

Robertson's Cool Job is Passing on Cool Skills To Others

Clyde Robertson's cool job is teaching an incredibly cool profession to others through the Southside Virginia Community College's Power Line Worker Training Program. Having been lead instructor at the school since it began in March of 2016, Robertson has guided more than 250 graduates towards a career he loved for many years.

This month, Robertson was awarded the 2019 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in the area of Outstanding Achievement by a College Faculty/Staff Member from the Virginia Community College System. The award was presented at the recent VCCS Annual Workforce Awards Banquet.

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(SEC) for years. After ten years with Boyd, Robertson became a lineman for SEC where he worked for another 32 years until his retirement.

"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.

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.

He notes that his work ethic came from his father who 'woke up at 3:30 a.m. and worked until 7 p.m. every day to provide for the family.'

The rewarding part of the job, according to Robertson is "I get texts and emails all of the time from former students. I take them on as my sons and daughters. It's a great feeling that I am making a small difference in their lives. I look forward to working with them and hearing from them."

Dennis Smith, Director of Workforce, notes, " "The difference Clyde is making in our students' lives is immeasurable. Not only is he doing a fantastic job of teaching them how to become outstanding linemen, but he is also making a difference in the way our students think and plan. We have graduated 265 students to date in our program and Clyde has been here since the beginning. We are fortunate to have him leading our Power Line Worker Training Program."

Students come to the program from all over the state of Virginia and even out-of-state. Most students are able to start a job right after completion of the program