

Empowering tomorrow's leaders in Washington, D.C. during Youth Tour

Each year, hundreds of high school students from across the United States embark on an educational and inspirational journey to the nation's capital city. Sponsored by Illinois' electric and telephone cooperatives, 54 students departed Springfield, Illinois, by bus on June 14 to Washington, D.C., for a weeklong trip of a lifetime.

Shelby Electric Cooperative sponsored two students within its service territory, Jack McClain of Shelbyville and Maya Klotz of Edinburg.

Youth Tour began in 1964, after President Lyndon B. Johnson inspired the nation's electric cooperatives to sponsor youths to go to D.C. to educate young people about the role of electric co-ops and the significance of the legislative process. It became an annual tradition.

"Youth Tour is more than just a trip," said Faith Wheeler, Member Services Specialist. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that empowers future leaders to become informed, engaged, and active citizens. Many Youth Tour alumni go on to become leaders in their communities, inspired by this experience."

The event offers a unique opportunity for students to explore the nation's capital, meet their peers from across the state and beyond, and engage with the political process. Youth Tour not only highlights the importance of electric cooperatives but also fosters civic engagement and leadership skills.

The itinerary for the Youth Tour was packed with both educational and cultural experiences. The students visited major landmarks such as Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall. They also visited several museums, including the Smithsonian, Air and Space Museum, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"There's a lot more to Youth Tour than sightseeing," Wheeler said. "It also provides students with a deeper understanding of American history and government and the role electric and telephone cooperatives play in the communities they serve."

One way the students learned about cooperatives was by forming one themselves. The Chip 'N Pop Co-op is an engaging way to provide the Youth Tour participants with experience in understanding the fundamentals of the cooperative business model.

"This hands-on activity emphasizes the importance of teamwork," Wheeler said. "The students gained practical business skills and a deeper appreciation for cooperatives."

The students created their own snack shop cooperative by forming a nominating committee, electing a board of directors and hiring a co-op manager. Shelby representative Jack McClain served on the nominating committee. The students worked together to manage all aspects of the operation and



54 students from Illinois stop to pose for a picture outside of the White House.



Youth Tour participants Maya Klotz of Edinburg and Jack McClain of Shelbyville in front of the Washington Monument.

had an equal say in decision-making, just like the cooperatives that sponsored them on the trip.

In addition, the students voted for one of their peers to represent Illinois on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to give a speech in front of their peers. Cole Buchanan, representing SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, was selected as the 2024-2025 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead.

"The impact of Youth Tour goes far beyond Washington, D.C.," Wheeler said. "One of the most impactful parts of Youth Tour is the relationships that students build with their peers from different parts of the state and country. These connections often turn into lifelong friendships."

High school students who live within the service area of Shelby Electric are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to youthtour.coop or facebook.com/ILYouthTour.

85th Annual Meeting highlights

Shelby Electric Cooperative's (SEC) members gathered at the Shelby County 4-H Fairgrounds on Friday, June 7 for their co-op's Annual Meeting of Members. Prior to the meeting, the members were treated to a pork chop dinner served by the Shelby County Pork Producers, music by the Hood Family Band, and activities for children and adults alike.

The business meeting began at 1:00 p.m., when members heard updates from the co-op's leadership. Board Chairman Robert Holthaus welcomed the members and stated that the board is committed to the safety of both employees and members and is continuing to pursue member access to fiber internet in their homes.

In the financial report, Board Treasurer Greg Mackling announced that SEC is in good financial condition. He explained that in 2023, electric services sales added up to \$37 million, while it cost \$23 million to purchase the power supply. "That means for every dollar the co-op spent, 61 cents was spent to purchase

the electricity." Total margins for 2023 added up to \$3,407,976. The margins have been allocated and will be returned to the cooperative's members in the form of capital credits in the future.

President/CEO Josh Shallenberger provided a co-op update in his report. "We have had a lot going on this past year," he said. "The theme for the day is 'powerful past, future focused.' I am confident the cooperative is well-positioned with its current employee talent to continue the great work that has been done up to this point."

In addition to efforts made to provide fiber internet to members, Shallenberger discussed the continual improvements the cooperative is making with the electric distribution system to enhance reliability. Due to the many environmental changes and pending laws, the future landscape of how power is generated and supplied is ever-evolving. This led to a discussion with Eric Hobbie, President/CEO of Prairie Power Inc., SEC's power supplier. In a town hall meeting style, Shallenberger and Hobbie discussed electric distribution, power generation, reliability, and energy policy.

Hobbie commented, "As I look to the future, we spent the last 50 years building generation to match new demand. The new future may be more about managing the load, and what you can and cannot use to match the available generation at any time. This will be a big dynamic change that is going to affect the utility industry and cooperative member practices."

Shelby Electric Cooperative Scholarship winners Jessi Wright and Jay Blieler of Taylorville and Caroline White of Tower Hill were introduced at the meeting. The Association of Illinois Electric Cooperative (AIEC) President/CEO Craig Sondgeroth presented a brief statewide update and congratulated John Berns of Pana, who represented SEC as a



Directors Brent Lively of Taylorville, Greg Mackling of Dalton City, and Robert Holthaus of Stonington were reelected to 3-year terms.

winner of the AIEC Thomas H. Moore Memorial Scholarship.

During the meeting, the membership also voted on an amendment to SEC's bylaws. Bylaw changes require a majority vote of SEC members attending the annual meeting, and this one was approved.

In addition, an election was held for three seats on the board of directors. Robert Holthaus of Stonington, Greg Mackling of Dalton City and Brent Lively of Taylorville were reelected to 3-year terms to represent districts 1, 2, and 7, respectively.

After the meeting, the board reorganized and reelected the following officer positions effective June 7, 2024: Chairman, Robert Holthaus; Vice Chairman, Brent Lively; Secretary, David Keown; and Treasurer, Greg Mackling.



At the conclusion of the meeting, door prizes were drawn, and Larry Molloban from Taylorville was the grand prize winner of \$250 "Shelby Electric Dollars." President/CEO Josh Shallenberger, pictured right, presented Molloban with his prize.

SHELBY News

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Berns receives Thomas H. Moore Scholarship

Shelby Electric Cooperative is proud to announce that John Berns of Pana High School is one of 16 winners of this year's Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship. He is the child of James and Laurie Berns of Oconee. John competed for the scholarship with 285 other students from across the state. The \$2,000 awards are given each year to 16 children of electric co-op members, employees or directors. A 17th scholarship is reserved for a student interested in lineworker's college and will be announced at a later date. John will be recognized during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on August 1, 2024, in Springfield.

Candidates were judged on grade-point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay demonstrating their knowledge of electric cooperatives. Come this fall, John will attend Belmont University. Shelby Electric Cooperative is honored to have a scholarship recipient and is excited to see how he will represent the community.



Pana High School Graduate John Berns, pictured left, receives the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship from Shelby Electric Cooperative's COO Jim Matlock.

Summer Office Hours

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resume August 12
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