

# Grassroots Nuclear Advocacy

by Gary J. Duarte, US Nuclear Energy

On a Sunday afternoon in December 2004, I visited with my sister and brother-in-law. Bruce has a Ph.D. in solid-state physics and has spent most of his career as an instructor and chairman of the electrical engineering department at the University of Nevada at Reno.

"What are we going to do to keep busy when we retire?" I said. "What is one of the single most important things mankind needs?"

Our answer: nuclear energy.

How could we promote to average citizens the advantages of nuclear power? Our answer: a grassroots effort.

"We should get Roger to come down and do a presentation about nuclear energy and nuclear waste storage for an IEEE seminar," I said.

Roger is a friend of mine who used to work at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory in Idaho Falls.

We called him on the spot, and he recommended his friend Peter Shaw, who was active in radioactive waste management. Shaw gave our first US Nuclear Energy presentation Feb. 7, 2005.

I have never pursued any mission as important as nuclear energy, and it has become an obsession. It is energy that drives companies, governments and the global economy.

We've found that world politics and media misrepresentation about nuclear energy have been so extensive during the past 50 years that an outside entity such as ours is needed. Eighty-five percent of people who live within 50 miles of established nuclear plants have favorable attitudes toward nuclear energy. The focus of citizen-based US Nuclear Energy is to deliver directly to an uninformed public science that is unfiltered by the media and unbiased by partisan politics. Scientists and engineers know about nuclear technology advances, but they poorly communicate those advances to Joe Citizen. And when companies attempt public outreach involving nuclear, the public sees them as advancing their self interests. Our hope is that citizens knowledgeable about nuclear will drive public opinion, the media and politicians.

US Nuclear Energy is disconnected from direct industry influence. Its activities include:

- **Distribution of printed literature and flyers.** Materials are as cost-effective as possible because of in-house, digital printing.
- **Public presentations by scientists and specialists.** These occur at various times to expose average citizens to the science of nuclear energy progress in spent radioactive waste containment.

One way to educate to the public is through clubs, chambers of commerce, etc. We distribute literature or show a video.



The US Nuclear Energy Northern Nevada Chapter averages 15 attendees each month and is growing.

The best example was during a presentation called "Back to the Nuclear Future" by Dr. Denis Beller of the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. A man with a hand-drawn poster of a three-eyed fish came into the back of the room. After listening to Beller for about 40 minutes, the man showed me the poster and said, "I came in to protest nuclear energy, but after listening to his presentation, I changed my mind."

## Our Mission

We educate Joe Citizen so he is equipped to influence political representatives and the media via editorial and blog participation. Specialty publications cover science and engineering, but their audience is scientists and engineers. Industry views are from top down; our mission is uphill because we're advocating from the grassroots citizens to the political establishment. Our mission must be fine-tuned to produce effective results.

The importance of energy to serve mankind is overlooked by the Joe Citizens of many countries. The advancement of any society is energy-dependent, and this is why most governments are seeking to solve it with nuclear power. The fuel input and burn process of nuclear reaction is more efficient than any other form of large-scale energy generation, and there are no greenhouse gas emissions. One reason average citizens are not tuned into energy importance is that they see or feel its cost increases in small amounts in their monthly power bills and don't have time to evaluate energy importance. There is an analogy here: the frog in a pan of water on a stove.

US Nuclear Energy is a grassroots nonprofit foundation neither managed nor controlled by government or the nuclear industry. It is its own entity with no directive to support the industry or a political agenda. How often does an industry have a promotional booth at a local farmers market instead of an industry science conference? **ELP**

On the Net: US Nuclear Energy site:  
<http://usnuclearenergy.org>

## Author

Gary J. Duarte is a layman with a mission.

After living in Maine for 38 years, he moved to Nevada in 1984.

Duarte's nuclear energy knowledge is that of a citizen, not a scientist or engineer. A community organizer, he served as executive vice president of the Maine Jaycees and organized the first statewide, multichapter March of Dimes Walk-A-Thon, which was offered as a model to the National Jaycees. Duarte also founded and operated Maine's first computerized book phototypesetting company.