



News from the Savannah River National Laboratory

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SRNS Program Provides Model for Assisting Wounded Warriors Re-enter Workforce

AIKEN, S.C. (February 8, 2011) – For many wounded veterans, getting back into the job market is one of the most important – and potentially most daunting – steps in returning to civilian life. The U.S. Department of Energy’s Savannah River National Laboratory and its management and operating contractor Savannah River Nuclear Solutions have joined forces with the CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project to help assist wounded warriors re-enter the workforce.

Jason Rainey, the first veteran recruited and hired under the SRNS Wounded Warrior Support Initiative, recently reported to SRNL to begin a three- to four-month assignment designed to expand his skill base and prepare him for rejoining the workforce.

“We have donated money to the CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project to help with a number of their initiatives, but we wanted to do something more,” said SRNS President Garry Flowers. “This is something real and specific we can do to support an individual who has made a great sacrifice in his service of our country.” Flowers hopes that the SRNS program can serve as a model for other national laboratories and other companies across the country.

Rainey, who was wounded in Iraq, will spend the next few months working with personnel in SRNL’s Materials Science & Technology directorate, exploring the fields of nondestructive evaluation and materials analysis. “This program is definitely a great opportunity, not only for me but also for future veterans who participate, to acquire or expand critical job skills and possibly gain interest in different careers,” Rainey said. “I cannot express how fortunate I am to be involved in this program and to work with the people in this group. It always feels good to know that our sacrifices are appreciated, and I would like to thank everyone involved in this program for reminding us of that.”

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SRNS Wounded Warrior Support Initiative

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The mission of the SRNS initiative, according to SRNL's Dr. George Wicks, who conceived it, is to "establish a process that allows Wounded Warriors to work at the Savannah River National Laboratory or SRNS operations for a short period of time under some of our best scientists, engineers and staff professionals, to help expand their skill base and assist them in furthering their education for re-entering into the workforce." The idea, Dr. Wicks said, is for SRNL personnel to serve as on-the-job mentors and provide resources, training, and oversight of the wounded warriors, while creating a supportive environment and building personal relationships that will improve confidence and abilities of the veterans, and the opportunity to ultimately reintegrate into the workforce.

Since no precedent for this type of program existed, SRNS called on the expertise of the CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project, the Veterans Administration and the military, along with their own human resources and education outreach personnel with experience in student work programs, and SRNL researchers with experience in mentoring, to develop a structure for the program.

Laurie Ott of the CSRA Wounded Warrior Care Project, said, "SRNS' commitment to our service members and veterans is a real beacon to other employers and serves as a model for other national laboratories to follow. What we are seeing is just one of the benefits of public private partnerships and why they are the foundation of great communities. We are grateful for the relationship with SRNS and SRNL and hope to continue to leverage these resources for the benefit of those we all aim to serve."

One of the mentors working with Rainey, Paul Smock of SRNL, finds his role with the initiative a rewarding intersection of his work life and personal interests. Smock has worked for three years with Team River Runners, which is a national organization that teaches kayaking skills to veterans. "We've trained visually impaired and amputee vets to kayak, and we take them on a whitewater kayaking trip for their 'graduation,'" he said. "These folks are amazing!"

SRNL is DOE's applied research and development national laboratory located at the Savannah River Site. SRNL puts science to work to support DOE and the nation in the areas of environmental management, national and homeland security, and energy security. The management and operating contractor for SRS and SRNL is Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC.