

## Washington Youth Tour: A Trip of a Lifetime

*Area students experience Washington, D.C., and learn about cooperatives*

From June 7 to 14, four local students had a trip of a lifetime. They joined more than 40 other Arizona and southeastern California high school juniors who toured Washington, D.C., as part of an Arizona delegation that gathered for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Washington Youth Tour.

Representing Graham County Electric Cooperative were Camilla Larson from Safford High School, Brock Jones from Thatcher High School and Hayden Ashby and Trae Nelson, both from Pima High School.

On this all-expense-paid trip, students learn about cooperatives and how the government works. Attendees visit memorials and museums such as Arlington National Cemetery, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Smithsonian Museums, the Holocaust Museum. They toured Old Town Alexandria, the National Cathedral, took a riverboat cruise on the Potomac, observed a military parade, visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, saw the White House and interacted with members of Congress.

This was the first year funds were provided by the Graham County Electric Foundation, which are primarily from unclaimed capital credits and Operation Round-Up. Educating and helping youth in our community is one of the reasons the GCEC Board of Directors formed the GCE Foundation.

Students spoke highly of the trip.

"I had an awesome experience on the Washington Youth Tour," Hayden Ashby says. "I met many new people and made lots of friends from all around the country. I learned so much about this great country. It really made me appreciate it."

"My WYT experience was absolutely incredible," Brock Jones says. "I had so



**From left, Youth Tour participants Hayden Ashby, Trae Nelson, Camilla Larson, Brock Jones, all representing GCEC, and Madison Nelson from Sulphur Springs Valley Electric.**

much fun and learned so much at the same time. I was able to make an abundance of new friends, and experience the memorials and museums for the first time."

Trae Nelson agreed. In joining Brock in a report to the board of directors, he said it was an experience he will never forget.

"The youth tour was the highlight of my summer," Trae says. "I loved seeing the White House and Capitol especially."

All of the Arizona delegation had the opportunity to apply for the NRECA Youth Leadership Council. One student from each state is selected to return to Washington, D.C., in July for a leadership workshop, which focuses on the electric cooperative industry.

Camilla Larson was selected from Arizona. The purpose of the YLC conference is to build leadership and public

speaking skills, and to enhance the delegates' knowledge of the energy industry and the cooperative form of business.

Camilla says both trips were unforgettable and is thankful for the opportunity to go.

"WYT gave me a greater appreciation for those who serve our country, both in the military and government," she says, noting she has a greater appreciation for co-ops across the nation and everything they do for their members.

As part of YLC, Camilla had to prepare a 5- to 7- minute speech about something that inspired her during Washington Youth Tour. Her speech is on page 4.

All of the students express their appreciation to Graham County Electric Cooperative and Graham County Electric Foundation for a trip of a lifetime. ■