



U.S. Department of Energy Nevada Site Office

EM NEWS FLASH



High School Students Engage EM Program, Teach Classmates about Nuclear Cleanup

Two high school students are aspiring to educate classmates on the [Nevada National Security Site's \(NNSS\)](#) environmental cleanup program following a survey to gauge their knowledge.

After West Career and Technical Academy (WCTA) juniors Justine Leavitt and Cielo Gumabon analyze the survey results, they will develop an educational tool to boost students' familiarity with NNSS's work to clean up the environmental legacy of historic nuclear weapons related activities. Leavitt and Gumabon are considering several ideas for the tool, from a short documentary and audience-interactive school assembly to a rap song or comic book.

Leavitt and Gumabon are undertaking the project as part of their roles as the first-ever student liaisons to the [Nevada Site-Specific Advisory Board \(NSSAB\)](#). Representing Nevada stakeholders, members of the board review and comment on environmental restoration and waste management activities at NNSS and provide recommendations to the EM program on issues of concern to the region surrounding NNSS.

The board hopes to obtain a fresh perspective on environmental issues from the pioneering student liaisons, who are encouraged to raise environmental concerns on behalf of their classmates and the greater community. In turn, the students learn about environmental and technical issues impacting the region, build their portfolios and gain insight into potential college studies and career tracks.

The liaisons' year-long project is a first of a kind for WCTA, NNSS and NSSAB as they come together for WCTA's inaugural Student Liaison Project. Similar partnerships exist at other DOE EM sites as well, including Oak Ridge in Tennessee.

"Cielo and Justine have put a tremendous amount of work into this project, and all the while they are juggling coursework and other activities," said NSSAB member Michael Moore, a mentor to the liaisons who helped coordinate the project. "They are succeeding in creating a path for other student liaisons who want to become involved with the environmental work at NNSS and its impact on the community."



NSSAB student liaisons Gumabon, left, and Leavitt discuss their project involving a student survey and educational tool to members of the NSSAB.

Liaison Program Draws Together School, NNSS and Community

Moore said the project integrates the school with NNSS and the community, providing the students leadership and educational opportunities outside the classroom.

"The students already have had an introduction to environmental management, and this project provides them with a real-world educational opportunity. Hopefully this project will encourage and inspire the students to continue forward on this path to college and later a career in environmental management," Moore said.

He said the project's goal of increasing the surveyed students' NNSS knowledge is important since the site is an integral part of the Las Vegas community. He recalled his school days in the 1980s when he saw workers stand in line for buses to transport them to the site. Many people in the community also remember the nuclear testing viewing parties held decades ago.

"Las Vegas has always been hand in hand with the site in one way or another," Moore said.

Gumabon said that the research she and Leavitt perform to try to educate the WCTA community will be a great skill to apply in her college and post-college careers.

"I hope to become an environmental and materials engineer, and research will play an integral role," she said.

Liaison: Students Should Know about Environmental Cleanup

Leavitt believes it's important for WCTA students to have knowledge of the NNSS EM program.

"Students at WCTA are always trying to connect with their surroundings, and this is a great way to do so," she said of the liaison project. "It will help increase their knowledge and awareness by us telling them what is happening. They should be aware because they are living with the changes the site makes."

Leavitt and Gumabon worked with their high school and NNSS to craft the survey questions. The surveys are emailed to the estimated 980 WCTA students for completion during English classes. Once all surveys are received, the liaisons will analyze the results and begin work on the educational tool this fall.

This month, Leavitt and Gumabon briefed NSSAB on their progress. Board members responded positively, Moore said. The liaisons will update the board later this year with the complete survey results.

Among the survey questions:

- Do you want to learn more about the EM program at NNSS and/or its history?
- Do you think the community's concerns would be diminished by increasing their knowledge of the environmental cleanup projects being conducted at the NNSS?
- Are you interested in any environmental management issues and solving them, in regards to the site?
- Are there any issues or concerns you'd like to have your WCTA student liaison representatives bring to the Board?

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