

TEXAS YOUTH TOUR ALUMNI MAGAZINE 2015

# Y = T YOUR





# YOUR ADVENTURE

starts here



“The maturation of youthful teens was remarkable. I received numerous letters from parents after the trip saying: ‘I don’t know what you did on that trip, but my son/daughter is a different person—more attentive to homework, watches the nightly news, has a positive outlook on life and has made many new friends.’”

**Dennis Engelke** | TEC Youth Tour coordinator | 1976–2000



# CONTENTS

**YOUR TOUR** | TEXAS YOUTH TOUR ALUMNI MAGAZINE

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# YOUR YOUTH TOUR



**FOR 80 YEARS, ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES** in Texas and across the country have been doing what they've always done—powering communities and empowering members to improve the quality of their lives. It's that sense of purpose that has always guided cooperatives and their members.

The same sense of purpose is represented in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour. For the past five decades, electric cooperatives have been empowering young people to improve the quality of their lives, their communities and their futures by sending them to Washington, D.C., to represent their hometown cooperatives and see their American heritage.

In 1965, Texas Electric Cooperatives shepherded its first group of 58 young Texas men and women to Washington, joining their peers from across Co-op Country to meet with their congressional representatives to discuss important issues and broaden their view of the world.

Electric cooperatives have rich traditions and deep Texas roots. Our state is where the first co-op energized a home in 1936 using funds from the Rural Electrification Administration. It's also the birthplace of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who, as a congressman, wrote in 1959, "I think of all the things I have ever done, nothing has ever given me as much satisfaction as bringing power to the Hill Country of Texas." With those remarkable ties between Texas and Washington, it's no wonder Texas co-ops have such a tenured track record of sending young adults on Youth Tour.

To celebrate the past 50 years, TEC launched Your Tour magazine. The publication, to be published yearly, aims to unite the approximately 3,700 amazing Texas alumni by bringing back memories and providing ways to get in touch. My hope is that Your Tour magazine reconnects alumni and inspires the next generation of cooperative young men and women to make a difference.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mike Williams  
President/CEO  
Texas Electric Cooperatives



MARTIN BEVINS

## BY THE NUMBERS

10 days  
40-plus destinations

## TEXAS

120 students in 2014  
53 participating cooperatives  
13 chaperones  
3,719 total students since 1965

## U.S.

43 states represented  
1,644 students in 2014  
311 chaperones  
50,000 total students since 1964

# GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR

# FACTS

## WHAT

An all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., under the guidance of chaperones to tour national historic sites, experience cultural diversity, meet U.S. congressional representatives, and learn about electric cooperatives and the energy industry

- Touring famous places
- Laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
- Visiting museums
- Seeing a production at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- Going on a Potomac River boat cruise and dance
- Participating in National Youth Day with 1,000-plus students from around the country
- Meeting U.S. representatives and senators

## WHO

High school students and their peers from around the nation who have won contests at their local electric cooperatives

## WHY

Electric cooperatives responded to then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, an advocate of rural electrification, who in 1957 suggested “sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.” Sponsoring students on the tour also follows the cooperatives’ guiding principle of concern for the community, a concept that includes supporting young people.

## WHERE

From Dallas—or Austin, part of the tour for the first time in 2015—to Washington, D.C., via airplane for a whirlwind tour

- Supreme Court and Library of Congress
- Washington National Cathedral
- Arlington National Cemetery
- George Washington’s home at Mount Vernon
- Smithsonian Institution and Holocaust Memorial Museum
- Jefferson, Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials
- Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Veterans and World War II memorials
- Washington Monument
- Kennedy Center

## WHEN

About 10 days in June

## HOW

Local electric cooperatives have individual methods for selecting Youth Tour winners. Many hold annual competitions such as essay, speech or video contests. Each winner’s travel expenses—valued at more than \$2,000—are covered by her or his co-op and sponsors, and coordinators at Texas Electric Cooperatives and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association handle all the arrangements.

# YOUR HISTORY



## OF A LIFETIME, FOR A LIFETIME 50-YEAR HISTORY OF TEXAS YOUTH TOUR

BY SUZANNE HALKO

**FIFTY YEARS AGO**, teenager Ethel (Mabry) Ellison from the Texas Panhandle saw President Lyndon B. Johnson up close in the U.S. capital. Her early trip to Washington, D.C., inspired a lifetime of travel.

