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Young leaders represent EnerStar Electric in D.C.

Fifty-three young leaders representing 24 Illinois electric cooperatives boarded buses and departed for Washington, D.C. on June 16 for the annual National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's (NRECA's) Youth to Washington Tour. They joined more than 1,800 youth delegates from across the nation for this annual tradition that has spanned nearly 60 years.



Eli Brinkerhoff and Aubrey Lawson visit with Congresswoman Mary Miller.



Aubrey Lawson and Eli Brinkerhoff tour the National Mall.

Eli Brinkerhoff and Aubrey Lawson, both of Paris, represented EnerStar Electric Cooperative. The weeklong event offers the opportunity to witness the government in action, meet their elected officials, and see the sights of the capital city.

"Youth Tour is impactful in many ways," said Angela Griffin, EnerStar's Manager of Marketing and Communications. "While these future leaders may have thought it was going to simply be a sightseeing trip to our nation's capital, they returned home with valuable knowledge and memories that will last a lifetime."

The students visited Capitol Hill and met with Congresswoman Mary Miller (R-15). They also visited historical and cultural sites including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, the Supreme Court, the White House, the National Mall, the Smithsonian Institution, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Ford's Theatre, and many more memorials and historic sites.

The tour's bus ride to D.C. also allowed plenty of time for co-op education. The students formed the Chip 'N Pop Co-op and ran for seats on the board. The board then interviewed candidates and selected a manager. Traditionally, money made during the trip is returned to the students as capital credits. This year, the Chip 'N Pop Co-op members voted to donate the profits of more than \$200 back to the Youth Tour program.

High school students who live within the service area of EnerStar are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to www.youthtour.coop. Applications for the 2024 tour will be available in October.



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Strong foundation, bright future

EnerStar Electric holds annual meeting of members

It was a display of the co-op difference as EnerStar Electric Cooperative members gathered for the annual meeting on June 3 at Crestwood School in Paris. During the meeting, the co-op board and management shared a few brief business updates on financials, projects and general state of affairs. But it's not all business, as the annual meeting includes a free meal and the opportunity to meet with those who help run the cooperative and win some great prizes.

Financial update

Board Secretary-Treasurer Greg Robinson provided an update on the co-op's financials, stating that

the co-op is in a strong financial condition with the total revenue from 2022 adding up to \$13.3 million and expenses totaling \$12.5 million. As a not-for-profit electric cooperative, any excess revenue over costs is allocated to individual members based on patronage and will eventually be returned to members in the form of capital credits.

"For every dollar we collect, about 55 cents goes toward the cost of power," he said. "Even with inflation, EnerStar's expenses have remained relatively stable over the last couple of years."

Robinson explained that while the price of goods and services continues to increase, the co-op's

controllable costs have remained steady for five years. The board has set a goal to reduce debt while keeping rates stable.

"We consider this an important part of our efforts to preserve rate stability going into the future," Robinson said. "We continue to return capital credits on an annual basis. We've held the final expenses that we can control, and we're maintaining a reasonable amount of debt. We strive to be good stewards of the cooperative's resources."

CEO update

In his fireside-type chat with the co-op's membership, CEO Dave Clinton asked the membership, "What makes EnerStar have a strong foundation? What creates a bright future?"

To have a strong foundation, Clinton emphasized the importance of reducing debt, which the co-op has been working on diligently while keeping rates as low as possible. Over the last 10 years, rates have only gone up less than 1%, which is below the rate of inflation. Simultaneously, EnerStar Electric has been able to reduce its debt by \$860,000 since 2018.

"Considering we serve one of the costliest areas in Illinois, to have been able to keep our costs stable shows we are holding the line on controllable costs. We believe that's part of our strong foundation going forward," Clinton explained. EnerStar is one of the most rural cooperatives in Illinois, with



*A huge **THANK YOU** to Crestwood School for the last-minute change of venue back to their location. We are grateful for Danette Pine, Josh McCarty, the board and all the staff for being so helpful and accommodating.*

just 3.5 members per mile of line. Comparably, an investor-owned utility may have 40+ consumers sharing that same per-mile cost.

Clinton also mentioned that a major part of the co-op's strong foundation includes efforts to improve the reliability of the distribution system and the 250 years of combined experience of EnerStar Electric employees.

"We believe that EnerStar is well-positioned to have a bright future," he concluded, adding that one goal for the future is to lay out ways for members to have greater control over their own energy costs.

Board election results

During the meeting, Cooperative Counsel Rob Anderson of Anderson Law Offices announced the results of Director Elections as follows:

- District A-1, Jeff Zimmerman, with 181 votes, was reelected without opposition.
- District C-9, Danny Gard, with 166 votes, was reelected without opposition.
- District B-5, Thad Martin, with 130 votes, was reelected in a contested election, with Mike Clark having 123 votes.

The co-op wishes to extend a special thanks to Tom Phillips, Pat Macke and Ray Young, all of whom are co-op members, for serving as election judges again this year.

Hope to see you next year!

With the return of the annual meeting to a Saturday morning and our popular pancakes, members enjoyed a full breakfast prior to the meeting, catered by Front Street Market in Hume, along with a \$25 thank-you bill credit. Of course, as always, many great door prizes were awarded. We appreciate all who came this year and the wonderful compliments. We hope to see you again next year! And if you didn't happen to make it, we hope to see you next year!



A full breakfast was catered by Front Street Market in Hume, but also back by popular demand were our pancakes! Left to right: Russ Camp, Director Granville Colvin, Ryan Haddix and Chase Graham



Thank you to Paris Cub Scout # 8 for the Presentation of Colors at the annual meeting.



In his first address to the membership, CEO Dave Clinton updated the members about EnerStar's bright future and strong foundation.



Welcome to our new employee

EnerStar welcomes Tyler Robison to the EnerStar team as a right-of-way crew leader. A native of the Cowden, Ill., area, over the last 3 years, Tyler was employed at Endrizzi Contractors and Lilly Tree Services, which are both located in central Illinois and specialize in utility right-of-way clearance and vegetation management. He is a member of the International Society of Arboriculture and a certified arborist.



EnerStar donates books to public, school libraries

EnerStar donated the book "Wish Upon a Crawdad" to area public libraries and schools in Paris, Chrisman, Hume, Oakland, Marshall, Martinsville and Kansas. The book's author is retired electric co-op magazine editor Curtis Condon. The story takes place at the end of the Great Depression during the early years of the electrification of rural America. It is told through the eyes of Ruby Mae Ryan, who has never had electricity a day in her life. The reader's age range is middle school but many who grew up during the period will enjoy it as well. In the photo, EnerStar employee Britta Baker presents the book to Marshall North Elementary Librarian Heidi Miller.



our office hours have changed

Office hours changing

Based on traffic patterns, we have slightly changed our office hours. The office is open 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. As always, we are available 24/7 by calling 800-635-4145. Need to pay by phone? Call 888-999-4201 or download SmartHub at your app store.