

## **New Hope Center making history at Y-12**

Frequently I find it helpful to break away from documenting Y-12's past in these articles to remind us of something of historic significance that is happening right now. The recent visit by the alumni of the Nautilus nuclear submarine crew is an example.

Other examples are the Y-12 History Center and the Y-12 New Hope Center. The history center exhibits were placed there to highlight Y-12's history during the ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the Jack Case and New Hope centers in July, 2007. Since then the Y-12 History Center has become a mainstay of our community relations as well as an encouragement to Y-12 personnel and a point of interest for all our visitors. Our employees have contributed significantly to the quality and number of artifacts both on display and in storage for future display.

I believe it is an understatement to say that Y-12 has a renewed sense of our heritage and our history because of the Y-12 History Center and related videos, books, newspaper articles and etc. We have always known that our work is vital to the nation's security, but heretofore we have not had the venue to really show the public the details of much of that historic work over the years.

The Y-12 History Center is enabling us to do that now, for the first time. We have displays of early Manhattan Project era artifacts, equipment and stories. We have Cold War artifacts, equipment and stories. Some War on Terror details are there as well such as a display of the Highly Enriched Uranium Materials Facility, arguably THE most secure location in the world!

The New Hope Center, in a broader role, is also helping us to engage the community in new and refreshing ways. Receptions are regularly held there, conferences are held in the 420 seat auditorium, luncheon meetings are held there regularly and many people now find coming to New Hope Center as natural as visiting any other place in Oak Ridge.

But this is Y-12! Yes, that's the point. We realize that vital and secret work is being done at Y-12 and that work is still protected and done in appropriate surroundings and with intended secrecy. However, much of our history is not secret and a lot of it never was intentionally protected, it was just included with other information or materials in sometime difficult places to reach. Much of what Y-12 has done in the past and even is doing today are things that can be readily talked about, fully understood and appreciated by the general public.

Take the Lunar Sample Return Container or more commonly known as the "Moon Box," something Y-12 is proud of having done and something that has no restrictions on it. We have added to the basic display to include a lunar globe, a carrying case for lunar material from between laboratories and even a partial space suit that was an early prototype for protecting the lunar materials from humans. The Lunar Materials Analytical Laboratory used glove box technology instead, so the spacesuit was never used. It sure does catch the children's eyes!

When foreign visitors come to Y-12 for training purposes, the first impression they get of our East Tennessee culture happens when they leave the hotel for events we plan to help them quickly acclimate to their surroundings. One of the very first things they receive is a package from the Y-12 History Center containing handout materials and history videos. It is much like a "welcome package" and it sets the tone for the rest of the visitor's stay with us.

Another thing that is done which helps people visiting Y-12 as they transition from the fully public arena to Y-12's necessarily restricted access environment is the manner in which visitor badges are provided. The Y-12 Visitor Center creates a "welcome and pleased you are visiting us" atmosphere by the smiling and friendly, yet strict and thorough approach taken to help the visitors meet requirements to visit Y-12.

On a recent visit, one person had left their driver's license in their truck at the American Museum of Science and Energy parking lot. While other visitors were processed, this person was transported to AMSE and their driver's license picked up. They were then able to continue on the tour.

At the recent Secret City Festival in June, we had 1,400 people tour Y-12. Unfortunately, many of them had to wait longer than we would have liked because of our limited capacity to handle that many tours. So the New Hope Center auditorium (420 seats) was placed into service and a Y-12 History question and

answer session was created to help offset the impact of the delay forced upon our visitors. We will do better with tour scheduling next year, I promise!

The latest “happening” at Y-12’s New Hope Center is a wonderful display of photographic art. The Camera Club of Oak Ridge is holding its 62<sup>nd</sup> annual salon in the main lobby. The giant curved wall that surrounds the south portion of the 420 seat auditorium and serves as the backdrop for the main lobby is being used to display the 220 printed images, and 120 digital images are displayed on two huge flat screen monitors.

The salon starts Saturday, November 13. The show will continue until November 30, except for the Thanksgiving Holiday. The show will be available for viewing by the public. You may drop by and view the photographs anytime between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Bring your family and enjoy the show.

For more information, contact Ray Smith, phone 865.576.7781. Or if you have special needs and want to view the photographs at times other than when the New Hope Center is normally open to the public, I will be glad to help arrange a special showing for you or any out of town visitors or try to accommodate other unique situations you might have.

So, the New Hope Center is creating history for Y-12 as we reach out to the community and share this wonderful space. The Knoxville Christian Youth Bands now routinely hold all their concerts there. The Cold War Patriots have used it for two years for their events. We have a Science Fair scheduled for early next year. And there are others...

While this is a new way for Y-12 to be a good community citizen, we are proud of the opportunity the facility provides. It is truly historic for us.