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With help from Hanford contractor, more students may see a future as engineers and scientists

BY ANNETTE CARY

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Mark Haag of Hanford contractor Washington River Protection Solutions visits students at Stevens Middle School in Pasco as part of a program that brings scientists, engineers and other professionals into middle schools to inspire students to pursue STEM careers. Courtesy Pasco School District

Hanford contractor Washington River Protection Solutions has donated \$40,000 to inspire Mid-Columbia students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The money will be used to expand the “STEM Like Me!” program of the Washington State STEM Education Foundation.

The program brings STEM professionals from Mid-Columbia companies and organizations into middle schools’ classrooms to help students envision a future working in a STEM field.

Washington state has the largest concentration of STEM-related jobs in the nation, but ranks low in the award of computer science, engineering and health degrees compared to job openings in those fields, said Matt Hammer, president of the foundation's board.

Positioning the Mid-Columbia as a national leader in STEM literacy would give it a competitive advantage, he said.

Washington River Protection Solutions, owned by AECOM and Atkins, has contributed \$105,000 to the foundation over the last three years. It holds the contract to manage the Hanford tank farms for the Department of Energy.