

Effective Citizen Advocacy of Beneficial Nuclear Technologies

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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a small group of citizens from communities near the Savannah River Site (SRS) formed a pro-nuclear education and advocacy group, Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness (CNTA). Their purpose was to: (1) counter nuclear misinformation that dominated the nation's news outlets, (2) provide education on nuclear subjects to area citizens, students, elected officials, and (3) provide informed citizen support for potential new missions for SRS when needed. To effectively accomplish these objectives it is also essential to establish and maintain good relations with community leaders and reporters that cover energy and nuclear subjects. The organization has grown considerably since its inception and has expanded its sphere of influence. We believe that our experiences over these fifteen years are a good model for effectively communicating nuclear subjects with the public. This paper describes the structure, operation and some of the results of CNTA.

INTRODUCTION

The need for a pro-nuclear voice provided by experts with factual information is a key element for the United States to be successful in many business areas. As we rapidly approach the beginning of an era of growth in nuclear energy, advocacy and communication of the benefits of this energy source are essential. Similarly, the growth of nuclear medicine will continue require educating the general public on the low risk of these technologies. The legacy of waste management from the cold war era and the need to open Yucca Mountain for spent fuel storage (and other waste forms) also require constant communication with the public and elected officials. These are all needs and opportunities where a grassroots organization like CNTA can make a major contribution to ensure a positive outcome for the individual and the nation. The following sections describe the approaches and activities used to educate and advise thus providing value to our sponsors.

MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

From the beginning, it was expected that CNTA would be local in membership, but national in influence. At present, CNTA has about 2,000 individual members, most of who live in South Carolina or Georgia, and 32 corporate and business sponsors. We are by far the largest such group in the U.S.

To be effective, such an organization must have broad community support. Our membership and Board of Directors include educators, students, homemakers, lawyers, physicians, merchants, congressmen, and local elected officials. We also have many active and retired nuclear professionals among our members. Having this broad community support gives us credibility with the citizenry and the media, founded upon the nuclear expertise available to address technical issues. We have designed our activities to fulfill our missions.

Table I Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness and Committee Structure

Executive Committee	Board of Directors
Fred C. Davison Distinguished Scientist Award	Robert Maher Memorial Scholarship
Finance	Membership: Corporate and Individual
Golf Tournament	Up & Atom Breakfasts
Edward Teller Lecture/Banquet	Board Nominations
Outreach (letters, op-eds, press releases, newsletters)	Speaker's Bureau
CNTA website	Essay Scholarship

The organization has only two salaried staff, namely a Director and Office Manager. It is governed by the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee is comprised of a subset of the Board members and guides the direction of the organization in addition to providing oversight of the budget and policy issues. All Board members are actively involved in gaining sponsorship and visibility for CNTA. Specific activities are developed and executed by committees that are delineated in Table I. Much of what we do is done by members volunteering their time, influence and expertise.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Speaker's Bureau

Central to CNTA's mission is the improvement of the public's knowledge of the real benefits and comparative risks of nuclear technologies including nuclear production of electricity, nuclear medicine, food irradiation, nuclear waste management, and the health effects of low levels of radiation. Thus, one of our most important activities is a comprehensive speaker's bureau with prepared talks on nearly thirty subjects. These talks are delivered free of charge to schools groups ranging from middle to graduate schools, to civic clubs, garden clubs, and church groups. CNTA speakers are experts on all aspects of nuclear energy, the role of nuclear technology in the nation's defense mission, and the missions of the U. S. Department of Energy Savannah River Site. They discuss the benefits of various applications of nuclear technology and the myths related to them, including nuclear medicine. A list of our more popular talks is given in Table II and the cover of our Speaker's Brochure is shown in Figure 1.

Table II. CNTA Popular Talks

ABC's of Radiation	NP 2010
Basics of Radiation	The Need for Nuclear Energy
Career Opportunities in Nuclear	Nuclear Medicine
CNTA Overview	Nuclear Waste Management
Economic Impact	Pu Disposition

Environmental Impact	MOX Fuel
Food Irradiation	Radiation & Modern Society
Fusion Global	Reprocessing of Spent Fuel
Nuclear Energy Program Health	Nuclear Fuel
Global Warming	Savannah River Site-Past, Present & Future
Health Effects of Low Levels of Radiation	SRS Contributions to the Space Mission
Nuclear Technology in Medicine	Transportation of Nuclear Materials
Savannah River National Lab – Efforts in Homeland Security	

In 2005, we reached approximately 674 individuals within South Carolina (SC) and Georgia. In 2006, this audience was expanded significantly, with 20 talks reaching 1037 people, 430 who were students from grade school thru college. In a cooperative educational effort with the Medical University of SC CNTA presented a seminar to the members of the SC legislature on radiation and its health effects.

Plain Talk on Nuclear Technology **To Request a Speaker...**
Tel: 803-649-3456 or 800-299-2682
Website: www.c-n-t-a.com



Citizens for Nuclear Technology Awareness

Figure 1. Speaker's Bureau Brochure Front Cover

News Media

In addition to the focused education activities described previously, it is also important to obtain regular pro-nuclear news media coverage. To that end, we meet with newspaper editorial boards and reporters that cover energy, and environment. For CNTA to be an effective voice we must be known and our input trusted. We have become well enough respected by local (and some national) news outlets that we receive phone requests for interviews on current issues. We are also called upon to be a resource, telling reporters where, or from whom, they can get information they are looking for.

In addition to frequent news interviews, we have averaged sending one letter-to-the-editor or guest editorial per week to newspapers and magazines throughout the nation. We respond quickly to inaccurate anti-nuclear articles in magazines and newspapers with factual and objective rebuttals. We take full advantage of the American Nuclear Society (ANS) news headlines service.