In 1970, young M. Ray Perryman from East Texas walked spellbound through the National Gallery of Art on the National Mall. He since has visited almost every major art museum in the world.

A decade later, 15-year-old Carrie Campbell from Central Texas witnessed oral arguments in the U.S. Supreme Court. She grew up to become a lawyer.

In 1991, Kristin (Bason) Sargent from North Texas beheld the Lincoln Memorial with inspiration and hope. She later pursued a degree in government and history.

In 2008, Daniel Sanders from south Central Texas represented the state on a nationwide youth advisory board, which exposed him to the needs of people living in developing nations. Today, he's helping build Haiti's first electric co-op.

Three years later, Annie McGinnis from far North Texas explored Old Town Alexandria, absorbing the bustle of shops and restaurants. She's now studying recreation and tourism.

These Texans—and thousands more like them from 1965 to today—participated in an ongoing annual youth program that yields life-changing results. They are among the 3,719 Texas participants of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which cele-

brates its 50th anniversary in 2015. The program started after then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, an advocate of electric co-ops, suggested sending youths to Washington.

Sponsored by electric cooperatives in Texas and 42 other states, the Youth Tour program sends teenagers who have won their local co-op contest on a supervised trip to Washington to be immersed in U.S. government, history and culture.

On what has been described as the trip of a lifetime, students see more of the capital in a few days than is possible for the average tourist. Careful planning allows the young visitors to meet their congressional representatives. And on more than one occasion over the life of the program, Youth Tour participants have seen the president.

"It's seeing your government in action. It's bringing your history book to life. It's the embodiment of the national fabric that made this country great," says Dennis Engelke, Texas Electric Cooperative's former Youth Tour coordinator for 25 years. "You get a deeper appreciation for being in America and a deeper appreciation for freedom and sacrifice."

**THE MAGIC OF YOUTH TOUR** These experiences have transformative powers, as the youths return home changed. "When they come back, they come back matured," says Esther Dominguez, TEC's Youth Tour coordinator. "It's magic."

1950s | 1960s

**1957**

Then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson suggests Youth Tour



"If one thing goes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."

Lyndon B. Johnson

**1963**

John F. Kennedy assassinated



**1964**

Beatles' U.S. debut



**1964**

First NRECA-coordinated Youth Tour



**1965**

Texas participates in Youth Tour with 58 students

POSTCARD AND KEY: RANDALL MAXWELL, LBJ: FRANK MUTO | LBJ LIBRARY, JFK: AP PHOTO, YOUTH TOUR 1964: NRECA, YOUTH TOUR 1967: NRECA, LBJ: NRECA, MARINE: NATIONAL ARCHIVES, MOON LANDING: NASA





That maturation manifests right away. Youth Tour parent Alea Peña says daughter Madeline, who went on the 2013 trip, discovered “confidence that she never knew she had.”

Lessons from Youth Tour also helped youths understand how national events affected their families. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, one young woman realized the scope of the war in which her father served and why he returned altered. She wrote a poem with the message, “Daddy, tonight I understand.”

The outcomes of Youth Tour are also long lasting. The trip often inspires educational and career choices, the desire to travel, an appreciation for electric cooperatives and, in some cases, love. Several pairs of Youth Tour participants got married. More than one attendee has been elected to Congress or to the Texas Legislature. Many return to serve their home communities or work at their local electric cooperatives.

“You’re planting a seed at a time when teenagers are at the most vulnerable growth period,” Engelke says. “You’re cultivating civic pride, and it carries on as they grow up to be adults, and that is a result of the Youth Tour program.”

**FROM BUSES TO AIRPLANES** Although core elements of the Youth Tour program have remained intact over its 50 years, parts of the program have transformed, just like the youngsters.

Involvement has more than doubled while costs covered by

co-ops have increased. On the first Texas Youth Tour in 1965, 27 co-ops paid about \$100 per youth. This June, 125 students are scheduled to attend at a cost of \$2,500 each, an expense still covered by the sponsoring cooperative. TEC and other sponsors provide money—a total of more than \$30,000 in 2015—for T-shirts, meals, backpacks and more.

Transportation methods have also changed. During the first 40 years or so of the Texas Youth Tour, students traveled by bus from Dallas to Washington. The six days on the road eating, sleeping and singing forged deep bonds. “When I asked the teens during our last night together what they enjoyed the most about the tour—almost without exception—[they’d say] the bus ride!” Engelke says.

