

TEXAS YOUTH TOUR MAGAZINE 2017

FOUR

TAKE THE TRIP
of a LIFETIME —
from AUSTIN to
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INSIDE: 10 REASONS TO APPLY | ALUMNI REFLECTIONS & PROFILES | WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY

YOUR YOUTH TOUR



OVER THE PAST 80 YEARS, the rich heritage of the electric cooperative program has been woven into communities across the state. The co-ops' purpose—to improve their members' lives—is nowhere more evident than in the 52-year tradition of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

This longstanding program sends the next generation of leaders to our nation's capital to interact with lawmakers and represent their co-ops and the communities those co-ops serve. They return home armed with knowledge they can use to benefit their communities and their lives.

This year, Texas electric cooperatives will send a record 147 students on the trip of a lifetime. Once in Washington, D.C., they'll join more than 1,700 future leaders from across the country to experience what then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson in 1957 described as an opportunity to “see what the flag stands for and represents.”

If you are reading this magazine as an alum of the program, you are part of something special. If you are considering applying, I'd encourage you to do so. It will change your life.



Best Regards,

Mike Williams
President/CEO
Texas Electric Cooperatives



DREAM DREAMS

Lyndon B. Johnson challenged

*Youth Tour participants to “dream dreams
and make them come true.”*

—Texas Co-op Power, 1968

Stick To It

Collecting stickers and pins is a Youth Tour tradition. Students meet peers from all over the U.S. and exchange mementos representing their states.



▲ In 2012, Coby Brakebill, sponsored by Lamar Electric Cooperative, collected them all and stuck them on his backpack and ID holder.



▲ Noe Sandoval, sponsored by South Plains Electric Cooperative in 2016, keeps them in a memory book.





Students leap for joy at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C., above, and explore the Texas Capitol, below, in 2016.

“It 100 percent is the trip of a lifetime that I am not going to forget.”

—LORYN HUDSON | PEDERNALES EC | 2016

Relive Youth Tour!

“I’M THANKFUL that the Bandera Electric Cooperative selected me to go on the [Youth] Tour in 1989,” Eric Wylie posted on the Youth Tour Facebook page. “Aside from the great experience that I got during the bus ride to and from D.C., as well as the time in the capital, I met a lifelong friend, Lee French (from Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative).” The two got together recently and pulled out pictures from the trip, and “on a whim,” he said, “decided to re-enact these two pictures just for fun.”

Grab a Youth Tour buddy and post your own re-enactment photo on facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni.



Eric Wylie, left, and Lee French—1989 and today



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Participants Put Youth Tour in Their Own Words

On the cover: At the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in 2016 are, from left: Mary Stanford, Bowie-Cass EC; Bryce McWhirter, Lea County EC; Meagan Corser, CoServ; Avory Isaac, Golden Spread EC (Lighthouse EC); and Spring Coleman, Wood County EC.

Record Attendance: MORE TEXAS STUDENTS THAN EVER ARE SET TO GO ON THE 2017 YOUTH TOUR. PARTICIPATION BEGAN IN 1965.



Catch of the Day

THE SIGHT OF A FISHERMAN on the Tidal Basin near the Jefferson Memorial lured 2015 Youth Tour participant Patrick Minor like, well, a fish to bait.

"I'm from Texas. I really love fish," says the Henderson native, who borrowed a spare rod from the stranger. The fisherman hooked a carp but without a net couldn't heft the 5-pound fish onto the bank.

"His line snapped," Minor says, "and I bailed into the river right there, grabbed it [by the gills] and came out of the river with it."

The leap soaked his walking shoes, but Minor had packed boots as backup and wore them for the rest of the trip.

Rusk County Electric Cooperative sponsoree Minor, now 20, is an engineering major at Texas A&M University.



CARVING OUT A PLACE



Except for his trip to

Washington, D.C., on Youth Tour, Ryan Drapela hasn't traveled far from his family's horse farm near El Campo, but his woodworking business has sent his name all over the world.

Drapela, 21, started his own business, Drapela Woodworks, in high school after taking a woodshop class. After one of his projects won local then statewide competitions, requests for his handiwork started rolling in. Texas Electric Cooperatives ordered cutting boards to auction off for a scholarship fund.

Several years later, Drapela Woodworks has delivered handcrafted products to every U.S. state and six countries.

Youth Tour "opened your eyes," says the young entrepreneur. "I'm a little bitty minnow in a huge lake. It makes you get after it a bit more. I want to be smarter and better."

