

CGCC's utility-pole climbing is part of Science Spectacular

Submitted by Jane Poston and Cathy Chlarson of Chandler-Gilbert Community College.

There's something about the image of a crew soaring to the top of a utility pole that is impossible to ignore.

Chandler-Gilbert Community College is counting on that fascination with heights and the people who aren't afraid to reach them as a way to attract attention Feb. 16 during the Chandler Science Spectacular. The three-day festival is a celebration of science and part of a larger effort to increase awareness of Arizona as a tech-savvy, science-oriented state.

The college is planting a utility pole on a grassy section of campus to demonstrate what students learn in its Electric Utility Technology program. Students in the program are taught the best techniques to climb utility poles and repair

distribution wires.

The Science Spectacular is meant to create a friendly point of entry to science for students and their families so that once people see how integral science is to their everyday lives, they'll have a better appreciation of how important a science and technology education is. CGCC is using the pole-climbing demonstration to attract attention but also to introduce students to a potential career.

"Our electrical utility training is one of a number of programs we have that prepare students for high-skills, high-wage jobs," said Maria Reyes, dean of Career and Technical Education. "The energy industry is experiencing high demand, and we've been working closely with our energy-business partners to ensure the training students receives is directly applicable to today's technology."

Employment opportunities



A CGCC student demonstrates climbing and line repair at last year's Science Spectacular. CGCC

in this field include power companies, power-line contractors and local utility companies, and have an average annual income ranging from \$45,000 to

\$73,000. The program is offered at CGCC's Williams Campus, which offers a technical certificate or an Associate of Applied Science degree.

Students become familiar with the tools, materials and equipment of the trade and, upon completion of the program, are prepared for employment as well-informed entry-level line workers. According to program director Mark Weaver, CGCC graduates more than 80 percent of its students, and places more than 60 percent in utility-industry jobs.

"It's important for Chandler-Gilbert Community College to develop career paths for the growing and emerging industries in our community and to help fill the need for a skilled and educated workforce," said Reyes. "Many of these careers require a solid foundation of science, technology, engineering and math education, which the

festival highlights in an entertaining and engaging way."

Chandler's Science Saturday is in downtown Chandler from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is the final event in Chandler's 3-Day Science Spectacular that begins Wednesday. Other events include a Tech Crawl, where visitors can tour Intel, Air Products and the Innovations Incubator, and A Night of Art & Science, a celebration of the science that goes into artistic endeavors.

Chandler is hosting this festival in conjunction with the Arizona SciTech Festival, a statewide effort to increase Arizona's reputation in the science and technology industry. For a list of events, visit chandleraz.gov/science or azscitechfest.com.

For information about CGCC's electrical utility technology program, call 480-988-8255 or visit cgc.edu.