



**KPR Electricians Chuck Carrier (r) and Scott Carl (l) inspect OYAP student Darren Froman's work bending a piece of conduit, a very marketable skill for future employment. - Photo by: Laurel Merriam**

## **KPR Mentors Light-Up Students' Futures - By Laurel Merriam**

Jordan George and Darren Froman, two Peterborough high school students, have a great opportunity, thanks to the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) and two KPR electricians. Chuck Carrier and Scott Carl are mentoring the two young men for a semester through a pilot project initiated by Ian Thompson (Co-ordinator - Youth Apprenticeship Program), Peter VanEssen (Maintenance Services Manager) and Sherry Summersides (Associate Director of Education). If it is successful, the program will roll out to the other two superintendencies. Next semester, there should also be at least one student in the Clarington area and one in the Northumberland area working with KPR journeypeople.

OYAP is a co-op program where the students work in the trades and may be signed on as apprentices. Although they are not paid as they would be if they waited to finish high school to begin learning their trade, they are earning credits towards their OSSGD, and all of their hours count towards their apprenticeship. Some students even have the opportunity to go to college two or three days a week during their last semester of high school in order to complete their Level One Apprenticeship. The students have to continue on their own after they finish with OYAP, but they already have a great start.

Ian Thompson says that it is difficult to choose the students who will participate in the program because there are so many strong applicants each semester. Students must go through a competitive interview process to get into the OYAP program. They must qualify for an OSSGD and already be co-op students. If they come with their own placement already arranged, they will have an advantage over other applicants. Scott, who participated in the interview process, feels it is important that the candidates have "good hands", they need to be able to work with their hands effectively.

When supervisors in the maintenance department at KPR were approached by Peter Van Essen to participate in the program, the first to step up were the electricians. Although having an apprentice slows Chuck and Scott down somewhat, as they have to take the necessary time to teach and explain everything, there is an advantage to having someone around to help out. They say that it is challenging because they have to be "on" all the time - they can't just run on autopilot and they have to have answers to questions they haven't thought about since they were in trade school! However, they speak highly of Jordan and Darren and they strongly encourage other KPR journeypeople to take on apprentices in the future.

Darren is a Crestwood Secondary School graduate who has returned to high school for the sole purpose of participating in this program. This ambitious 18 year old has already completed two semesters in the Gold Collar Construction Co-op Program offered at his school. By the time he completes the OYAP program, he will have over 440 hours towards the 9000 hours required by an apprentice. Darren says that he has learned a great deal so far - including what not to do! Safety is incredibly important and a main focus at the beginning of an apprenticeship. Chuck feels that it is also vital for these students to come out of the program with a wide variety of skills. He has them doing things that apprentices might not be doing until their second, third or even fourth year. He wants them to be highly marketable to increase their chances of getting hired on after they complete high school. He believes that these students should be learning everything they can rather than just running errands and cleaning up messes. As he so beautifully stated, "We have a good organization here and we are an education system... It's supposed to be for the kids, so let's do it [help] and let's do it right!"