Up & Atom Breakfast Meetings

To inform and educate our members and their guests we have eight or nine “Up and Atom” breakfasts each year with nationally known speakers. Attendance ranges from 80 to 140, including many community leaders. In July 2006, Ambassador Linton Brooks spoke on the activities of his organization, the National Nuclear Security Administration, and in August Bernie Beasley, President, CEO, and Chairman of Southern Nuclear Operating Company spoke of their plans for nuclear expansion and he announced the filing of an Early Site Permit with Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

Table III. List of 2006 Up & Atom Breakfast Speakers

Guest Speaker	Title	Presentation Title
Dr. Harold McFarlane	President Elect, American Nuclear Society & Deputy Associate Director Idaho National Laboratory	“America’s Energy Security in a Global Context”
Dr. Alan Waltar	Sr. Advisor, Pacific Northwest National Lab, Past President American Nuclear Society	“Radiation and Modern Life: Fulfilling Marie Curie’s Dream”
Dr. Ramon Figuero	Professor of Radiology & Chief of Neuroradiology at Medical College of GA	“3 Tesla MRI: Concepts and Applications”
Ambassador Linton Brooks	Administrator of NNSA	“Status of DOE’s Nuclear Weapons and Proliferation Efforts”
Mr. Bernie Beasley	President, CEO & Chairman of Southern Company	“Southern Company’s Nuclear Plans”
Dr. Tom Hinton	Sr. Research Scientist-University of Georgia’s Savannah River Ecology Lab	“Radiation Effects on Plants & Animals at Chernobyl”

A complete listing of 2006 speakers and topics are in Table III. These are selected to ensure coverage of the full range of nuclear activities within CNTA mission. Our speakers are rewarded with a participative audience and a CNTA coffee mug.

ADVOCACY

Elected Officials

As advocates for nuclear science and technology it is important for the organization to serve as an educational resource and to maintain good relations with all elected officials. We meet regularly with some, and keep them on our mailing list. Some are members of CNTA. We correspond frequently with congressional representatives. In fact, congressional staff members often contact us for information on current issues. The fact that we have about 2,000 members, including many community leaders, ensures a voice.

In recent years, we have worked with both the South Carolina congressmen and senators with respect to new mission activities at SRS and commercial nuclear power. We maintain close contact with the local Economic Development Partnership activities and with the SC Governor's Nuclear Technology Advisory Council.

Testimony at Public Hearings

CNTA members provide testimony at public hearings held by regulating agencies such as the Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board. Three recent examples are: a Nuclear Regulatory Commission "scoping" hearing on Southern Nuclear Company's plans to build two more reactors at Plant Vogtle near Waynesboro, Georgia; a DOE hearing in North Augusta, South Carolina on the possibility of making Savannah River Site the plutonium consolidation site for Complex 2030; a public hearing by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control on Savannah River Site's high-level waste disposition and tank closures.

These testimonies have been effective and greatly appreciated by our sponsors. Historically public comment at these hearings has been dominated by anti-nuclear organizations. Our objective is to provide factual and civic supported advocacy.

Edward Teller Lecture/Banquet

Our largest community event each year is the Edward Teller Lecture/Banquet. Dr. Teller was the inaugural speaker in 1992, and gave permission for us to name the lecture series for him. He is shown in Figure 2 signing autographs after a stimulating talk. He spoke on the need for children to be educated in math and science to ensure the continuation of the U.S. lead role in technology. Table IV documents the impressive list of speakers hosted in successive years. This event draws 400 to 850 attendees including members of regional and local media and elected officials and/or their representatives. In addition to the opportunity to learn from a speaker who is a leader in his/her field, the event provides a forum for interactive discussion amongst community and business leaders.

In recent years at these events, we have awarded a \$5,000 scholarship for a nuclear student, sponsored by Washington Savannah River Company, and a Distinguished Scientist Award chosen from nominations from SRS, the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (University of Georgia) and the Medical College of Georgia.

Table IV. Teller Lecture Speakers

Dr. Edward Teller (1992)	Advisor at Lawrence Livermore National Lab
Dr. Margaret Maxey (1993)	Anthropologist
Dr. Leonard Sagan (1994)	Electric Power Research Institute
Mr. William Duke (1995)	Duke Power Company
Dr. Alvin Weinberg (1996)	National Academy of Sciences & former White House advisor
Dr. James Schlesinger (1997)	Former Secretary of Energy, Secretary of Defense and head of Central Intelligence Agenda
Mr. Richard Rhodes (1998)	Pulitzer Prize winner in History & Author

Senator Howard Baker (1999)	Senate Majority Leader & White House Chief of Staff
Dr. Harold Agnew (2000)	Director of Los Alamos National Lab
Senator Pete Domenici (2001)	Senior U.S. Senator from New Mexico
Mr. Cordin McNeill (2002)	Chairman & CEO of PECO Energy
Dr. John Foster (2003)	Director of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
Dr. Henry Wagner (2004)	Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
Mr. Frank "Skip" Bowman (2005)	President & CEO of Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI)
Dr. Nils Diaz (2006)	Chairman of U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)



Figure 2. Dr. Edward Teller signing autographs at the first lecture (1992).

CONCLUSION

CNTA has established a major role in regional nuclear education and advocacy. Given the imminent next generation of commercial nuclear power, we expect the need for such public education to grow. CNTA's sphere of influence is growing and expanding to national venues and we find that people respond favorably when presented with objective and factual information. We can and do influence nuclear technology acceptance.