



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

A monthly newsletter for co-op members of EnerStar Electric Cooperative

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Local students represent EnerStar Electric during the nationwide Youth to Washington Tour

What do you get when 71 students from 27 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives join more than 1,800 of their peers from all over the United States? You get the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth to Washington Tour!

Two local students were selected from a diverse group of applicants to represent EnerStar Electric Cooperative. They were sent on an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. from June 8-15 as part of the annual Youth Tour.

The 2018 Youth Tour delegates from EnerStar Electric included Bethanny Lawson of Paris and Chase Mayne of Martinsville.

The students toured Capitol Hill and met with U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and Congressman John Shimkus. They also visited historical and cultural sites including Arlington National Cemetery, the Supreme Court, Newseum, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, a variety of memorials and the U.S. Capitol. Among fun activities the students enjoyed were the Marine Corps Sunset Parade, the Smithsonian Museums and an assembly of Youth Tour participants from across the nation.

“Some of my favorite memorials included the Newseum and the



Holocaust Museum,” 2018 participant Bethanny Lawson said. “They were the most humbling, and really demonstrated how we as a country are able to work from evil to create more good.”

“Youth Tour is a great opportunity that changes these students’ lives,” says Mike Clark, President/CEO of EnerStar Electric. “This experience helps prepare them for their futures. After touring our nation’s capital, meeting congressional representatives and learning firsthand

how our government works, they return home with valuable knowledge and memories that will last a lifetime.”

Since 1964, the nation’s cooperative electric and telephone utilities have sponsored more than 60,000 high school students to visit Washington, D.C. Applications to represent Enerstar at next years tour will be available in October. To learn more about the Youth to Washington Tour, go to www.youthtour.coop.

Youth to Washington tour – more than just a trip

By Bethanny Lawson, Youth Tour participant

One may not expect a weeklong trip to our nation's capital to be a spiritual journey, but mine certainly was.

Every year, a couple thousand high schoolers and chaperones make their way to D.C. to spend a week of the summer touring all the sights, museums and memorials. It's a trip sponsored by the nation's rural electric cooperatives, created to grow leaders and educate people on what co-ops are all about.

I was blessed to be one of EnerStar's representatives on this year's trip. I expected it to be fun, especially since it has been a dream of mine to tour D.C. for years. I did not expect it to change my entire life in the ways it did.

Forty-four states participate in this annual event, including Alaska and Hawaii. This means that for one week during the summer, kids from all over the country are all in the same two hotels in D.C. together. Part of my time in D.C., I was with my Illinois group only, and the rest of the time we were with the nation's youth as a whole.

When the Illinois' group was touring, we made it to every last thing there was to see in D.C. We sat inside the Supreme Court, walked through the Holocaust Museum, watched the Marine Corps Sunset Parade from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, spoke with protesters outside the White House and walked the Gettysburg battlefields.

There wasn't a single day on that trip I didn't have tears in my eyes.

Every story the memorials told was a story of defeat, disaster, sorrow and, in the end, death for all of them. But through each of those stories, hope, joy, victory and promises of a bright future were born. My people, past, present and future, inspire me in so many ways. Every stop was a reminder that one day, people will look back on our story. We have a duty to make this generation's chapter in the history books a meaningful one.

While the tour alone would have been enough to make this the trip of a lifetime, it was not the only highlight of my time in D.C.

Many companies have conferences or events for their leaders and marketers. They bring them together to educate them on their company, products, and brand, to train them to be better leaders, and get them excited about the future

they are a part of.

NRECA's Youth Tour was no different. I will admit, learning about electricity didn't seem all that appealing to me even when I applied for this trip. But now that I am home, I have never been so appreciative of my electric co-op, and I am so pumped up and impressed by how cooperatives work.

Two nights during the week, all



the states were gathered together in the Hyatt Hotel. The first night was essentially a leadership conference for high schoolers.

We heard from so many leaders from co-ops, so many people who live their lives as an example of how we should live ours. In a sense, it was like the biggest family gathering I'd ever seen, because co-ops are like families and care about each other as such.

My eyes were opened to how many opportunities there are to serve and lead. People spoke to us who were small-town folk making a big splash in their small ponds, they were people who have gone overseas to work with those who don't have the blessings we do in America, and they were people who work in the highest branches of government, participating in leading our nation.