Drapela, sponsored on Youth Tour by Wharton County Electric Cooperative in 2014, is now at Texas A&M University with a full-ride scholarship to study agribusiness and rural entrepreneurship.

See his handiwork at [etsy.com/shop/drapelawoodworks](https://www.etsy.com/shop/drapelawoodworks).

Living Monument

VISITORS TO THE NATIONAL MALL might stand before a monument and wish that the memorial could talk.

In a way, the Korean War Veterans Memorial did speak to Cassidy Devault and Nicole Rohrbach during the 2014 Youth Tour. Deaf Smith Electric Cooperative sponsored the two Panhandle teenagers on the trip.

While taking a break in the shade, “an elderly gentleman was sitting next to us on the bench,” Rohrbach says, “so we struck up a conversation.”

That man was part of a sponsored trip, too. The Korean War veteran was visiting his memorial as a guest of the Honor Flight Network. The three were sitting right in front of the Korean War Veterans Memorial.

“It is just an overwhelming feeling to be sitting here, seeing a memorial that is made for you,” Devault remembers him saying.

The memorial’s 19 stainless steel statues didn’t need to speak that day. Devault and Rohrbach met a living memorial who spoke for them.

Says Devault: “It was just so neat to actually talk to someone who went through it.”



Below: Cassidy Devault, center, and Nicole Rohrbach meet a Korean War veteran at the monument, above, dedicated to his service.

By the Numbers

20

visits to congressional leaders in 2016

40

pizzas consumed in 2016

45+

destinations

52

-year legacy

58

co-ops in Texas participating

3,000

-mile round trip

3,883

Texas students since 1965

50,000+

students nationwide since 1964



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YOUR TOUR | TEXAS YOUTH TOUR

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Youth Tour takes guts.

Celebrated teacher, deputy press secretary or doctor in training—these alumni all will tell you that nerves were hard to ignore leading up to the trip. New faces, new places and a bunch of weird accents took them out of their comfort zones. Years later, they'll all tell you that the initial worry is worth the rewards.

YOUR
ALUMNI

BY CHRIS BURROWS

Texas Secondary Teacher of the Year

honoree Martha Saucedo can point to many moments in her life that led to her success. Youth Tour is one.

“It opened a lot of doors and opened my way of thinking,” she says. “It gave me a reason to believe that there was so much more out there for me.”

Getting there wasn’t easy for her, however. She needed the help of a good teacher.

As a junior at Menard High School in Central Texas, Saucedo entered Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative’s Youth Tour essay contest at the prodding of English teacher Laura Austin. When the results came in, Austin broke the news to Saucedo that she’d been chosen.

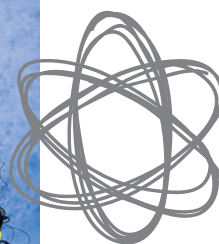
“The next week I came back to school, and I told her, ‘I really can’t do this. My mom and dad don’t really have the extra money to help me out with this,’” Saucedo says, also admitting that she was a little scared.

Youth Tour is an all-expenses-paid trip, but students typically take extra cash for souvenirs. Austin collected \$200 in a coffee cup passed among school staff to make sure Saucedo went.

“She said, ‘Sometimes you have to go out there, even when it’s scary,’” Saucedo remembers.

The trip to Washington, D.C., was her first trip alone outside the state. She participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery and remembers standing in awe at the Lincoln Memorial.

“It was an incredible experience,” Saucedo says.



In 2004, nine years after graduating high school—after dropping out of junior college, becoming a single mom, working as a housekeeper, and being denied

food stamps and Medicaid—Saucedo earned a degree from Angelo State University. She will begin her 13th year as a high school teacher this fall.

“This paper, this adventure, this co-op changed my life,” Saucedo says. “I found potential in myself, and a teacher took an opportunity to believe in me.”

When the principal at Brady High School nominated her for the statewide award that she would claim in October 2016, it again was Austin who encouraged Saucedo to submit the necessary paperwork.

“She said, ‘You know you have to fill out that application,’” Saucedo says. “So I did.”

For Saucedo, it’s her students—not the banner with her name on it that hangs at Brady, the acclaim or the speaking engagements—that are the greatest rewards.

“I’m hired to come into the school and to give them the opportunity to change their lives the way Ms. Austin changed mine,” she says. “I want to be able to give them wings and just let them fly. ... That’s the joy in teaching.”

