

# Public Power Weekly

From the June 9, 2008 issue of *Public Power Weekly*:

## **Lansing BWL to recruit, hire high school students in effort to train a new generation of employees**

The Lansing Board of Water & Light in Michigan has launched a new job recruitment and training program, called First STEP, which will begin building the city-owned utility's next-generation work force.

First STEP stands for First School to Training and Employment Program.

The program will recruit area high school seniors to work as part-time BWL employees. The intent is to train and mentor these students for possible careers at the Board of Water & Light, which is Michigan's largest municipal utility.

"We need to grow tomorrow's work force today, and I can think of no better place to start than our local high schools," said BWL General Manager J. Peter Lark. "Like many companies, the BWL will experience a large number of retirements in the next few years. Given the myriad business challenges this utility will confront, it is essential that our next-generation work force be fully prepared. First STEP is an essential way to ensure that our future employees will hit the ground running."

Juniors from nearly 30 area high schools will receive information this spring about First STEP. High schools will screen applicants and select a group of students to be interviewed by BWL staff this fall.

The utility will make the final selection of First STEP participants late this year. Starting in January 2009, approximately 20 students will work entry-level jobs at the BWL for an average of 20 hours a week. They will be paid \$10 an hour and will be eligible to work until June graduation.

Depending on the company's employment needs in June, the BWL may offer as many as 10 of those students an opportunity to work full-time in an entry-level job. Other, remaining qualified First STEP participants will be offered \$1,500 scholarships to attend Lansing Community College. Employment opportunities and scholarships are contingent on the students completing the First STEP program and meeting all high school graduation requirements.

The BWL has initiated First STEP in partnership with several local school districts, the community college, the Clinton County Regional Educational Service Agency and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 352.