The bus rides also allowed participants to experience more of the country’s places, events and circumstances. In the 1960s, Ellison first encountered segregation in the Deep South when a restaurant refused to serve one of her peers, an African-American. In 1976, the nation’s bicentennial, the group made an excursion to Jamestown and Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1982, the itinerary included a stop in Knoxville, Tennessee, to attend the World’s Fair.

More recently, students fly to Arlington, Virginia, on what’s often a young person’s first flight. And this year, for the first time in Texas Youth Tour history, the state delegation departs from Austin after a tour of state governmental and historical sites.

The intense schedule, barrage of “firsts” and distance from

“That trip was one of the absolute highlights of my life. I’m still so appreciative of those experiences and what the co-op invested in me and the people that spent time with me because it widened a little country girl’s world in ways that I would never have dreamed possible.”

**Ethel (Mabry) Ellison | Lighthouse EC | 1965**



**1965**  
U.S. goes to war with Vietnam



**1969**  
First man on the moon





family create deep ties among the students, as they find solidarity in the shared experience. “The bonding among the youths is phenomenal,” Engelke says. “Many of the youths said they made stronger friendships during the [then-] 12-day trip than they have with friends they have attended school with for 12 years.”

Amid all these grown-up-style activities and responsibilities, Texas Youth Tour participants also get the chance to play. The teenagers have dinner and a dance on a Potomac River boat cruise. And during a talent competition dubbed “Youth Tour Idol,” students perform for a chance to win cash prizes. Even winning Youth Tour Idol can lead to more opportunities. Peña placed in the 2013 competition for her vocals and was invited to open the 2014 TEC Annual Meeting in Galveston with the national anthem.

**A STEP IN LIFE'S JOURNEY** The journey with electric cooperatives continues for one exceptional Texas youth serving on the Youth Leadership Council. In 1976, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association formed the council to advise the NRECA and local co-ops about youth activities and relay information on industry issues, according to a 1978 Rural Electrification magazine article.

Texas teen Clint Cook from Aspermont, an area now served by South Plains Electric Cooperative, became the board's 1977–78 president. In an address, excerpted in *Rural Electrification*, Cook said: “I am here because someone cares, and that someone is

you. It is the rural electric cooperatives who have afforded me the opportunity to see my nation's heritage; not in a book, but with my eyes, in Washington, D.C.”

Michaela Gardner is Texas' 2014–15 representative to the YLC. She holds similar awe for Youth Tour and credits her sponsoring co-op, Houston County EC, for making her trip possible. “Pretty much the whole trip was a whole new experience,” Gardner says. “It was a breath of fresh air. I was around all these kids who all excel.”

After Youth Tour, Gardner returned to Washington for a leadership conference and attended the NRECA's February annual meeting in Orlando. On June 10 in Austin, she's scheduled to speak at the 2015 Texas Youth Tour anniversary celebration and reunion at the Sheraton Austin Hotel.

The last Texas Youth Tour Reunion was in 1985. The event commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Act and the 20th anniversary of the Texas Youth Tour. About 150 Youth Tour alumni attended the Austin ceremony. “How long has it been since you last had contact with a fellow Youth Tourer?” wrote Engelke in the 1985 reunion invitation. “Well, that's too long!”

And that was 30 years ago. Since then, generations of new participants have experienced this trip of a lifetime for the opportunity to, as Gardner says, get a glimpse of “all the amazing things in the world that I have yet to find.”

1970s | 1980s

“One of the first sites we visited was the Lincoln Memorial. The Texas delegation gathered on the front steps and sang ‘America the Beautiful,’ much to the surprise of the other tourists. We had suddenly become aware of a closeness to our country and to each other that we never felt before.”  
**Paulett (Tielsch) Renfro | Fayette EC | 1970**

**1974**  
 President Richard Nixon resigns after Watergate



**1975**  
 “Saturday Night Live” premieres



“I was just in awe at the discipline and precision of the guards [at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier], and my emotional reaction was overwhelming at the respect and honor that was given to those who died serving our country.”  
**Kerri (Arnold) Mercer | Swisher EC | 1975**

YOUTH TOUR 1996: TEC. NIXON: NRECA. SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE: © LYNN GOLDSMITH | CORBIS. BANK AND COIN: RANDALL MAXWELL. SOLDIERS: NRECA. BUNTING: © ISTOCK.COM | SOUBRETTE. CARTER: NRECA



# YOUR REUNION



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, YOUTH TOUR TEXAS PLANS REUNION CELEBRATION

BY SUZANNE HALKO

**TEXAS CELEBRATES** the 50th anniversary of electric cooperatives' participation in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour in 2015. To mark the occasion, the Texas trip coordinators added another day for special events: tours of Austin landmarks plus a 50th anniversary celebration and reunion, June 10.

