

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



[SPU Apprentice Line Workers Jacob Dowden and Hayden Shefchik talk to students at Central Heights Middle School.]

Middle school students learn line worker basics, enlightened by local apprentices

SUN PRAIRIE, (Wis.) - Students at three Sun Prairie middle schools got a special visit from two local apprentices in early March.

Jacob Dowden and Hayden Shefchik, both Line Worker Apprentices at Sun Prairie Utilities (SPU), visited Patrick Marsh, Central Heights, and Prairie View Middle School to show students what it's like to be an electric line worker.

At each school, Dowden and Shefchik met with two groups of students in the AVID program and explained how they started their careers and what their job entailed. AVID is an elementary through post-secondary college readiness system designed to increase school-wide learning and performance for students. Currently, in Sun Prairie, AVID is offered for 7th through 12th grades.

Dowden explained he initially went to school for Criminal Justice, tried Fire Safety School, and then found his place at SPU. Through advancement opportunities at SPU, Dowden worked his way up from Grounds Maintenance to Water Operator to the current electric apprenticeship position.

Shefchik took the more common path of becoming an electric line worker apprentice following the completion of a nine-month Electrical Power Distribution program. You can find this program at several colleges in the state, including Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville, Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire, Moraine Park Technical College's Beaver Dam Campus, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore, and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in Green Bay. To help fund this certification program, high school students are encouraged to apply for the Sun Prairie Utilities WPPI Energy Scholarship during their senior year.

Both men are currently in their second year of the four-year Electric Line Worker Apprenticeship program. They explained how apprentices throughout the state attend in-class training four weeks per year while spending the remaining time receiving on-the-job training at their respective utilities. Upon the completion of the educational training and on-the-job service hours, both will graduate as Journey Electric Line Workers.

Shefchik pointed out that line workers generally construct and maintain the electric distribution system in the City of Sun Prairie. Sometimes they need to work on utility poles high in the air and other times work in the dirt to lay electrical wires underground.

Dowden explained how the job had risks and rewards. Along with being well compensated and experiencing the enjoyment of working as a team in a truly rewarding field, line workers are constantly reminded of the need to always work safely under the inherent dangers of electricity and during extreme weather and field conditions.

After the speech, students were able to explore a bucket truck and try several pieces of personal protection equipment to get hands-on experience. In all, students learned there can be different paths to a career, and line workers provide a vital resource for our community.

###



For Sun Prairie Utilities' news, visit [sunprairieutilities.com/newsroom](https://www.sunprairieutilities.com/newsroom) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

Media Contact: Cora Seibt, Communications Coordinator,
(608) 837-5500, cseibt@myspu.org