

## First SVCC Power Line Worker Program Celebrates Graduation

The inaugural class of the Power Line Worker Program of Southside Virginia Community College celebrated graduation with family, friends and supporters on May 12, 2016. Eleven students completed the 11-week program earning Level 1 certification from NCCER (National Center for Construction Education & Research), a commercial driver's license, first aid & CPR certification and OSHA 10 safety training.

This comprehensive training program includes pole climbing, pole-top rescue, power line repairs, electrical circuits, rigging, setting and pulling poles, electrical test equipment, and trenching, excavating and boring equipment. Prior to the graduation ceremony, students demonstrated pole climbing, rescues and other skills on the outdoor pole range.

The first of its kind in Virginia, the school was founded earlier this year by a public-private partnership between Virginia's electric co-ops, Southside Virginia Community College, the Virginia Community College System, Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The motivation to establish the program grew from the demand for power line workers throughout Virginia and the nation.

Clyde Robertson, Instructor and a 41-year veteran lineman, noted, "This class set a high bar for the classes to follow."

Senator Frank Ruff, guest speaker, said, "This type of skill and training is a building block to your future." He commended the partners who brought this program "to our part of Virginia, it saves costs and keeps dollars in our economy."

The Program opened on March 1, 2016. At the time, Dr. Al Roberts, SVCC President said, "The establishment of the Power Line Worker Training School is a shining example of the high level of partnership and collaboration that is required if we are to advance our local economies and meet the demands of Governor McCauliffe's New Virginia Economy."

SVCC Vice President of Workforce Development, Keith Harkins points out "this program is a wonderful example of how short-term training leading to an industry credential can result in a rewarding career". Two of the recent graduates have accepted jobs with electric cooperatives and several others have had interview opportunities.

The second class of the program starts on July 11 and is almost full. An October class is filling up also. This program is open to any high school graduate or GED

recipient and includes extensive hands-on training that will prepare students for apprentice level line work at electric utilities.