



## SVCC Lineman School Graduates First Class

Without warning, and in unison, students in the inaugural class of the Power Line Worker Training School quickly climbed to the top of the 40-foot poles arranged in a circle on their training facility, known as the “playground.” Atop the poles, they triumphantly waved to family and friends on the ground, who responded with applause. Wearing white hard hats, safety glasses and long-sleeve, gray T-shirts with the school name on the back, the soon-to-be graduates returned to the ground before climbing another 65-foot pole to demonstrate other skills they had learned since their 11-week program began in early March.

Eleven students graduated from Southside Virginia Community College’s Power Line Worker Training School at Pickett Park in Blackstone May 12. They left with their lineman credential cards, commercial driver’s licenses, safety certifications and plans for a career.

The lineman school is a partnership between the Virginia Community College System (VCCS); Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC); Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives; the state’s electric cooperatives, including Southside Electric Cooperative (SEC), investor-owned utilities and contractors; and state government. SEC President & CEO Jeff Edwards first hatched the idea for the school, a spinoff of the Cooperative’s popular Day in the Life of a Lineman program, and approached the VCCS chancellor about launching Virginia’s first training program of its kind. In about a year’s time, the school transformed from an idea to a reality, becoming one of just three in the southern United States.

“The effort to bring the school to fruition was a shining example of what can be accomplished when no one is worried about the credit, and everyone just pitches in to make it happen. A true public-private partnership from day one, I am thrilled to see the first class finishing so strong and on their way to rewarding and fulfilling careers as linemen,” noted SEC’s Edwards.



The graduates, perched atop a pole, wave to family and friends on the ground. The exhibition portion of the ceremony was bittersweet for the graduates, as it was a moment to showcase their accomplishments, yet it was also their last climb together.



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State Sen. Frank M. Ruff Jr., whose 15th District covers much of Southside Virginia, delivered the commencement address. He described the training the students received and the skills they gained as “building blocks for future success.”

Ruff commended the graduates’ families, the community college for being sensitive to local employers’ needs and the leadership of the electric cooperatives for developing a program that is affordable and located in Southside Virginia. Ruff advised the graduates to work hard to provide value to their employers, respect others and keep a good attitude.

SVCC President Dr. Al Roberts also addressed the group, noting the exceptional teamwork demonstrated by all community partners involved. He congratulated the first class on a job well done, paving the way for many future graduates of the fledgling program.

Graduates were Joseph Alan Anthony Jr., Anton Andrew Lewis Carwile, Matthew Thomas Cox, Joshua Lanier Crenshaw, Cameron Willis Gibbs, Kevin Lee Dalton, William Andrew Jordan, Jackie Eugene Lewis Jr., Robert Joseph Parlante Jr., Derek Hunter Staton and Lucas Brent Storey.



Graduates of the inaugural class of SVCC’s Power Line Worker Training School honored electric cooperative CEOs Jeff Edwards (Southside Electric Cooperative) and John Lee (Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative) for their dedication in helping create the new program. From far left, school instructors Brad Wike and Clyde Robertson commended the graduates for being an excellent first class.

The class named SEC's Edwards and John Lee, president & CEO of Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative, as honorary members, presenting them with official school shirts and honorary certificates. The next class, which is now filled, begins July 11. Registration is still open for a fall class that begins in October. For more information, visit [www.southside.edu](http://www.southside.edu) or contact Susan Early with SVCC at [susan.early@southside.edu](mailto:susan.early@southside.edu) or (434) 292-3101.

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