



THE FUTURE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY: BREAKING BARRIERS WITH GRACE STANKE



ABOUT GRACE STANKE

It's not often that you find an athlete, engineer, musician, and former Miss America all in one. Grace Stanke breaks misconceptions surrounding nuclear energy through social media, public engagements, and educational workshops. During her year as Miss America 2023, Grace was named the "New Face of Nuclear Energy" by the Wall Street Journal and was on the Forbes 30 under 30 list for Energy. While completing approximately 270,000 miles of travel, she finished her undergraduate degree in Nuclear Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since passing on the title of Miss America, Grace continues to advocate for peaceful purposes of the science of the atom. She was recognized by CNET as part of the four women powering America's Clean Energy Transition. By encouraging worldwide change for clean, zero-carbon emission energy sources, Stanke emphasizes the benefits of nuclear power and seeks to dispel the myths around nuclear energy while inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians. In March 2024, Grace began work as a Nuclear Fuels Engineer & Clean Energy Advocate at Constellation. Outside of the nuclear industry, Grace is an avid waterskier, classical violinist, and travel enthusiast.

"I'm not looking to change the entire world on my own - all I need to do is make the one connection that will start a chain reaction."

Recently, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Grace Stanke, a rising star in both the nuclear energy sector and the public eye. Grace is no ordinary engineer—she's the 95th Miss America, a former competitive water skier, and a passionate advocate for the future of nuclear energy. Her story is an extraordinary blend of science, advocacy, and high-stakes communication that is breaking barriers and reshaping perceptions about the industry.

From the Miss America Crown to Reactor Core Design: Grace Stanke's Bold Vision for Nuclear

It's not often you hear of a Miss America who spends her days designing reactor cores. But Grace Stanke is shattering stereotypes and paving the way for nuclear energy to take center stage in America's clean energy future. Her background as a nuclear engineer, combined with her passion for communications, makes her a powerful force in transforming how we talk about and implement nuclear technology.

Reclaiming Nuclear's Image: How Grace Stanke Is Changing the Narrative

Nuclear energy has long suffered from misconceptions, but Grace is working to change that. In her role at Constellation, she's not only designing reactor cores but also educating the public about the power and potential of nuclear energy as a clean, reliable energy source.

"People often associate nuclear energy with danger," Grace explains, "but it's the most dependable and environmentally responsible energy we have. It's my mission to spread that message."

I agree, as Grace's work is more than just technically focused.. She's building the bridge between public perception and scientific reality. It's people like her who will ensure that nuclear energy becomes a mainstream solution to our energy challenges.

The Chris Crane Legacy: Honoring Nuclear's Past While Powering Its Future

One of the most emotional highlights of the conversation came when I had the chance to thank Grace and Constellation for the recent dedication of the Three Mile Island site as the Chris Crane Clean Energy Center. Chris was a dear friend of my family and his sudden passing left a great impact on our family as well as our community.

Grace mentioned "I never had the opportunity to meet Chris Crane, but his legacy is incredible," Grace says. "This new chapter in nuclear energy, with the reopening of the center, honors his work and the countless lives he touched."

What Gen Z Wants: Why Grace Stanke Believes Nuclear Energy Is the Answer to Climate Change

One of the most surprising elements of Grace's story is her connection to younger audiences. At 22, she represents a new generation of nuclear engineers, and she's not afraid to push boundaries.

"For Gen Z, climate change is our issue," Grace says. "And nuclear is the solution."

Her enthusiasm for nuclear energy is matched by her ability to communicate its benefits to a generation more focused on sustainability than any before.

"The young people I talk to are excited about nuclear energy. They see it as part of the answer to our climate crisis, not part of the problem," she says.



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ABOUT HOST: PHIL ZERINGUE

Vice President Strategic Partnerships has dedicated over two decades to driving transformative growth in the nuclear industry, building a reputation for operational rigor, strategic insight, and relentless commitment to excellence. Known for delivering a 500% increase in capacity and Annual Recurring Revenue within his first year in the role, Phil is celebrated for his disciplined, structured approach to tackling complex organizational challenges. Phil's career began with a deep technical understanding of the industry, evolving over the years into visionary leadership that maximizes emerging technologies and drives meaningful change. With expertise spanning operational excellence, P&L oversight, risk management, and organizational transformation, he has repeatedly elevated company performance, helping teams transcend expectations and achieve sustainable success. Guided by his passion for measurable results and transformative processes, Phil's philosophy—centered on technical acumen, strategic thinking, and uncompromising integrity—reflects his dedication to building agile, high-performing organizations that advance nuclear industry standards.

“Great Achievement rests on effective organization, meticulous preparation, and visionary leadership”

Miss America or Nuclear Engineer: Which Is the Bigger Flex?

When we dove into which role garners more attention—Miss America or nuclear engineer—Grace doesn't hesitate.

“Honestly? It depends on who I'm talking to!” she laughs. “In the nuclear world, designing reactor cores is impressive. But outside of that, the Miss America crown still turns heads.”

Grace's dual identity is part of what makes her such a compelling advocate for nuclear energy.

Nuclear Energy's Time Is Now: The Surge in Private Investment

One of the biggest shifts in the nuclear industry, according to Grace, is the increasing interest from private companies.

“It's not just government funding anymore,” she says. “We're seeing companies like Amazon and Microsoft invest in nuclear energy because they know it's the future of clean energy.”

This is huge for the industry. Private investment means nuclear is being seen as a competitive, scalable solution—not just a backup plan. And Grace is right at the center of that shift.

STEM Education and the Next Generation of Nuclear Engineers

Grace's passion for nuclear energy doesn't stop with her career. She's actively working to inspire the next generation of engineers.

“I love visiting schools and showing kids that nuclear energy is not only cool but essential for the future,” she says. “It's about making sure we have the workforce we need to meet growing demands for clean energy.”

I agree, the future of nuclear energy depends on getting young people excited about the field. Grace's outreach is doing exactly that—bridging the gap between education and industry.

Final Thoughts: Grace Stanke on the Future of Nuclear Energy

As the conversation wraps up, Grace reflects on her hopes for the future of nuclear energy.

“I think we're on the cusp of something big,” she says. “The public is starting to see the potential of nuclear power, and with more investment and innovation, I believe we can lead the charge in clean energy.”

Grace is a force in this industry—someone who understands both the technical and human sides of the equation. The future of nuclear energy is bright, and with leaders like Grace, it's only getting brighter. To watch the full interview, visit nuclearn.ai