**A NEW DEPARTURE** Before 2015, Youth Tour students left for Washington, D.C., from Dallas. But this year, Texas co-ops sponsored an additional day so students can experience Austin.

"We are the biggest state, so we should be giving them some Texas history before we leave for D.C.," says Esther Dominguez, Texas Electric Cooperatives Youth Tour coordinator. "Why not start from Austin, where they can visit the Capitol and see the museum?"

The Austin day kicks off with a tour of the Capitol, followed by a picnic lunch on the Capitol grounds. Next, the group visits the Bullock Texas State History Museum before taking part in the Youth Tour anniversary celebration and reunion.

**YOUTH TOUR REUNION** Invitations went out this spring to as many of the 3,719 past Texas Youth Tour participants as co-ops could find. They're all invited to join this year's 125 youths, tour coordinators and co-op representatives for an evening of memories.

"The purpose of the reunion is to connect past and present Youth Tour participants with their cooperatives and memories by providing an opportunity to reminisce about this life-changing trip," says Martin Bevins, TEC vice president of Communications & Member Services, who has served as a chaperone on multiple Youth Tours. "These people shared something unique, and they're part of a special group. It's time we brought them together."

"These people shared something unique, and they're part of a special group. It's time we brought them together."

—Martin Bevins

TEC Vice President  
Communications & Member Services

Among the event's featured speakers are TEC President and CEO Mike Williams and Youth Tour alumni, including Michaela Gardner, sponsored by Houston County Electric Cooperative in 2014.

"Because the trip did have such an impact on my life, I'm really excited to go and talk to these kids before they go," Gardner says, explaining that she is also eager to address her fellow alumni. "I am really excited to share my Youth Tour experience with them so it can bring back memories from when they went."



**1976**  
U.S. bicentennial



**1976**  
Youth Consulting Board formed (now Youth Leadership Council)



**1976**  
Texas sends one bus with 38 people on Youth Tour

**1979**  
Sony releases Walkman



# YOUR MEMORIES



-2013-

1980s | 1990s

**1981**

First woman appointed to U.S. Supreme Court



“I was one of the youngest members of the 1985 Youth Tour ... Nevertheless, I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. While all the other members on the tour visited our nation’s Capitol, I walked across to the Supreme Court. I lucked out; the Court was in session ... My lasting impression of the tour is the openness of our government—how ordinary citizens can access justice and impact decision-makers.”

**Carrie Campbell (lawyer since 1995) | Pedernales EC | 1985**

**1985**

Youth Tour reunion and 50th anniversary of REA



**1986**

Space shuttle Challenger explodes



MEMORY BOOKS: RANDALL MAXWELL. YOUTH TOUR 2013: ANNIE MCGINNIS. SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR: AP PHOTO | JOHN DURICKA. CHALLENGER: NASA. 1984 BUTTON: RANDALL MAXWELL. LINCOLN MEMORIAL: NRECA. BERLIN WALL EXHIBIT: NRECA. WWW: © ANDREAS FISCHER | DREAMSTIME.COM



**YOUTH TOUR ALUMNI LEAD STORIED LIVES** Traveler, economist, photographer and philanthropist—some landed jobs through connections they made. Others discovered interests, such as art collecting and photography, that they enjoy to this day. No matter what year they traveled to Washington, D.C., over the 50 years of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, all participants have a story to share about how the trip shaped their lives. **BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS**



**ANNIE MCGINNIS | GRAYSON-COLLIN EC, 2011** Her mother cried when Annie McGinnis, then 15 and a bit scared, waved goodbye at the Dallas hotel. The 2011 Youth Tour was McGinnis' first-ever solo trip away from her home in Van Alstyne.

"I was so shy because I'd been raised in a small town and had the same friends all my life," she recalls. "But my three roommates welcomed me right away, and I quickly learned during the tour to open up and talk to people."

Now 19, McGinnis studies recreation, park and tourism sciences at Texas A&M University. Since 2012, she's served as the Youth Tour photographer for the Texas Youth Tour. McGinnis initially proposed the idea to Esther Dominguez, Texas Electric Cooperatives Youth Tour coordinator, after returning from her 2011 trip.

