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Electric Co-ops Dedicate State-of-the-Art Training Center

With the snip of a ribbon, the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Electric Cooperative Training Center officially opened May 22 during a ceremony that brought more than 120 co-op officials, elected representatives, government officials and dignitaries to the site north of Palmyra, Va.

“This is a day we have literally dreamed about for decades,” said Richard G. Johnstone Jr., president and CEO of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives.

“The training center is really the embodiment of the cooperative spirit. Every one of our member systems identified a need for a state-of-the-art training center and worked diligently to bring this day about,” he said.

The 9,600-square-foot building is located adjacent to Central Virginia Electric Cooperative’s Palmyra office. CVEC provided nine acres to the association for the \$1.5 million project at favorable terms.

“This building is a great investment in a number of ways,” said Gary Wood, president and CEO of Arrington, Va.-based CVEC. “It’s a deposit on the continuing investment co-ops are making in Fluvanna County. It’s an investment in all the instructors and trainers because you now have a great tool to deliver your messages. And it’s an investment among co-ops in our relationship because our strength comes from the partnerships we share.”

For years, the association conducted lineworker training at an aging building adjacent to a converted vo-tech center in Culpeper. That site’s insufficiency was demonstrated during one class when a snake fell on Ron Campbell, former vice president of safety & training for the association.

“The guys would go in the bathrooms and the snakes would be hanging from the ceiling,” Campbell recalled with a shudder.

In 2013, training moved from Culpeper to three modular trailers at the Palmyra site with an eye toward a new building. “We’ve always had this in mind,” Campbell said. “This is my dream here.”



The building has three classrooms — one each named for Maryland, Virginia and Delaware. The rooms employ state-of-the-art video technology with a touchpad system to control lighting and A/V equipment. The building also offers a full-service kitchen with a catering window, a break room, and showers in the men’s and women’s restrooms. A large garage bay provides space for equipment demos and training in inclement weather.

An outstanding feature is the “Storm Soldier” statue developed by Arkansas sculptor Ron Moore.

In time, the Fluvanna center will train thousands of cooperative employees and directors.

“In addition to lineworkers, we’ll be providing training to engineers, accountants, customer service representatives, and the elected directors who serve on the boards of our member cooperatives,” Johnstone said. “We’ll also offer training to employees from Virginia municipal electric

systems, and we intend to work with community colleges as well.”

Photo: From left, Herbert Patrick, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, presents a proclamation of gratitude on behalf of the association to Gary Wood, president and CEO of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative.