



For Immediate Release

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Business Leaders Support New Life for Friendship Bell

OAK RIDGE, Tennessee, June 1, 2017 -- When Ken Rueter and Alan Tatum met beside the iconic Friendship Bell in Bissell Park recently, they took a moment to reflect on the importance of preserving what the Bell symbolizes to the Oak Ridge community.

Tatum, an accelerator systems and stable isotopes group leader at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, is co-chair of the International Friendship Bell Advisory Committee along with Pat Postma. Rueter is President and Project Manager of URS | CH2M Oak Ridge LLC (UCOR), cleanup contractor for the East Tennessee Technology Park and other sites on the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge Reservation. Both men serve on the Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Advisory Board.

The occasion of their May meeting was UCOR's donation of \$15,000 toward an effort to construct a new peace pavilion for the 8,300 pound bronze bell. Cast in Japan in 1993, the bell was dedicated at its current location in 1996 as a 50th anniversary landmark for the creation of the City of Oak Ridge, home to nuclear production facilities that helped end World War II. The bell symbolizes the bonds of peace and friendship that have been forged by Oak Ridge and Japan in the decades since the war ended.

For two decades after it was installed, the bell pealed its unifying message of caring and cooperation across the grassy park. But time has taken its toll. A fundraising campaign was launched in 2014 soon after it was discovered that the red oak pavilion housing the bell was deteriorating. The International Friendship Bell Advisory Committee was formed by the Parks Advisory Board with support from the Oak Ridge Rotary Club. To date, over \$700,000 has been raised as the committee closes in on its \$750,000 goal.

"As Alan and I stood by the bell for a photo, it occurred to me that DOE contractors and other local employers do a lot to support this community in so many ways," Rueter said. "Not only do they contribute money as UCOR did for the bell pavilion but, collectively, the Oak Ridge workforce gives tirelessly of their own time and resources for a host of good causes."

Rueter referenced one of UCOR's focus areas for community giving, conservation and historic preservation, which made the project an obvious choice for their support.

“There is definitely strength in numbers,” Tatum added. “Our community has truly rallied around this cause, and we could not be more thankful for the support. However, our work is not done. Our goal is to replace the former structure with a beautiful, modern design that will draw visitors from around the world and compliment Oak Ridge’s other community assets.”

If you would like to contribute to the campaign, please make your check payable to the Oak Ridge Rotary Community Foundation and write “For Bell Project” on the memo line. Checks should be mailed to: Attention David Carr, Oak Ridge Rotary Community Fund, P.O. Box 6331, Oak Ridge, TN 37831-3886.

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