



## On The Bright Side: SUNY Delhi offering training for utilities

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DELHI \_ Four electric poles, spaced 15 feet apart, went up Tuesday on the SUNY Delhi Valley campus and soon, students will be climbing on them.

The poles, which were provided by the Delaware County Electric Cooperative, will be used as a learning laboratory for students in the electrical construction and instrumentation program. The utility poles will provide training in "hot-sticking," a process that uses insulated tools to repair live wires.

New York State Electric & Gas is providing full restraint devices to prevent students from falling.

James Finneran, 19, a second-year student from Chester, watched the poles go up and said he wished he could climb them immediately.

"My dad is a utility worker, and this is going to help me learn what he goes through," Finneran said.

Finneran's father works as a foreman for Orange and Rockland Utilities.

"He's definitely an influence on me," said Finneran. "It will give us a opportunity to learn more about outdoor electrical work and see what the career options are, and it's something that is going to be around."

Mark Schneider, class instructor, said the State University College of Technology at Delhi was fortunate to get support from NYSEG and DCEC for the pilot program.

"This is just the beginning of the real-world experiences we are offering students who wish to enter the utility field," Schneider said.

The outdoor laboratory will serve the newly formed SUNY Delhi Future Lineman's Club and will be used in a pilot class this spring.

The club and the pilot class have formed in anticipation of a shortage of utility-line workers.

Schneider said he is an engineer from the utility business who is well aware of the need for utility workers.

"As I read the trade publications, I see a nonstop need," Schneider said. "It is so evident that they are struggling to hire qualified people."

On Tuesday, Kevin Richardson, 19, of Queens, stood with his hands jammed in his pockets to keep warm in the 20-degree weather.

"My grandfather was an electrician and my stepfather was an electrician in the Army," Richardson said. "At the end of 10th grade, I worked with him and I really liked it. I am always looking for a new experience. I think it will be very interesting."

Jesse Rose, 21, of Cooperstown, said he is a student in plumbing and electrical construction, but wanted to see if he was interested in utility work.

"I have thought about being a lineman," Rose said. "I just want to see if I like it or not."

Kim MacLeod, a college spokeswoman, said the college was grateful for the collaborative efforts of the local electric co-op and the upstate utility to install the poles.

"We consider SUNY Delhi a community partner and are glad to support the college," Greg Starheim, DCEC general manager, said in a media release. "This collaboration establishes a more formal relationship with the college and will help us identify new talent for DCEC through Delhi's electrical and construction management programs."

"Line mechanics and utility construction personnel are professionals whose service and skills are often tested under the most extreme circumstances," Bill Sears, regional operations director for NYSEG's East Region, said in a media release. "We are extremely pleased to be able to support SUNY Delhi's efforts to get future utility workers off on the right foot."

NYSEG will also donate restraint equipment and instruct Delhi students on its use. In the coming months, NYSEG operations staff will visit the campus to offer additional training in pole-top construction techniques and conduct student tours of the Frasier transmission substation and the utility's Johnson City training facility.

SUNY Delhi will also collaborate with Orange and Rockland Utilities and Con Edison to provide training in underground distribution systems.

For more information on SUNY Delhi's efforts, call (800) 96-DELHI or visit [www.delhi.edu](http://www.delhi.edu).

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