

RICHARD G. JOHNSTONE JR.
Executive Editor

BILL SHERROD
Editor

LAURA EMERY
Field Editor

JANET BAILEY
Production Manager

LAURIE MILLS,
Apple Eye Studio, LLC
Graphic Designer

AMANDA S. CUNNINGHAM
Advertising Sales

SUSAN C. GLISSON
Advertising Assistant

To contact magazine:
9 a.m.-5 p.m. M-F

Phone: (804) 346-3344

Or at any time:

Fax: (804) 346-3448

Email: bsherrod@odec.com

Web: www.co-opliving.com

Published by the VA, MD & DE Association
of Electric Cooperatives

LARRY C. HOWDYSHELL
Chairman

JAMES E. HUFFMAN
Vice Chairman

HERBERT R. PATRICK
Secretary

FLETCHER B. JONES
Treasurer

JACKSON E. REASOR
President

RICHARD G. JOHNSTONE JR.
Executive Vice President

Board of Directors: R. Wayne Browning, Belvin Williamson, Jr., A&N; C. Michael Sandridge, Michael J. Keyser, BARC; George N. Goin, Gary E. Wood, Central Virginia; Robert E. Arnold, Michael I. Wheatley, Choptank; Jeannette S. Everett, Steven A. Harmon, Community; James E. Huffman, Shawn C. Hildebrand, Craig-Boletourt; Patricia S. Dorey, J. William Andrew, Delaware; Fletcher B. Jones, John C. Lee, Jr., Mecklenburg; Russell G. Brown, Greg W. White, Northern Neck; J. Manley Garber, Stan C. Feuerberg, Northern Virginia; Dale McNiel, Randall W. Meyers, Powell Valley; Herbert R. Patrick, Michael E. Malandro, Prince George; Richard C. Oliver, Kent D. Farmer, Rappahannock; Larry C. HowdysHELL, Myron D. Rummel, Shenandoah Valley; Frank W. Bacon, Jeffrey S. Edwards, Southside.

To advertise in *Cooperative Living*, contact:
Amanda Cunningham (804) 346-3344

National Advertising Representative: NCM,
611 South Congress Ave., Suite 504,
Austin, Texas 78704 • 800-626-1181



Member of the NCM network of
publications, reaching more than
8 million homes and businesses.

PRESSRUN 515,065
COOPERATIVE LIVING (USPS 473-300) is
published 10 times a year, monthly except for
combined March/April and November/December
issues, by the Va., Md. & Del. Association of Electric
Cooperatives. POSTMASTER, address changes
should be sent to: *Cooperative Living*, 4201
Dominion Boulevard, Suite 101, Glen Allen, VA
23060, (804) 346-3344. Periodicals Postage paid at
Glen Allen, VA, and additional mailing offices.
Subscription: \$4.90 per year for members of
subscribing co-ops; \$10 per year for all others.

ADVERTISING published is accepted on the
premise that the merchandise and services offered
are accurately described and willingly sold to
customers at the advertised price. Neither this
magazine nor the electric cooperatives in Virginia,
Maryland, and Delaware endorses any products or
services advertised herein. If any readers encounter
non-compliance with these standards, they are
asked to inform the Editor.



Viewpoint | by Richard G. Johnstone Jr., Executive Editor

The Maypole, Reborn

There was no dancing around these Maypoles, but there was plenty of celebrating, as a high-flying group of young men last month became the first graduates of a new school created with the help of Virginia's electric cooperatives.



Long ago, in the analog age, high school students took civics, most knew their way around a slide rule, and every May 1st many would celebrate the greening earth by dancing around a Maypole.

This quaint tradition dates back several centuries and is now largely obsolete, yet may well have gotten a new lease on life recently, as young people on May 12 celebrated around a different kind of "Maypole," this one a 40-foot utility pole on which they had trained tenaciously since late winter.

Through a mix of hitting the books inside the classroom and climbing the training poles outside, 11 young men spent 11 intense weeks learning the basics of electric-utility line work — literally from the ground up.

The most wondrous and wonderful part of this story may not even be the fact that this new Power Line Worker Training School is the first of its kind in Virginia, but that it went from rough vision to vivid reality in a mere 11 months ... from an inaugural meeting of the minds in April 2015 between representatives of Virginia's electric cooperatives and Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC) ... to the beginning of classes on March 1. (See cover story, page 12.)

From the outset, the program seemed to ride on a wave of good fortune, fortitude, faith and financing.

The good fortune was due at least in part to the fact that creating such a school was simply a great idea, with the closest comparable one hundreds of miles away in north Georgia.

The program's staff provided the fortitude, and kept the faith. This dedicated group of professionals at SVCC worked tirelessly over many months to meet the countless deadlines involved in building a complicated training program virtually from scratch.

Two state grants helped provide financing. One came from the state's community college system, the other from the governor's office, both given to help this program allow young people to gain valuable skills — and apply them in jobs — close to home.

Electric cooperatives across Virginia provided a generous measure of all four ingredients, in the process creating a winning recipe that joins

public and private sectors in common cause to meet a shared need for workforce training and community development. Virginia's electric co-ops stepped up and provided financial and material support to a school that will produce skilled applicants for line-worker jobs for years to come.

And two cooperatives that together serve much of Southside Virginia have been especially involved in the school from the get-go. Mecklenburg Electric in Chase City and Southside Electric in Crewe were key players in envisioning and planning the school, whose journey from idea to reality is a living testament to one of the core principles of every cooperative business: a commitment to the communities it serves.

Southside and Mecklenburg provided technical expertise and invested sweat equity to make certain that the outside area — "the playground" as it's called by the students — was set up to fully train and test these budding professionals in work that is important, satisfying ... and dangerous.

Training for danger, though, seems to be part of the DNA of Pickett Park, an industrial complex outside Blackstone that houses the school. The park occupies part of the footprint of old Fort Pickett, a former U.S. Army base. Developed in 1941 as World War II drew closer to America's shores, Fort Pickett was where many thousands of young soldiers were trained before heading off to defeat the greatest threat the world has ever seen, in the process becoming known as The Greatest Generation.

Last month, 11 members of the Millennial Generation celebrated the completion of their own "basic training," in this case the rigors of electric-utility line work. On graduation day, their words reflected an understanding that — just like soldiers — the real test of their training is yet to come, in the daily double duty of watching out for your own safety, and for that of your crewmates.

But on that May day, past rigors and future challenges were put aside for a few moments. In the field of poles on which they had been trained and tested, their spirited shouts and jubilant cries were an untethered exultation, an expression of pure joy, an exclamation marking the end of their difficult first test of mind and body.

And marking the beginning of their climb toward a promising career. ■