



News Release

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Apprenticeships Help Train Wisconsin's Municipal Utility Workforce

SUN PRAIRIE, Wis. — The 9th Annual National Apprenticeship Week, November 13-19, celebrates the value of Registered Apprenticeship, such as the program for Electrical Line Workers offered in partnership by the Municipal Electric Utilities of Wisconsin (MEUW) and the Wisconsin Technical College System.

"My classes keep getting bigger and bigger in this apprenticeship program," says Kendal Schmidt, Electrical Line Worker Apprenticeship Instructor at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC). During a recent hands-on, underground electrical equipment training session, Schmidt said he typically has close to 30 students per class in the four-year program. This school year, however, that number has grown to more than 40 second-year apprentices, he said.

According to 2023 U.S. Department of Labor statistics, 607,509 workers were enrolled in Registered Apprenticeship programs throughout all industries nationwide. In Wisconsin, 11,446 workers are getting paid on-the-job training and technical college instruction as apprentices. Workers who are needed to fill the gap from losses during the pandemic and a retiring baby boom generation.

"Being able to contribute, turning the lights on, that's the main reason I've chosen my career path," says Sam Turner, Line Worker Apprentice, Sauk City Utilities. "Plus, you're getting paid to go to school and learning things you are going to use when you're at work." The fourth-year apprentice says being able to have a positive impact on his community was key to his decision to apply to work for his municipal utility. It's a common theme for students in the apprenticeship program, which requires one week of training each quarter at the technical college along with about 8,000 hours of on-the-job training over four years.

"You're not sitting in school for nine months out of the year," says Tyler Strey, a third-year Line Worker Apprentice for New London Utilities. "You go for a week, bring what you learned at school back to the workplace, teach the other guys," says Strey.

Andy Goettl, a Line Worker Apprentice from Marshfield Utilities, says he likes the real-life training scenarios in a safe environment before he takes it back to the daily work he enjoys. "It's something different every day," says Goettl. "You're doing one job one day and the next day you're doing a whole different thing."

Schmidt says the partnership between MEUW and WTCS allows the municipal utilities to join together and share the cost of the Apprenticeship Program. "The program is very valuable for MEUW."

2023 National Labor statistics show 93 percent of apprentices who complete a Registered Apprenticeship retain employment, with an average salary of \$77,000.

Apprentices like Turner say it's beneficial to everyone involved, "It's a win-win in my eyes."

Formed in 1928, MEUW is the state association providing safety services, leadership and management training, advocacy, and member support to 81 municipal electric utilities across Wisconsin. Collectively, these public power utilities distribute more than 11 percent of the electricity in Wisconsin and most have century-old roots in serving their communities. Municipal utilities operate on a not-for-profit basis overseen by a local governing board composed of local citizens and elected officials. To learn more, visit meuw.org.

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- **B-roll** of MEUW apprentices doing hands-on training at CVTC is available [here](#).
- **Sound bites** with apprentices and Instructor are available [here](#).