Four tours later, McGinnis has turned into an ace photographer. "She just gets better and better," Dominguez says. "Annie knows exactly what we're looking for and what I need. She knows where to go to get the pictures. Now she just totally does it on her own."

What's more, McGinnis assists with TEC's annual meetings, inspiring Dominguez to call McGinnis her sidekick. **"Working with Esther has inspired me to want to be an event coordinator," McGinnis says.**

Likewise, McGinnis strives to inspire others. "Before I got to go, our co-op had to ask students to apply for the Youth Tour," says McGinnis, who was sponsored by Grayson-Collin Electric Coop-

erative. "At the 2011 annual meeting in August, I thanked everyone and shared about my experiences on the Youth Tour. The next year, they had nine applicants, and more the next year. In 2013, Grayson-Collin started sending two students instead of one."

Even though the 2015 Youth Tour will be her fifth, McGinnis still can't wait to go. "Yes, we'll see all the same places, but it's the people who make the experience so rich," she says. "Every year, I'm just as excited to be a part of the tour so I can watch the relationships and friendships that form. I love being there on the sidelines with my camera, capturing all the memories."

**DANIEL SANDERS | MID-SOUTH SYNERGY, 2008** Daniel Sanders, 25, remembers exactly when he knew he wanted to devote his life to helping others.

After going on Youth Tour in 2008, Sanders entered Texas A&M University to study business. He attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans the next spring to fulfill his duties as the Texas representative on the Youth Leadership Council.

Sanders recalls serving lunch at the annual meeting, when the words of a guest speaker changed his life. "When I heard Abraham Awolich, a man from South Sudan, share how street-lights brought hope in his poor country," he says, "I was stunned."

Because of that presentation, Sanders—who now works as a construction supervisor with NRECA International—is helping

"Back then, kids didn't travel as much as they do today. My only reference for government or history was what I saw in Fayette County ... The blend of history, government, and the sheer experience of the trip ... drove home the concept of a larger world and the sheer magnificence of our country."

**Sarah (Muras) Koehl | Fayette EC | 1988**



**1989**

Fall of the Berlin Wall



**1989**

World Wide Web invented



# YOUR IMPACT



-2010-

to build the Haiti Rural Electric Cooperative, the country's first consumer-owned utility. In Haiti, the electric utility is government-owned, and the power sector is one of the weakest in the Western Hemisphere, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Sanders, a Madisonville native, also credits Mid-South Synergy for allowing him to participate in the 2008 Youth Tour, which ultimately led him to New Orleans and other opportunities.

Deeply affected by Awolich's words, Sanders changed his business major to community development. In 2012, he received his degree and continued working for Mid-South Synergy as he had in college.

Kerry Kelton, CEO of Mid-South Synergy, says he took a chance on hiring Sanders when he called asking for work so he could finish his degree. But he's glad he did. "Daniel is a passionate young man who, while attending the Youth Tour, found a career," Kelton says. "Passionate young men like Daniel are the future of our program."

Sanders went to work for the NRECA in August 2013. He and his wife, Amanda, live in Côteaux, Haiti, where he is helping establish affordable, reliable electric service, and she teaches English as a volunteer at local schools.

"Things have definitely worked out for me professionally, all because of the Youth Tour," Sanders says. **"I'm living my dream because the co-op network helped me out."**

**M. RAY PERRYMAN | WOOD COUNTY EC, 1970** As an economist, M. Ray Perryman, 62, travels extensively, helping large companies around the globe deal with complex issues in innovative ways through his Waco-based firm, The Perryman Group.

Quiet and shy, Perryman, a high school junior from the small East Texas town of Lindale, won a speech contest held by Wood County Electric Cooperative. The award earned him a trip to Washington, D.C., on the 1970 Youth Tour.

"Seeing Washington for the first time was more impressive and grand than I had ever envisioned," Perryman says. "Now I travel to Washington routinely, but I still never fail to be amazed by the city's grandeur."

While on the Youth Tour, Perryman met his U.S. congressman, the late Herbert Ray Roberts. Perryman remembers sitting in the gallery of the House of Representatives while the elected officials debated whether to give 18-year-olds the right to vote.

He also saw the nation's founding documents. He says he literally felt chills upon seeing the signed Declaration of Independence and Constitution at the National Archives Museum.

