4 filters in-house rather than sending the filters to the manufacturer for cleaning, which will save the company over $90,000 a year.

The SRNS IDEAS program received two Savings Per Eligible Employee Ratio Awards, including two Silver Awards in the “Total Dollars Saved” and “Savings Per Implemented Suggestion” categories, and an honorable mention for “Savings Per Eligible Employee.” Two “KUDO” awards were presented to SRNS IDEAS leads Joe Legge and Paula Croom.

In 2015, SRNS implemented a Lean business methodology called the Focused Improvement Transformation (FIT). “The IDEAS program is the starting point for many of our employees,” said Brenda Kelly, IDEAS Program Administrator. “The impact of their ideas is sometimes larger than they expect and move on to become very successful FIT initiatives. Every employee has the opportunity to make suggestions to improve our business processes and make work safer through the IDEAS program.”

SRNL at National Lab Day

Savannah River National Laboratory was the lead lab at the DOE National Laboratory Day on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 13. The event was themed “Advancing U.S. Environmental Stewardship through Innovation” and a number of SRNL technologies were featured, including 3-D virtual reality, robotics, and innovative chemical treatment and separations technologies used in the tank farm and the environment. SRNL organized the event, which supports the Secretary’s goal of engaging members of Congress on national lab innovations.

“NASA has been using this technology for many years to train astronauts for space, and they’re helping us to develop the models for our use,” said Eric Richardson, SRNS Tritium Deputy Training Manager. “It’s a great way to bridge the gap from education to experience. It can get people prepared for the task much more quickly.”

Virtual/augmented reality allows employees to see a 3-D image of a piece of equipment, either on a computer screen or tablet, or through goggles. They can then manipulate that image as they would in real life: taking it apart, putting it back together. Because they would be working in virtual space, employees can learn a task and repeat it as many times as necessary to become proficient, without danger of injury, damage or loss.

SRTE Training and SRNL held a couple of demonstration days, allowing SRTE employees to try their hands at sample tasks and provide feedback on the experience. The next step is to determine what tasks to turn into pilot projects.

SRNS Training Manager. “It’s a great way to bridge the gap from education to experience. It can get people prepared for the task much more quickly.”

Virtual reality opens up a whole new world for Tritium training

It may look like a video game. It may even feel like a video game. But in reality, it’s a way to build skills for performing complex tasks on sophisticated equipment.

The Savannah River Tritium Enterprise (SRTE) is working with Savannah River National Laboratory to adapt virtual and augmented reality capabilities for training Tritium personnel. “NASA has been using this technology for many years to train astronauts for space, and they’re helping us to develop the models for our use,” said Eric Richardson, SRNS Tritium Deputy Training Manager. “It’s a great way to bridge the gap from education to experience. It can get people prepared for the task much more quickly.”

Virtual/augmented reality allows employees to see a 3-D image of a piece of equipment, either on a computer screen or tablet, or through goggles. They can then manipulate that image as they would in real life: taking it apart, putting it back together. Because they would be working in virtual space, employees can learn a task and repeat it as many times as necessary to become proficient, without danger of injury, damage or loss.

SRTE Training and SRNL held a couple of demonstration days, allowing SRTE employees to try their hands at sample tasks and provide feedback on the experience. The next step is to determine what tasks to turn into pilot projects.

Although one of the key drivers is the influx of new employees SRNS has hired to work in Tritium, use of virtual/augmented reality offers benefits for experienced employees as well. For example, it allows them to stay proficient at tasks that are only performed occasionally. It can also reduce the amount of time spent in radiological areas, by providing a way to practice tasks in a clean environment.

“We learned the value of 3-D models when we were planning the grouting of R Reactor,” said John Bobbitt of SRNL. “It’s easy to misinterpret a flat drawing. By having 3-D models, you can avoid a lot of that misinterpretation. Here, we’re taking it a step further by putting the model into virtual reality, which we can do a lot faster and cheaper than building a physical model.”

Bobbitt said that computer gaming is driving down the cost of virtual/augmented reality systems by creating huge markets for simulators and other devices, making it a more affordable approach than ever before.
7,500 participants turn out for annual event

More than 7,500 high school students, parents and educators from the greater Aiken-Augusta area met with recruiters from over 130 colleges and universities during this year’s CSRA College Night. Scholarships, each worth $1,000, were awarded to 16 students during drawings held throughout the evening at Augusta’s James Brown Arena.

“We’re excited about the amazing turnout from throughout the entire region,” said Gladys Moore, SRNS Program Coordinator. “We use virtually every square inch of the arena to help college recruiters provide much needed information to the students. One recruiter described it as the ‘Super Bowl of all college recruiting events.’”

Valued as a “one-stop shopping” opportunity, College Night can help reduce the number of planned college visits for students, potentially saving them thousands in travel costs.

The event is now entering its third decade of service to area high school students. Well over $250,000 in scholarship funding has been offered to the tens of thousands of students who have attended College Night in the past. The generosity of our scholarship sponsors and much appreciated help from more than 100 volunteers are major reasons why this effort is consistently so successful each year,” said Moore.

