Miss America Brings Nuclear Energy Message to Women Engineers at Hanford

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B Reactor National Historic Landmark Operations Manager Patrick Jaynes with contractor Central Plateau Cleanup Company briefs nuclear engineering student and Miss America 2023 Grace Stanke in the B Reactor control room.

RICHLAND, Wash. — The **Office of River Protection** and contractor Washington River Protection Solutions recently hosted a high-profile advocate for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

Miss America 2023, Grace Stanke, is a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she has nearly completed her degree in nuclear engineering. Stanke took part in May's Hanford **Women in Engineering** speaker series, a monthly program led by women engineers at Washington River Protection Solutions.

“Miss Stanke is an accomplished young woman and a great role model for her generation and the next,” said Elaine Porcaro, chief engineer for the **Office of River Protection**’s **Tank Farms Project**. “I admire her campaign for awareness about nuclear power and zero-carbon energy sources, which is well aligned with many elements of our DOE mission and will help us build energy independence and reduce carbon emissions as a nation. When we think about reaching out to the next generation of Hanford workers, Miss Stanke is an example of who we want to reach.”

Miss America 2023 Grace Stanke, at right-front, learned about the Hanford Site’s Tank-Side Cesium Removal System during a briefing from Washington River Protection Solutions Production Operations Deputy Manager Ted Jarecki, at left. Stanke, a nuclear engineering student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was at the site to participate in the Hanford Women in Engineering speaker series.

Stanke first toured the **B Reactor National Historic Landmark**, part of the **Manhattan Project National Historical Park** and the world’s first full-scale plutonium production reactor. She also toured the **Tank-Side Cesium Removal System** at the AP Tank Farm.

“Being here and seeing the history of the Hanford Site as well as the work being done to clean up the legacy waste will allow me to speak about the significant difference between waste generated by plutonium production and the waste from energy production,” said Stanke. “There is really no comparison.”

As she travels the U.S. talking about her community service initiative — Clean Energy, Cleaner Future —through the Miss America organization, her goal is to dispel myths

about nuclear energy and inspire the next generation of female scientists, engineers and mathematicians.

From left, Washington River Protection Solutions engineers Jennifer Kadinger and Brittney Atterbury speak with nuclear engineering student and Miss America 2023 Grace Stanke during a Women in Engineering virtual meeting for Hanford Site employees.

“It was an honor to meet with Grace to discuss our shared vision for a future in which there is gender parity in the field of STEM,” said Brittney Atterbury, coordinator for Hanford’s Women in Engineering speaking programs. “Her perspective on how best to foster a sense of curiosity and passion for STEM in the next generation was truly eye-opening.”

The Women in Engineering speaker series highlights the accomplishments of Hanford’s women in engineering and STEM fields and provides a forum for networking, mentorship and volunteering among women engineers throughout the Hanford Site. The series is open to all Hanford Site employees, including men and women in all career fields.