Martha Saucedo, left, and fellow Youth Tour students pose with servicemen in 1994.





field takes sacrifice and commitment.

“It just showed me that—I know it’s kind of cliché—but that one person really can make a difference,” he says. “In order to be a leader, you have to be a servant.”

For Mueller, meeting government officials on Capitol Hill and observing the dedication of the U.S. armed forces at Arlington National Cemetery revealed a level of dedication and focus that he hadn’t seen before.

“Just going and seeing what’s outside our small little corner of Texas opened my eyes to what I could do and how I could help and how I could serve others,” he says.

Mueller returned home motivated to make a difference and eventually decided that pursuing medicine would be the best way to put his passion of serving others into practice. He recognizes a need among medically underserved rural populations and may take his calling in that direction after the residencies that follow his 2020 graduation.

“In this country, there is this real need for primary care physicians, real hands-on family people,” he says. “I want to say I’m gravitating toward that because it’s a major need, and I love interacting with people.”

Above: Brendan Mueller, left, participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Arlington National Cemetery in 2006.

He credits Youth Tour, with its examples of patriotism, leadership and selfless service, for setting him on his chosen course: “It inspired me to strive to be a leader.”

Ask him, and Brendan Mueller will confirm that the first year of medical school is tough.

“It’s been overwhelming at times,” he says.

Ask him if he’s looking forward to the end, and he’ll tell you he hopes to continue to be a student long after graduation. He’s already learned a lot, too, having earned a bachelor’s degree in biomedical science and a master’s of public health in epidemiology from Texas A&M University since graduating from La Grange High School in 2008.

Mueller says it was his experience on the 2006 Youth Tour, sponsored by Fayette Electric Cooperative, that inspired him to pursue a career dedicated to serving others. That trip to Washington, D.C., also imparted that being a leader in any



Mueller at Youth Tour 2006

By the time she was a junior

at Plains High School, Stephanie Addison already had attended leadership camps, visited Washington, D.C., and won a contest through Lea County Electric Cooperative—a coloring competition in third grade.

Still, she cites Youth Tour as a defining experience that continues to open doors in D.C., where she now works as a deputy press secretary for the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

“All the opportunities that I’ve had and the people that I’ve met, it all kind of trickles back to the Youth Tour,” she says. “I may have gotten here eventually, but I don’t think I would have had the exposure to know that I could do it.”

A seventh-grade trip to Washington gave Addison what she calls “Potomac fever”: “It was almost magical, to sound corny and all.” So when she got past the essay and the interview rounds to represent LCEC as a high school student in D.C., she was delighted but nervous.

“I was so worried I wasn’t going to make any friends and just worried that this was not going to be right for me,” she says. “How wrong I was.”

Being surrounded by more than a hundred other ambitious Texas students from small towns like hers had a big impact on Addison.

“I came out with a better view of the world, and I came out with motivation,” Addison says, citing friends made on the trip as a reason to forego community college and go directly to Texas Tech University, where she roomed with her Youth Tour roommate and got a degree in public relations and communications. “The tour really inspired me to take myself to the next level and know that I was capable of going to a [four-year] university, of going back to Washington, D.C., someday.”

During college, Addison worked as an intern for the U.S. House then



afterward for congressmen Randy Neugebauer —whom she met for the first time on Youth Tour—and Jeb Hensarling. She’s worked for the agriculture committee since 2015, a job that gives her incredible pride as a farmer’s daughter who grew up around the cotton and cattle businesses.

“I feel like I’m making an impact,” she says. “I feel like I’m helping my family. I’m not just thousands of miles away from the people I love for no reason. I’m actually making a difference in their day-to-day lives. We all serve our country differently, and this is the best way that I know how.”

On Youth Tour, Stephanie Addison, left, met Holly Bearden, and the two became college roommates.



HAVE AN ALUMNI EXPERIENCE TO SHARE?

Email youthtour@texas-ec.org
or post on [facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni](https://www.facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni).



10

REASONS TO APPLY FOR YOUTH TOUR

You could stay home this summer, or you could kick it off with a 10-day trip to Washington, D.C. On Youth Tour, you'll laugh until your face hurts, crane your neck at tall buildings, stand humbled by national memorials and get inspired by leaders. You'll love it so much that you'll weep when it's over. Need more convincing? Here are 10 reasons to apply for Youth Tour.

1. **It's free.**

Your electric cooperative, statewide association and sponsors completely cover the cost of Youth Tour, including airfare, hotels, meals and attractions—a \$3,265 value per student.

