



Making their mark

Local students represent Shelby Electric Cooperative in D.C.

49 students from across Illinois pose for a picture with United States Senator Dick Durbin.

A select group of students representing electric and telephone co-ops across the state recently returned home following Youth Tour, a tradition spanning decades that sends students to Washington, D.C., for an unforgettable weeklong trip.

This year, 49 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives took part in the 2026 Youth Tour, held June 15-22. They visited the nation's capital for an immersive experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) sponsored two students within its service territory. These students included Shae Conder from Stewardson and Elizabeth Hampton from Windsor. They joined more than 2,000 students representing 44 states, for this annual event.

"Electric and telephone cooperatives across the state are investing in the next generation through Youth Tour," said Brooke Gross, member

services manager and facilitator of youth programs at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. "It gives students a chance to see our nation's history and government up close. Just as importantly, it helps them discover their own potential as leaders."

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives headquarters in Springfield, where they selected the co-op's board of directors. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making, and budgeting — giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate. All students were members of the co-op.

The Chip 'n' Pop Co-op leadership included Manager Josephine Meyer, Tri-County Electric Cooperative;

Board Chair Elizabeth Hampton, Shelby Electric Cooperative; Vice Chair Brenna Hays, Wabash Communications CO-OP; Secretary-Treasurer Isabella Smith, Menard Electric Cooperative, along with board members Iris Mount, SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, and Reece Whitley, Wayne-White Counties Electric Cooperative.

"Being part of this co-op helped us better understand what makes a cooperative different," said Hampton. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone — not just one person or company. I was humbled to be chosen for the board and to lead the Chip 'n' Pop Co-op as the chair."

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks, including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, and the U.S. Capitol, where they had the opportunity to meet U.S. Senator Dick Durbin. They also strolled the National

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Morrison receives Thomas H. Moore Scholarship



Nokomis High School Graduate Faith Morrison, right, receives the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship from Shelby Electric Cooperative's Member Services Specialist Faith Wheeler.

The cooperative is proud to announce that Faith Morrison, from Nokomis High School, is one of the 16 winners of this year's Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship. She is the child of Steve and Mindy Morrison of Rosamond. The program began in 1996 by awarding two \$1,000 scholarships each year. Since then, it has grown significantly. This year, 17 scholarships are being awarded in the amount of \$3,000 each.

Morrison competed for the scholarship with 293 other students from across the state. The \$3,000 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. Morrison was recognized during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on July 30, 2026, in Peoria.

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. This fall, Morrison plans on attending Lincoln Land Community College to earn her bachelor's degree in respiratory care. Shelby Electric Cooperative is honored to have had a Thomas H. Moore scholarship recipient for the sixth straight year.

Youth Tour continued from 18A

Mall and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they

joined hundreds of other teens from across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.

In addition, a student was selected to represent Illinois on the national Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to be interviewed for the position.

Corn Belt Energy Corporation's Colton Leonard was selected as the 2026-2027 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead. "It's so awesome that the co-ops are able to do this for us all," Leonard said. "Everyone comes from so many different perspectives, and getting to meet other individuals is just so empowering."

"These students arrive in Washington, D.C., not knowing

what to expect," noted Faith Wheeler, who coordinates youth programs at SEC. "By the end of the trip, they have built friendships, expanded their knowledge, and gained a better understanding of how they can make a difference in their local communities."

The week concluded with a farewell dinner and dance, and by the time students returned home on June 22, many said they felt changed by the experience. "I saw and learned so much history during the week and made some of the best mem-

ories with new friends. I would like to thank SEC for sending me on this trip. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience," explained Conder.

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



Shae Conder from Stewardson and Elizabeth Hampton from Windsor represented Shelby Electric Cooperative on the tour.

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Effective June 8-August 7



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Annual Meeting Highlights



Members of Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) were invited to the Shelby County 4-H Fairgrounds on Friday, June 5 for the co-op's 87th Annual Meeting of Members. Before the business meeting, members were served pork chop and pulled pork dinners prepared by Shelby County Pork Producers and had the opportunity to enjoy musical entertainment provided by the Hood Family Band, children's activities, and a Live Line Safety Demo with Steve Hancock.

After the singing of the national anthem and an invocation by Dustin Theiss, Board Secretary David Keown called the meeting to order. Chairman Robert Holthaus introduced SEC's 2026 scholarship recipients Olivia Mizeur, Owen Mateer, and Karalyn Endsley. Faith Morrison was also introduced as one of the Thomas H. Moore

Scholarship recipients through the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Holthaus then reported on the board of directors' appointment of the committee on credentials. Committee Chairman Scott Ohmes

confirmed a quorum with 660 active members present, and the 2025 annual meeting minutes were approved.

Reports were then given by Chairman Robert Holthaus and Treasurer Greg Mackling. Mackling reported that 2025 sales of electric service came to \$42.1 million; \$25.3 million was spent to purchase that electricity. "That means for every dollar the co-op spent, 66 cents was spent to purchase electricity," he explained, adding that total margins for 2025 were \$3,522,255. In addition, he shared that in 2025, ShelbyFiber

received \$6.7 million in federal grant funds to assist in the construction of its fiber network.

Amy Jackson, legal counsel for the cooperative, followed, explaining the process behind director elections. "I can report to you today that valid nominating petitions and statements of qualification were received from the

for the At-Large Director B position, which covers Districts 1, 6, and 7, John Gardner of Taylorville," she said. The candidates ran unopposed and were each elected to a 3-year term on the board.

President/CEO Josh Shallenberger then addressed the membership, drawing a parallel from the co-op's beginnings to current day. "This was an organization that was formed back in 1938 by a grassroots movement of farmers," he said. "It is worth noting it took years and decades to get where we are today — it's not something that happens overnight ... [similar to] what we are doing with ShelbyFiber right now." Shallenberger discussed the cooperative's vegetation management efforts, which amounted to 983 miles of line in 2025, as well as upgrades to infrastructure, including pole replacement and conductor upgrades. In addition, he highlighted the staff's continued commitment to safety, with 1,141 days since the co-op's last lost time accident.

"We push to the edge of what can be accomplished in a relatively short time," Shallenberger said, emphasizing that the grid is continually being upgraded to accommodate future technology. "Cooperative members' willingness to assist in this effort is crucial, and it is appreciated."

Following the adjournment of the meeting, door prizes were drawn, among them the grand prize of \$250 "Shelby Electric Dollars," won by Linda File of Shelbyville.



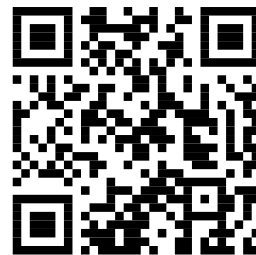
At the conclusion of the meeting, door prizes were drawn, and Linda File of Shelbyville was the grand prize winner of \$250 Shelby Electric Dollars.

following individuals not less than 60 days prior to the date of [this] annual meeting, as required according to the bylaws — from District 4, Tim Lenz from Strasburg, District 5, Nick Dunaway from Shelbyville, and



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Nick Neuses & his family
for being ShelbyFiber's
100th subscriber**

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