"But our visit to the National Gallery of Art was the ultimate highlight," Perryman says. "I had expected to be just another bored teenager being dragged somewhere. But I was completely captivated by the artwork I saw painted by the Dutch masters, impressionists and more. I walked out totally hooked for life! I now have an art collection of my own and have visited nearly

1990s | 2000s

**1992**

Texas Co-op Power goes from tabloid to magazine



**"Young people experiencing our nation's history and government firsthand garner a better understanding of American struggles, achievements and sacrifices. The Youth Tour makes history books come alive."**

**Dana R. Williams | Pedernales EC | 1990**

**1995**

O.J. Simpson verdict



**1996**

"Macarena" hit single gets nation dancing



**1997**

Hale-Bopp comet visible



DVDS: RANDALL MAXWELL. YOUTH TOUR 2010: NRECA. SIMPSON: AP PHOTO | MYUNG CHUN. MACARENA: © ISTOCK.COM | 4X6. COMET: © ROB JONES | DREAMSTIME.COM. YOUTH TOUR 1990S: TEC. COLUMBINE: AP PHOTO | ALEX BRANDON.





**ANNIE MCGINNIS**  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC, 2011



**DANIEL SANDERS**  
MID-SOUTH SYNERGY, 2008



**M. RAY PERRYMAN**  
WOOD COUNTY EC, 1970



**ETHEL (MABRY) ELLISON**  
LIGHTHOUSE EC, 1965

every major art museum in the world.”

A quirky decision led to his successful career. “I was from a small high school and had no idea what an economist was,” Perryman explains, “not until [I took] my first economics course at Baylor University after I flipped a coin to choose between economics and psychology.”

He went on to earn a doctorate in economics from Rice University. His higher education coupled with what he learned on Youth Tour gave Perryman a deeper understanding and appreciation for government. **“I have led a very rewarding and blessed life,” he says, “and the Youth Tour was an important early milestone on the journey.”**

**ETHEL (MABRY) ELLISON | LIGHTHOUSE EC, 1965** Ethel (Mabry) Ellison, 66, and her husband, John, love to travel. So much, in fact, that they have sponsored church mission trips with teenagers to destinations such as Alaska, the Bahamas and Washington, D.C.

“I’ve always wanted to do for others what the Youth Tour did for me,” says the Austin resident. “Back then, my family could never have afforded to send me on a trip like that. I’m still so appreciative of the experiences that I had and what Lighthouse [Electric] Cooperative invested in me. The trip widened the world for a little girl from Petersburg—me.”

Ellison, then Ethel Mabry, attended Youth Tour the first year that Texas participated in the program. She went on to graduate

from college, marry, work and raise two daughters.

“During our tour, I remember seeing President Johnson up close as he walked by us while we were on the grounds of the Capitol,” she says. “And I remember laying a wreath on President Kennedy’s grave in the Arlington National Cemetery. That night, I called home collect on our party line to tell my parents we were going to be on the national news so be sure and watch TV. They did!”

Teenage Ellison also learned about cultural differences and regional attitudes on the trip. Until the early 2000s, Texas Youth Tour students traveled by bus across several states.

“On our way home through the Deep South, we stopped at a café,” she tells. “After we’d all sat down at tables, Ken [Loyd], our trip leader, told us that the café wouldn’t serve us unless a black student in our group went to the back of the restaurant to eat. That was my first time to experience prejudice. Without any discussion, all 66 of us stood up, got back on our two buses, and left. I was stunned by what happened and didn’t fully understand it. But I was also so proud of what we did as a group.”

Years later, Ellison still treasures her Youth Tour memories. “That trip in 1965 was one of the absolute highlights of my life!” she says. “The bottom line for me is that traveling is not a luxury but rather an educational experience that gives us an opportunity to understand peoples and cultures different from our own. **My Youth Tour was life-changing, and I am most grateful to have had the experience. I will always support rural electric cooperatives.**”

**“The wonderful experience of traveling to Washington, D.C., played a huge part in my decision to obtain my bachelor’s degree in government and history ... The opportunity given to me almost 22 years ago has provided me a lasting encouragement and motivation that I apply in every arena of my life.”**

**Kristi (Bason) Sargent | Hilco EC | 1991**



**1997**

First “Harry Potter” book published



**1999**

Columbine school massacre in Colorado



# YOUR CONNECTIONS



**AS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS**, I am often asked questions regarding the future of our nation. While I believe we face many challenges, I am most optimistic about our future and the direction of our country when I visit with young men and women who have a desire to lead and serve. I have had the pleasure of meeting with Texas' Government-in-Action Youth Tour participants at the U.S. Capitol, and I have always been impressed by the desire to get involved with our government and enter the public policy debate.