Go to TexasYouthTour.com to find your co-op and apply!



You spend days touring popular attractions in D.C., including memorials, monuments and museums. You'll go on a cruise on the Potomac River and see a show at the Kennedy Center.

2. **IT'S FUN.**

3. **You get to travel.**

You get to leave your summer job, siblings and routine behind for 10 days! No making your bed for 10 days!



4. **You meet new people.**

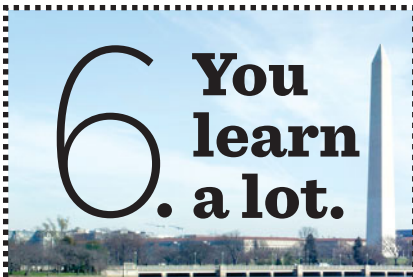
You'll make new friends from among the more than 1,700 teens from across the nation, including more than 145 from all over Texas.





Washington, D.C., is rich in history and heritage. That's why Youth Tour was created more than 50 years ago, inspired by Lyndon B. Johnson, to give you the opportunity to discover "what the flag stands for and represents."

6. You learn a lot.



You are surrounded by venues that focus on science, art, history, space, American culture and so much more. You return home with a ton of newfound knowledge.

5. You get a classic American adventure.



7. YOU CAN GAIN LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE.

Any Youth Tour participant can apply to be on the national Youth Leadership Council. One student selected from each state returns to D.C. in July for a leadership workshop.

8. *You can make your voice heard.*

You spend a day on Capitol Hill and meet with your elected officials. You get face time with some of the most powerful people in the nation and an opportunity to talk about what's important to you and your community.



9. You can put it on your résumé.

When you apply for college or a job, Youth Tour can help you stand out. The trip offers experiences that can shape your college application, essays and career path.



10. YOUR

You get plugged into the electric co-op community and are in a great position to learn about scholarships, internships and jobs offered through this network.

You connect with opportunity.



BY SUZANNE FEATHERSTON

Four Texas students stride down the steps before the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. Being watched by more than 100 of their peers and other spectators makes them nervous, but the four focus on the honorable task they've been singled out to perform.

In front are Mark Torres and Loryn Hudson, followed by Cameron Hall and Jude Rios. They're experiencing an event that puts their lives in perspective with the history of this nation.

All are here because they won places on the 2016 Government-in-Action Youth Tour through their electric cooperatives. Of the 127 Texas students sponsored on Youth Tour that June, they applied and were selected to take part in a wreath-laying ceremony.

This formal act recognizes the unidentified who died while serving in the U.S. military. The tomb site contains the remains of unknown service members from World War I, World War II and the Korean War. Presidents, foreign dignitaries and organizations, including Texas Electric Cooperatives since the 1960s, have partaken in this patriotic ritual.

"It felt pretty extraordinary knowing that you're one of the very few people that is able to cross the line to place the wreath," Torres says.

As tradition dictates, the students follow the guidance of a soldier from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, known as The Old Guard. On his cue, they march toward the tomb in silence. Torres and Hudson take a red, white and blue wreath from another soldier and place it before the white sarcophagus, inscribed with this tribute: "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

For the students, the ceremony makes real the sacrifice of many U.S. service members in securing the nation's freedom. Fellow Americans died for it, and, under different circumstances, the remains in that tomb could have belonged to any of their own loved ones who served in the military.

Torres, whose uncle fought in the Vietnam War and died from leukemia as a result of exposure to chemical warfare, says he felt "sad because I know there are a lot of soldiers that have gone miss-

PROFOUND CEREMONY PUTS HISTORY IN PERSPECTIVE



ing in action or haven't returned to their family. And [I] also felt sad because my own relatives have died of war or the side effects of war. And I felt happy because I was doing something to honor my family."

From left, Loryn Hudson, Cameron Hall, Mark Torres and Jude Rios laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Hudson's great-grandfather served in the Air Force. "I'd love to honor my great-grandfather by honoring, through the process, those he served with, looked up to, and inspired," she wrote in her application essay. "I loved Gramps just like the soldiers in The Tomb were loved in their lifetimes."

Hall's grandfather also served in the Air Force. At his funeral, an honor guard presented the family with a folded American flag. The gesture made an impression on Hall, who says he respects customs to remember the fallen. Out of respect, he wore his Eagle Scout uniform for the ceremony. "Just as they [the soldiers] had a uniform and were representing the military and America," he says, "I wanted to represent the youths of America."

