

Clyde Robertson knows the ups and downs of being a Power Line Worker. He plans to pass this knowledge on to the first class of the Southside Virginia Community College Power Line Worker Training Program beginning March 1, 2016.

“The student will learn that this is not a job, it is a lifestyle,” Robertson said of the often challenging working conditions. But, “it is rewarding to fix the problem and get the lights back on for people, as much as the money you make,” he said.

A Burkeville native, Robertson worked in the industry for 42 years. His first job was with Wallace Boyd of Crewe who contracted to Southside Electric Cooperative for years. After ten years with Boyd, Robertson became a lineman for SEC where he worked for another 32 years until his recent retirement.

He was a Line Tech Supervisor when he hung up his hard hat, but then was asked to get back into the industry by teaching. He notes that so much has changed since he began his career with two radios. Now, much is computerized and the thought is to work smarter, not harder.

The 11-week course will include training to receive a Commercial Driver’s License and first aid with an emphasis on safety. The site at Pickett Park has a pole field for practice climbing, placing transformers and other troubleshooting methods.

“The best way to teach this is to let the student do it,” Robertson said.

The demand for skilled power line workers is high and growing. The average lineman earns just over \$71,000 a year. In response to the growing demand for workers, SVCC has worked with several industry partners to develop this new program in Virginia.

Robertson said this program is designed to get those who complete it “in the door” for a job in the field. He trained on-the-job and moved up through the ranks and now is ready to pass his knowledge to others.

“I believe in this program and want it to be successful,” he said.

Robertson lives in Blackstone, has two children and three grandchildren. He is an avid African violet horticulturist in his spare time.