

# News from the Savannah River Site

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## From Tragedy to Triumph: An Inspiring Story of an SRNS Intern's Quest to Become an Engineer

AIKEN, S.C (July 17, 2014) If there ever was a success story about beating the odds, it would be the story of James Holiday, a summer intern for the Department of Energy's primary contractor, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS). Where most people in his situation would have given up, Holiday found a way to turn his tragedy into triumph.

While most college students are at home recuperating from the arduous tasks of reading complex literature, completing final exams and writing essays, Holiday is spending his eight-week internship in the Process Control and Automation Engineering department at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

Holiday's time at SRS is part of a SRNS education outreach program for students interested in learning more about a multitude of professions. One of the objectives of the SRNS program is to provide college students like Holiday the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and level of experience in the science and engineering fields.

Internships for college students are common at many U.S. companies; however, because of a high level of competition, obtaining an internship can be difficult.

A senior at the University of South Carolina, Holiday is pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a mechanical engineer. "To change a person's life is what I want to do," said Holiday. He was inspired by a



*SRNS engineering interns Joel Pabon (left) and James Holiday work collaboratively to design and test a hands-on demonstration project for middle school students.*

commercial that showed the benefits of an MRI and the gratitude expressed by the patients for whom it has helped. Who knew that this same imaging technology would one day help save his life?

Holiday's journey to become an engineer hasn't been an easy one. In March 2010, Holiday, then age 19 and a student at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USCA), was involved in a car accident while driving his family to work and school in Barnwell County, S.C. Another motorist ran a stop sign and hit Holiday's car causing it to spin until it struck a tree. Holiday was rendered unconscious and later became comatose, while the rest of the family suffered non-life-threatening injuries. As a result of the collision, Holiday sustained massive head trauma and was airlifted to the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) Shock Trauma Unit where he remained under medical care, to include rehabilitation at Walton Rehabilitation Hospital, for 103 days.

Today, Holiday is a happy, healthy young man who looks ahead to the future as an engineer with much anticipation as he enjoys his internship at SRS. "I like the people I work with. They are easy to talk with, very knowledgeable of their jobs, and funny," said Holiday. He is excited about his recent and current projects. One project was to design and help build a metal rack used as a support stand for specialized equipment.

Holiday and another engineering intern have also been asked to design and test a hands-on demonstration to be used by middle school students during "career days" and other, similar events. Their goal is to create an intriguing demonstration that will generate interest in the field of engineering.

Alex Henderson, SRNS Senior Technical Advisor, spoke highly of Holiday's character and work ethic and applauds him for his drive and determination to complete what he started prior to the accident. "He is a very flexible person, agreeable, and easy to get along with. His interest is mechanical engineering, but he has had to do more computer work than expected and is doing a great job with it. Holiday is truly an inspiration, and we are elated to have him interning with us this summer," said Henderson.

*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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