

# Friends of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge

(As published in *The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking* column on December 14, 2015)

The implementation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge continues to gain momentum! We have a Contact/Visitor Center located in the American Museum of Science and Energy. A Park Ranger is there every Saturday, and often other days of the week as well.

Niki Nicholas, Superintendent, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area and Obed Wild and Scenic River is the person the Park Service has placed in charge of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge. She is a dedicated professional with substantial experience managing national park units.

One of her very first actions was to post the job to enable her to expand the staff coverage to daily. The job bids are closed now and she explained to me that she was pleased by the very high number of applicants received and by the experience they brought with them. The job will be filled after the holidays.

She went on to explain that she had also been pleasantly surprised by the strong interest in the Oak Ridge location by her existing staff. What she had feared was that adding the responsibility for Oak Ridge to existing workloads might not be as well accepted as she hoped it would. Just the opposite has been the case, Niki said.

I have had the opportunity to interact with several of her staff and have been much impressed by their intense interest in learning about Oak Ridge history. As an example, Natasha Klug, who has spent several Saturday's here, called me to ask for suggestions that she might use to create short tours in Oak Ridge. Of course, I fired off an email to her listing some 21 suggested tour sites that are readily accessible, such as the International Friendship Bell, the Secret City Commemorative Walk, the Birth of a City monuments, and more.

To say I find all this exciting is put it way too mildly! So, what is next?

On November 13, 2015, representatives of the National Park Service from the Atlanta regional office attended the Manhattan Project National Historic Park Business and Community Leaders' Forum in Oak Ridge. The event was sponsored by Leidos, a company that exemplifies strong community support and saw a unique opportunity to be among the very first to financially contribute to the new local national park effort.

The Park Service is experienced in working jointly with partner organizations and readily assisted the attendees better understand what we were being asked to consider. It was quickly apparent that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park would be different in many ways, but would not be unlike other National Parks when it came to seeking local support and private funding.

As you may realize, funding for the new park is going to be somewhat limited, as is funding for all our nation's national parks. The amount planned for FY 2016 is \$180,000 which will cover the salary requirements of a superintendent and will begin the master planning initiative necessary to begin effective operations of the national park at three sites, Los Alamos, NM, Hanford, WA and Oak Ridge.

While the American Museum of Science and Energy Foundation had already been discussing what could be done to quickly accommodate the need for a fund collection point and a formal method to assist the newly forming park, this November 13, 2015, event gave exactly the detailed information required to take the next steps. As a direct result of the interest generated by the Business and Community Leaders Forum, an initial process has been implemented.

A formal agreement between the National Park Service and the American Museum of Science and Energy Foundation was officially signed on Thursday, December 10, 2015, by Wayne Stevenson, Chairman of the Board of Directors for AMSEF and Niki Nicholas, National Park Service designated person to execute the agreement. Niki was authorized by Tracy Adkins, Superintendent of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

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This agreement is but the first of such actions we will see take place as the newly established national park, located in three sites, moves through the iterations required to function locally while keeping all three sites and the headquarters in Denver, CO, in the loop. I have been impressed with the prompt actions by both Tracy and Niki on this initiative.

The agreement signed today sets forth a simple but thorough process for managing the account established exclusively to support the identified critical needs of the park in Oak Ridge. Such needs include, but are not limited to: Volunteer Coordination; Interpretative and Educational Staff; Development and production of interpretive materials, programs, plans and technology; Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program costs; Historic preservation activities or documentation of historic buildings or sites; Planning, design or construction to improve public access; and Support for social media efforts.

Specific identified needs for the park in Oak Ridge are:

1. Print Park (Oak Ridge site) newspaper, \$500 per run of 3,000
2. Print Park (Oak Ridge site) Junior Ranger Booklets, \$900 per run of 1,000
3. Junior Ranger badges and patches, \$4,000
4. Volunteer uniforms and supplies, \$2,000
5. Part Time Education specialist Park Ranger, \$20,000
6. Manhattan Project National Historical Park - Oak Ridge site display at Knoxville Airport, \$3,000
7. IT equipment, \$6,000
8. Part Time Lead Ranger, \$30,000
9. FY16 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher summer program, \$4,000 per teacher
10. Seasonal Park Ranger, \$16,000

See what I mean? Would you have thought the Park Service personnel would already be thinking and actually checking into the possibility of placing an exhibit in McGee Tyson Airport? Well, Niki has already made connections there and has agreement that she can put a display there. All she needs is the funding for it. So, who wants to be the first to contribute to that \$3,000 effort?

To facilitate ease of support, a web site has been created, [www.AMSEFoundation.org](http://www.AMSEFoundation.org) with a special page for the Friends of Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge. Here is a link to the Friends' page: <http://amsefoundation.org/friends-of-manhattan-project-national-historical-park-fund/>

There you will find information on how to donate via check and you may use PayPal directly from the web site. If you desire to use electronic fund transfer, contact me directly and that can be arranged as well.

Or, of course, support can also be provided by check mailed to the AMSE Foundation at 300 S. Tulane Avenue, Oak Ridge, TN 37830. Please indicate the funds are intended for the Friends of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park fund – Oak Ridge, by making your check payable to the park fund.

NOTE: The contributions donated to this fund are intended for use only at the Oak Ridge location. However, donated funds will not be used to pay Ms. Nicholas' salary.

If you have ANY questions, please feel free to contact Ray Smith at [draysmith@comcast.net](mailto:draysmith@comcast.net) or 865-482-4224.

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Wayne Stevenson and Niki Nicholas officially sign the Agreement establishing the Friends of Manhattan Project National Historical Park fund – Oak Ridge account