I was struck by the hearts of the people leading us. We were instilled with pride in our nation, pride in our flag, and pride in what our youth





can accomplish as the next generation. We were treated like gold.

The event breathed life into me. Standing with my peers as we all sang the national anthem together made my heart swell in ways I have never experienced.

The second night was for a farewell party, and I must say it was a party to rival all other parties. Getting to meet and interact with people my age from all over the country was quite an experience. I love my hometown and where I come from, but it was incredible to see how many cultures America holds within it beyond the corn fields. Our world seemed so big and so small at the same time while I was in D.C.

People were just as fascinated with what my state is like as I was with theirs. One moment I recall is sitting in Ford's theater answering another group's questions about Abraham Lincoln. One of the kids asked, "How do you know so much about Lincoln?" We just grinned and replied, "Well, we are quite literally from the land of Lincoln."

One of my favorite things to witness on this trip was our politicians and representatives in person. It's easy to forget they are simply people, as we are. What we see on



the internet and in the news is not necessarily what they are like in reality.

The commonly quoted phrase, "every villain is a hero in his own mind," applied to meeting with senators and congressmen, too. So often those with opposing mindsets are framed as enemies or "the bad guys."

But none of the men or women I spoke to treated each other like enemies or saw those who disagreed with them as bad people.

Beyond the cameras and Facebook articles, the democrats and republicans are friends, the liberals and the conservatives have the same hearts. I found myself nodding my head in agreement with people I never would have expected to agree with.

Our methods may be different, but at our core, we all ultimately want what is right and want to better our world. Maybe what we believe is right differs, maybe the ways we attack problems don't line up, but at least we can appreciate that we're all making an effort and fighting for what we believe in—America.

So here we stand, in June 2018. No matter what anyone says, no matter how bad things look, no matter the ways current events are portrayed, we are still one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Those words ring ever so true, and I intend to

dedicate my life to making sure they stay true.

I went to D.C. hoping to have a fun time exploring a city I've always wanted to visit. I came home with a hundred new ideas on how to change the world, and I am forever grateful to my electric co-op for making it all happen.

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Lineman Chad Cornwell honored as Father of the Year

Early last month, Enerstar employees, family, and friends of the Chad Cornwell family gathered for a celebration of his “Father of the Year” award. The celebration was held at Enerstar and consisted of a delicious breakfast from Mill Creek Restaurant in Clarksville, and recognition from EnerStar CEO Mike Clark. A very special presentation was also made by Chad’s first daughter, Brea Like. Brea read the nomination letter that she sent to the Association of Illinois Electric Co-ops earlier this year to all in attendance so everyone could hear why Chad was so deserving of this award.

Chad is not only an EnerStar

family member, but is also a member-owner of the cooperative. This makes him the first recipient of the award to fill both of those roles. Chad was also presented with two different gifts from both AIEC and his EnerStar family.

“There was no doubt or discussion about who the winner of this award would be when going through the nomination letters,” Valerie Cheatham, representative from AIEC, said.



EnerStar is very proud to call Chad one of our own, and we can’t wait to watch his family grow with the help of their wonderful father.

Survey says! Member survey coming soon

Let your voice be heard!

Every other year, the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) conducts a statewide member survey project on EnerStar’s behalf. Participants are randomly selected by Inside Information who has worked with cooperatives across the country.

“These surveys are very important to our co-op and we welcome your input,” EnerStar CEO Mike Clark said. “If a member-owner participating in the survey cannot rate EnerStar with a score of 8, 9, or 10, then please give us a call. We want the best service for our member-owners and need to know if that is not being achieved.” He emphasized with recent changes in

the last couple of years, such as a significant reduction in power outages, that EnerStar will continue to improve their results.

Neither the AIEC or Inside Information, will not ask for credit card information or sell or share your private information. They will provide us with the anonymous survey results, and we will evaluate the information that is gathered to help improve our service to our member-owners.

We need YOUR help! The more completed survey questionnaires we receive, the more accurate the information will be, so if you’re selected to participate, please take the time to answer the short



survey. We anticipate that survey questionnaires will be distributed in September.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact EnerStar’s Angela Griffin at 800-635-4145 or via email at agriffin@enerstar.com. We appreciate your help!