The Texas Youth Tour does an incredible job of sparking the development of our future leaders through educational and cultural development. As you continue to delve further into the history of our nation and get more involved in our government, the Texas Youth Tour will provide the foundation for you to flourish.

America prides itself in its diversity. We need an equally diverse Congress to represent the many cultures, ideologies and interests of the American citizenry. In Congress today, we have doctors, farmers, engineers, teachers, lawyers, accountants, military officers—just to name a few. Before I came to Washington, D.C., I ran a small residential construction and real estate development business in Lubbock.

There is no one clear path to becoming involved in government. I recommend you find something you enjoy—such as history—and become an expert in it. You can apply any field to serving your fellow Americans as long as you understand your fellow citizens' needs and concerns.

I hope you continue to stay interested in politics and current events. Meeting with students participating in the Texas Youth Tour makes me confident that our country can remain prosperous and vibrant for generations to come. I hope to see you on your next visit to our nation's capital.

Sincerely,

Randy Neugebauer  
Texas Congressional District 19  
R-Lubbock

2000s | TODAY

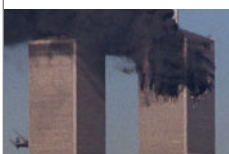
**2000**  
New millennium



**2000**  
Texas sends three buses with 121 people on Youth Tour



**2001**  
9/11 terrorist attack



**2002**  
"American Idol" debuts



**2004**  
Facebook launches



**2005**  
First Youth Tour plane flight to D.C.



YOUTH TOUR 2013: JOHN SPEISS. PIN: RANDALL MAXWELL. GLASSES: © BELIEVEINME | DREAMSTIME.COM. 9/11: AP PHOTO | MOSHE BURSUKER. AIRPLANE: © IMDAN | DREAMSTIME.COM. YOUTH TOUR 2014: NRECA. YOUTH TOUR GROUP: MARTIN BEVINS. FIREWORKS: © MARILYN GOULD | DREAMSTIME.COM





## HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

**TEXAS YOUTH TOUR ALUMNI** have more ways to stay connected than ever before. Stay in the loop by reading Your Tour magazine, joining alumni on Facebook and visiting TexasYouthTour.com.

“The Government-in-Action Youth Tour has changed the lives of so many Texas co-op members over the past five decades, and we wanted to give this special group of people a forum to reconnect and share their life-changing stories with the rest of Co-op Country,” says Martin Bevins, Texas Electric Cooperative’s vice president of Communications & Member Services. “The new Your Tour magazine and the alumni Facebook page are two ways for participants to share their stories, inspiring and informing the next generation of Youth Tour participants.”

### FACEBOOK

The Texas Youth Tour Alumni Facebook community provides a forum for conversation among Youth Tour alumni and allows TEC to share up-to-date news. To find friends, share memories and stay up to date on future alumni activities, visit [facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni](https://facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni).

### WEBSITE

At TexasYouthTour.com, the Texas Youth Tour website, viewers can learn about the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, send in Your Tour magazine story ideas and find out how to apply. The website provides:

- Articles and videos about Texas Youth Tour
- Digital archives of Your Tour magazine
- Links to electric cooperatives in Texas
- Youth Tour application information

### SEND US YOUR STORIES

Alumni, do you have memories about your Texas Youth Tour experience that you would like to share? Send your story, comments or photos to [youthtour@texas-ec.org](mailto:youthtour@texas-ec.org).

### GET YOUR TOUR MAGAZINE

For Texas Youth Tour alumni to receive complimentary issues of Your Tour magazine, email name, address, Youth Tour year and sponsoring cooperative to [youthtour@texas-ec.org](mailto:youthtour@texas-ec.org).

“Seeing all the names of soldiers [on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall] who sacrificed everything for our freedom gave me chills. You could see people looking for past family members’ names, and it felt like the past soldiers talked to you as you walked the memorial.”

Kassidy Martin | Swisher EC | 2006

**2007**  
Apple unveils iPhone



**2015**  
Youth Tour departs from Austin



**2015**  
Texas Youth Tour’s 50th anniversary celebration and reunion

**2015**  
75th anniversary of Texas Electric Cooperatives





# MAKE YOUTH TOUR YOUR

