

JAMMUP

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Youth to Washington trip may provide answers for your future

OK. So you aren't really into politics. As a junior in high school, you're thinking about college and where you're going to come up with more than \$100,000 to pay for higher education. You're also trying to decide what you want to work at the rest of your life to make that college experience pay off.

Oddly enough, the very people who may have answers to those questions are wearing the title of state legislator or seated in chambers of the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C.

Before you know it, you will be voting in your first election and the weight of the country's decisions will partially belong to you. Will you support a Congressman who wants to pass Cap & Trade? Will you be in favor of farm subsidies? As you approach what was once "draft-age," do you think we should send more troops to Iraq and Afghanistan or should the military be strengthening our borders? Oh, and when you get the opportunity to meet your Congressman, in addition to these questions will you ask: What has Congress done to make higher education more affordable and will I be able to find a job when I graduate?

Electric and telephone cooperatives in 44 states believe that young people deserve a first-class opportunity to educate themselves in the government process. Each year, the cooperatives across the nation sponsor more than 1,500 high school students to make the trek to Washington to get that personal initiation, and they have a lot of fun in

the process.

It all begins in Springfield on April 6, 2011 during the Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperative Youth Day where nearly 300 students will visit the State Capitol and spend much of the morning meeting with legislators. You will tour the Supreme Court and spend the afternoon touring local sites.

This year marks the 52nd trip to the nation's capitol and promises to be as exciting as ever. Students learn the principles required to keep coop-

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erative members working together for the cooperative's success by establishing their own "chip and pop" cooperative while on the bus trip.

While in Washington during the week of June 10-17 (Youth to Washington Tour), in addition to meeting with Congressmen from Illinois, students are treated to tours

of historic sites, given the opportunity to make life-long friends and receive information to help determine career paths.

The future of the country depends on the youth of today getting involved.

If you are a junior in high school and want to learn more about this opportunity, contact your guid-

ance counselor or Jerri Schaefer at Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative by calling 1-800-762-1400. You may also check out the Youth Tour through the Association Of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) at www.aiec.coop for additional details.

LEAD SI accepting applications for class of 2011

Where will tomorrow's leaders come from? That's a question leaders of Connect SI, a 20 county economic development initiative, have asked for some time. Concern for tomorrow has led Connect SI to develop a leadership development program for southern Illinois high school students.

Heading into selection of the fourth group of high school sophomores and juniors, LEAD SI has been designed to ensure a continuous supply of homegrown leaders for the future of southern Illinois. Future young leaders attend a three-day institute on the campus of Southern Illinois University Carbondale in June, where they focus on developing skills in communication, problem solving, team building and decision-making. They also learn their individual strengths and how to use those strengths to their benefit.

Following completion of the institute, these future young leaders continue a year-long program of events that helps them learn how to apply for college scholarships, build a resume, and to work with others. They will also learn the beauty and the challenges facing leaders of southern Illinois, as well as opportunities to continue their career in the area.

Each LEAD SI class is limited to 35 students who have exhibited leadership tendencies in their school and extra-curricular activi-

ties. If your high school sophomore or junior student is interested in being a LEAD SI student, visit www.connectsi.us/lead-si.php or

speaking with your high school guidance counselor. Applications must be returned by March 1, 2011.



SIEC Urges Caution When Using Back-Up Generators

Professional installation - an important safety step

During long-term power outages many rely on portable generators for emergency power. The growing popularity of portable electric generators has resulted in millions being placed in homes and small businesses across the nation. But it's estimated only a small percentage are hooked up correctly. Safe Electricity and Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative (SIEC) urge consumers to understand the proper safety steps that must be taken.

If installed and operated correctly, the use of standby or portable electric generators poses little danger, but improper installation or use could be dangerous to you and threaten the lives of your family, friends, neighbors and electric utility crews trying to restore service.

Consult and discuss your purchase options with a reliable vendor, your electric supplier and contractors. A qualified vendor or electric professional will know existing safety codes and the utility's safety requirements, and can help you select the best equipment for your needs and situation. **Heather Heun**

Properly connecting the generator into the system is a critical step for safe and effective use. A licensed professional should install a permanent, standby electric generator and can help with proper equipment for safely using a portable generator.

Members should be aware that if they wish to connect a generator into their home, building, or farm wiring system during a power outage, then a double-throw safety transfer switch must be installed. The transfer switch breaks the path of electricity between the power lines and your main electrical panel. SIEC offers these switches at cost for members and they should be installed by a qualified electrician.

During emergencies, many members think they can just pull the meter or put their breaker in the "off" position, then connect their generator into their home's wiring system. **However, this is a very dangerous practice and one which SIEC does not allow.** If the meter is accidentally installed, or if the breaker malfunctions or is accidentally turned on, then power from the generator would "backfeed" onto SIEC's distribution system, endangering linemen who will be working on the lines.

SIEC offers these tips for the safe operation and use of portable generators:

- **Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator.** Be sure you understand them before hooking up the generator.

- **Maintain adequate ventilation. Generators emit carbon monoxide.** Never operate a generator in your home, garage, or other enclosed building. Place it in a dry, outside location.
- **Never plug a portable electric generator into a wall outlet or connect directly to a home's wiring.** This can energize utility power lines and injure you or others working nearby. Electrical backfeed can also damage the generator and home electrical equipment.
- **Turn off generator and allow cooling before refueling.** Gasoline and its vapors may ignite if they come in contact with hot components or an electrical spark. Store fuel in a properly designed container in a secure location.
- **Protect your appliances.** Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit.
- **Use proper extension cords.** Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.
- **Shut down generator properly.** Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.
- **Remember maintenance between uses.** It's important to drain the gasoline from the generator while it is being stored. It's also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality and start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

These safety guidelines and basic operating instructions should be posted in the home and with the generator. For more information on generator safety and other electricity safety issues visit www.SafeElectricity.org or www.siec.coop.



