



Many Voices Working for the Community

Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board

For Immediate Release

Contact: Pete Osborne, ORSSAB Support Office, (865) 576-1590

Clinton High School Student Recognized for Contribution to Oak Ridge Advisory Board

Who can forget those wonderful high school days: making new friends, competing in sports activities, studying waste acceptance criteria for the Department of Energy's (DOE's) Environmental Management (EM) Program?

Well, it may not be as glamorous as being on the football team, but for recent Clinton High School graduate Shane Bellis, advising DOE on its cleanup program had some very unique benefits, and from his perspective, it was time well spent.

This past school year Shane served as a student representative to the Oak Ridge Site Specific Advisory Board (ORSSAB)—an independent citizens' panel chartered in 1995 under the Federal Advisory Committee Act to advise DOE on environmental cleanup issues at its Oak Ridge Reservation.

"The knowledge I've gained this past year has far exceeded my expectations, and I've learned that volunteers do make a difference in our community," Bellis said of his experience as a board member. "I've learned that the problems this board deals with are very real and complex and require a lot of study and analysis as part of the decision-making process."

Bellis was presented with a certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the Board at a recent ORSSAB meeting. The certificate was awarded by Rod Nelson, DOE-Oak Ridge Assistant Manager for EM.

"We really appreciate Shane taking time to participate on the SSAB," Nelson said. "Oak Ridge is the only board to have student representatives, and through this program they are able to participate in board trips and other educational activities. I don't think there are many high school students that get that type of opportunity."

Although the students are non-voting members, they study and debate cleanup issues and participate in board and committee meetings and in other activities just like everyone else. In February, both Shane and fellow ORSSAB student member Avalon Mansfield of Oak Ridge High School traveled with other Board members to study waste management facilities at Envirocare of Utah, the Nevada Test Site, and the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico.

The ORSSAB program began in 1999 when Anne-Marie Wiest, a rising senior at Oak Ridge High School, became the board's first student representative. The program was then expanded so that one student would be selected each year from Oak Ridge High School, and another would be chosen on a rotating basis from one of the high schools surrounding Oak Ridge. The students are selected by their schools' administration.

Two new students—Alix King of Oak Ridge High School and Ryan Burton of Roane County High School—were appointed in May 2001 to replace Bellis and Mansfield.

Luther Gibson, ORSSAB Chair, summed up the board's thinking about the importance of including students this way. "The legacy of DOE activities on the Oak Ridge Reservation will be with us for a long, long time, so it's crucial that the next generation, as well as those that follow, be informed, active participants in remediation decision-making. As the regional economy is diversified, many will be employed in activities not related to DOE's legacy. We owe it to them to teach them, and they owe it to themselves to take responsibility for the world they are to inherit."

ORSSAB meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Garden Plaza Hotel in Oak Ridge. Meetings are open to the public, and notices are posted on the Board's Web site (www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab) and through the Board's 24-hour information line (865-576-4750).

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PHOTO CAPTION:

Rod Nelson, DOE-Oak Ridge Assistant Manager for Environmental Management, recognizes the contributions of recent Clinton High School graduate Shane Bellis.