Annual SRS environmental report provides details and data about conditions, compliance, monitoring

Last year, SRS continued to safely complete its missions while maintaining a record of environmental excellence. The site’s radioactive and chemical discharges during 2015 were well below federal and state standards, designed to protect the public, environment and site workers.

The maximum radioactive dose from SRS operations to a representative member of the public in 2015 was less than one percent (0.18%) of the federal exposure limit.

SRS prepares an Annual Site Environmental Report (ASER) in accordance with DOE requirements. This report provides detailed information regarding environmental conditions at SRS for the calendar year and is available for use by the public and SRS regulators.

The report also summarizes SRS environmental data; environmental sustainability performance; compliance with applicable DOE, federal and state regulations; and remediation and surveillance monitoring programs.

SRS has monitored environmental conditions since the site was built in the early 1950s and has prepared an ASER for more than five decades.

“SRS has a longstanding commitment to environmental quality, safety, and health for our community,” said Teresa Eddy, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions manager, Sample Data Management. “Our comprehensive environmental monitoring program demonstrates our operations have minimal impacts to the environment and public.”

Each year, management and operations contractor SRNS collects more than 5,000 samples found both on and off site to include air, water, soil, sediment, food products, freshwater fish, seafood, wildlife, plants and trees. Samples are collected from neighboring cities, towns and counties located in Georgia and South Carolina.

A condensed version of the ASER, referred to as the Summary Report, is also available. The Summary Report, written in plain terminology, is used to provide information to the public in support of SRS’s educational and community outreach programs.

Environmentally safe

Get it online!

Both the 2015 SRS Annual Site Environmental Report and the summary are available online at http://www.srs.gov/general/pubs/ERsum/index.html
Use of cell phones improves efficiency for SRNS fire system testing, maintenance and operations

The SRNS Site Services’ (SS) Fire System Testing & Maintenance (FST&M) and Fire Water Operations (FWO) departments are focused on professional and Aspiring Mid-Career community outreach. SRNS President and CEO Carol Johnson and Mike Johnson, Executive Director, Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness (CNTA), hosted a mentoring session on careers for members in Aiken, S.C. LEAP and AMP are Professionals (AMP) on Sept. 16.

More than 600 systems are monitored in nuclear and non-nuclear facilities across SRS. All systems are monitored at the SRS Operations Center (SRSOC) using an application called BoldNet. If an abnormal condition such as a fire alarm or trouble signal occurs, SRSOC receives a signal, prompting the appropriate action to be taken. Each fire system has its own account on BoldNet, providing a user with an activity log that details all events on that system. When a technician is performing testing or maintenance on the fire system or pump, typically they would contact SRSOC to place the system in test mode, wait for the system to be placed in this mode, and then contact the SRSOC to place it back in operating mode. FWO is able to monitor and maintain their systems via the same program. A recent upgrade in software—BoldNet Mobile—now gives a technician access to the activity log and allows the user to place systems in and out of test mode by using their Android or iPhone. Prior to BoldNet Mobile, technicians and operators would have to stage one person at an available computer in the facility to monitor the activity log, while another technician or operator would perform maintenance/testing. The update allows an employee (whether on- or off-site) to monitor the activity log on their government iPhone or Android, eliminating the need for a computer.

Legislative Delegation tours SRS

The Aiken County Legislative Delegation visited SRS on Sept. 12, and received briefings on SRNS, SRNL and MOX. Members of the delegation also toured the Plutonium Blend Down Mockup in K Area and the Defense Waste Processing Facility. Participants included (front row, from left) Senator Nikki Setzler, Senator Tom Young, Representative Bill Hixon, Representative Bill O’dyburn, (back row, from left) Senator Shane Massey, Representative Bill Taylor and Representative-elect Burt Blackwell.

Marra named ACerS Fellow

SRNL Deputy Director Sharon Marra has been named a Fellow with the American Ceramic Society (ACerS). Marra received the distinction because of her accomplishments and long-standing service to the society as an officer and member.

As Deputy Director, Marra helps as the lab moves forward in creating innovative solutions for nuclear chemical manufacturing. "With new technologies, SRNL will be able to reduce risk in meeting our mission and moral obligation in providing new options in environmental stewardship. Partnerships through organizations such as the American Ceramics Society are vital in sharing knowledge and challenging researchers to work together for viable solutions. I am honored to be named a Fellow in such a highly respected organization," Marra said.

Marra has almost 30 years experience in the engineering and research field with 25 of those years in the DOE complex primarily in the high-level waste environmental management area. She has been a member of ACerS for over 30 years and has served in all officer positions of the organization’s Nuclear and Environmental Technology Division. She has also chaired or served on several Society committees.

Marra will be recognized at the ACerS Annual Honors and Awards Banquet on Oct. 24 in Salt Lake City, Utah. The event is part of the Society’s Annual Meeting, which will be held in conjunction with the Materials Science and Technology 2016 Technical Meeting and Exhibition.

ACerS is the leading professional membership organization for ceramic and materials scientists, engineers, researchers, manufacturers, plant personnel, educators and students.
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions
We make the world safer.

savannahrivernuclearsolutions.com