Both of Rios' grandfathers served in the military. He called them as soon as he found out he had been selected to participate in the ceremony. "They were really proud," he says. "Not everyone is as lucky as my two grandfathers. I knew I had to give all of them my respect."

After laying the wreath at the tomb, Hall saluted, and the remaining three young Americans placed their hands on their hearts to the solemn call of taps.



CAMERON HALL, from Cherokee, was sponsored by Central Texas EC. After graduating high school, he plans to attend Texas A&M University to study biomedicine.



LORYN HUDSON, from Kyle, was sponsored by Pedernales EC. She plans on studying psychology in college after graduating from high school.



JUDE RIOS, from Cedar Creek, was sponsored by Bluebonnet EC. He is studying government at the University of Texas.



MARK TORRES, from Edinburg, was sponsored by Magic Valley EC. He plans to attend Columbia University in New York and major in biomedical engineering.

BEAUTIFUL
PEOPLE,
BREATHTAKING
SIGHTS

BY TAYLON KNORPP

your. voices

PARTICIPANTS PUT YOUTH TOUR
IN THEIR OWN WORDS



Taylon Knorpp, Greenbelt EC, 2016



At the beginning of Youth Tour, we heard nonstop that this was the “trip of a lifetime” and that we needed to take advantage of it.

We, not knowing what we were getting into, easily discarded that.

We didn’t like waking up early and running on five hours of sleep. We didn’t like standing and walking for hours on end while the heat and humidity left an exact sweat imprint of our Youth Tour backpacks.

As we got further into our trip, the friends that we made in Austin turned into great friends.

We viewed the beautiful monuments erected to commemorate the most important people in United States history. We stood where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his *I Have a Dream* speech. We stood at the base in awe at the gigantic Jefferson, Washington and Lincoln memorials. We walked through in amazement at Washington’s home on Mount Vernon and the Smithsonians. We relished the pure history radiating from the Declaration of Independence in the National Archives.

under our eyes and comparing hideous bed-heads.

By the end of the trip, I couldn’t imagine living life without all of the beautiful people I befriended on Youth Tour, and I will never forget all of the breathtaking sights I was fortunate enough to see with my own eyes.

I don’t care how many times it has been said and how cliché it may sound now, the only accurate way to describe Youth Tour is by saying it is the trip of a lifetime.

Once we started forming these everlasting friendships and witnessing these beautiful ceremonies and monuments, it made every single morning worth it. My friends and I looked forward to waking up and seeing the bags

Taylon Knorpp, sponsored by Greenbelt EC in 2016, graduates high school in 2017 and plans to pursue a journalism or business degree at Texas State University or Stephen F. Austin State University.



Youth Tour students, left, at Mount Vernon in 2016

Emily Carabajal, San Patricio EC; Jana Steen, Jackson EC; and Timothy Kroschk, San Patricio EC, at Mount Vernon in 2016

SHARING STORIES, EXPERIENCING HISTORY

BY TIMOTHY KROSCHK



Youth Tour was one of the most exciting and memorable experiences that I have ever had, and it will remain with me as one of my fondest memories.

I got to see the great capital of our nation and meet some of the most powerful people in America.

It was mind-boggling to see some of the things that Washington, D.C., has to offer, from the old and fragile documents forged at the beginning of our country, to the even more ancient fossils of beings millions of years gone, to the vast archives of literary knowledge held in the Library of Congress.

Not only does our capital store antique wonders and knowledge, but it also is home to some of the greatest powers in America and the world. We met with the representatives from each of our respective districts and learned what exactly they do.

The sights and experiences were all wonderful, but the people are what made this trip really memorable. I met many great people, not only from Texas but from all over the U.S., some of whom shared with me a common ambition, and it was refreshing to speak to people who shared my interests.

Before Youth Tour, I had never really enjoyed the company of others; instead, I preferred to remain solitary. But on the trip, I decided to give it a shot and start hanging out with new people. While I did not experience a radical transformation into becoming an extrovert, I did realize that sometimes it is better to be with others, as everyone has something interesting to say and is worth listening to.

This is what made the trip really special: To see people from all over the country—speaking with them and sharing stories was a special experience that will stay with me forever. Youth Tour was amazing.

Timothy Kroschk, sponsored by San Patricio EC in 2016, is studying neuroscience at the University of Texas.



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Email youthtour@texas-ec.org or post on facebook.com/texasyouthtouralumni.



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