

Local Students Headed to Washington, D.C.

Graham County Electric Cooperative is sending four students on a trip of a lifetime

Four area high school juniors have been selected to join an Arizona delegation of 50 students and chaperones attending the 2016 Washington Youth Tour in June. Tevin Broadhead and Aleesha Clonts of Safford High School, along with Brianna McBride and Conner Palmer of Thatcher High School, will represent Graham County Electric Cooperative for a weeklong tour in Washington, D.C.

GCEC's Washington Youth Tour requires students to take a written test and complete a 350-word essay on an assigned topic. This year's topic was, "If you could fix one of the problems facing today's youth, what would the problem and the solution be?"

After scores were tallied, finalists were interviewed by a panel of judges, and the winners selected.

The Arizona delegation will gather with more than 1,700 other high school juniors from across the nation and see Congress in action. Students are taught the importance of our nation's history, the democratic process and how co-ops work.

Tevin Broadhead

Safford High junior Tevin Broadhead is the son of Michele and Jonathan Driver and Lyle and Dayna Broadhead.



Tevin Broadhead



Aleesha Clonts



Brianna McBride



Conner Palmer

In his essay, Tevin says he thinks about combatting the negative effects that technology has on today's youth.

Tevin writes that one solution might be to have schools focus on developing and strengthening social skills and emphasize the correct use of technology. He says having corporate sponsors promote motivational speakers in schools to emphasize what is expected in the workplace may be helpful.

Besides being in National Honor Society, Letterman's

Club, and participating in sports, Tevin loves reading, running, learning new languages, hunting, fishing, riding horses and being outside.

He would like to carry on a family tradition and join the United States Marine Corps with a military occupational specialty in tactical air operations module/air defense technician or infantry.

His recommendation letter states Tevin is observant and comprehends things quickly and is able to teach and lead

his peers.

Tevin says he is a people person who understands how to work with others to achieve a specific goal and appreciates the opportunity to represent GCEC.

Aleesha Clonts

The daughter of Cord and Emily Clonts, Aleesha is involved in many Safford school activities, including Future Business Leaders of America, Interact, Best Buddies, soccer and tennis. She loves playing the piano, baking, beekeeping and baby-sitting.

Aleesha writes in her essay that she believes motivating youth to succeed is a problem facing America today. Some solutions might be to let students with good grades get out early for lunch, give specific students Fridays off or excuse high-achieving students from taking finals.

By helping motivate students now, they will realize learning, working hard and getting good grades really does matter. Students will have a brighter future and can be a positive contribution to society.

Aleesha's recommendation letter says she is committed, focused and is dedicated to extracurricular activities and classes. Aleesha has proven that through hard work and perseverance, she can accomplish tasks in a timely manner and with accuracy.

Aleesha believes she will make a good GCEC representative for the tour because she is honest, curious, cheerful and helpful.

Aleesha would like a career in the medical field, and is leaning toward becoming a veterinarian or a pharmacist.

Brianna McBride

Thatcher student Brianna McBride is the daughter of Bryan and Nadine McBride.

She is involved in the community by raising animals for the Graham County Fair, varsity triathlon, Operation Christmas Child, Make a Difference Day, helping provide Christmas for a family in need, cleaning cemeteries, volunteering at a nursing home, and participating in the Angel Tree Program that provides Christmas gifts for children and adults.

Brianna's essay was about how technology has become a dominant force in everyday life. Youth are becoming so addicted to and reliant on cell phones and social media that they are unable to function without them, writes Brianna in her essay.

Simply put down the phone and spend quality time with people, she writes. Most teenagers do not notice how big of a distraction and problem their cell phones are. Parents need to educate and help their teenagers use their phones wisely.

Brianna's recommendation letter says she is smart and takes school seriously. She is a well-rounded individual, has effectively served in many leadership positions and is a great example.

Brianna plans to graduate from a four-year university and pursue a career in home health.

Conner Palmer

Conner Palmer believes the more educated a person is, the more empowered they become. His parents, Michael and Julie Palmer, along with his teachers, have taught him to be eager to learn.

Conner wrote in his essay that "the problem" isn't the problem; the problem is how you handle the problem. He believes the more technology we have, the less face-to-face time we have. Youth have forgotten how to speak to people face to face. Technology should be mastered and used in a way that will help us reach our full potential as individuals. Limiting our time on devices will give us social opportunities to grow and develop lasting personal relationships with others.

Like the other winners, Conner is involved in many activities, including Boy Scouts of America, church and school choirs, cross-country and track, football, basketball, National Honor Society and is junior class vice president at Thatcher High School.

Conner says he is courteous and kind to those around him and gets along well with people of all ages.

"I'm clean in my appearance, language and conduct and will not lower my standards of living for others," he says.

Conner is looking at the nursing program at Northern Arizona University to become either a nurse anesthetist or anesthesiologist.

"I want to learn and grow," he says. ■

Employee Spotlight

Wes Reidhead Takes on Gas and Water Superintendant Duties

Wes Reidhead is the gas and water superintendant for Graham County Utilities, as of August 2015, assuming the duties vacated by retiring Jason Hughes.

Wes has worked in different capacities with GCU, starting in 1998 as a helper in the gas & water department. After performing a variety of duties for about seven years, he left in 2006 and worked with El Paso Natural Gas building pipeline. He returned in January 2007 as GCU's gas and water department foreman.

"Whether it is being involved with consumers' trouble calls or providing estimates for a new service, I love working with the customers," he says. "I enjoy challenges and solving problems."

Frustration sets in when Wes is dealing with GCU's older gas and water systems that were purchased in 1989.

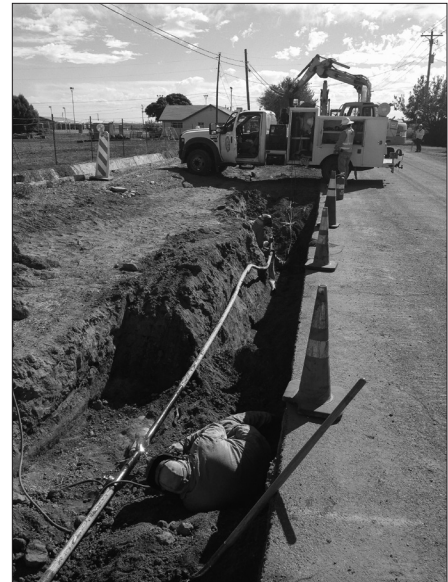
"I'm looking forward to bringing GCU into today's world," he says. "My goal is

to use new technology and work toward updating our systems".

Looking for the most efficient way of providing safe and reliable service to the consumer is important to Wes.

"I think the things that stand out to me when it comes to Wes Reidhead is his work ethics, honesty and the fact he is very trustworthy," says retiring General Manager Steve Lines. "Wes has taken the new position as our gas and water superintendant and has already faced some big challenges, such as the major gas outage the week before Christmas. He not only did an outstanding job getting services back on but has outlined some things we can improve on. Wes is a dedicated professional at what he does and is always concerned with the safety for our members and employees. GCU's future is definitely in good hands with Reidhead's oversight."

His peers say he is easy to get along



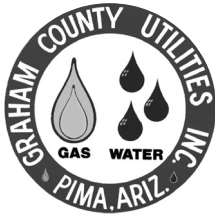
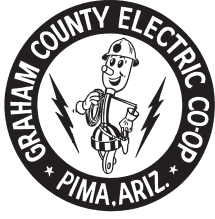
with and a team player. Prior to coming to GCU, Wes manufactured pumps at Sun Pumps in Safford.

Graduating from Snowflake High School, Eastern Arizona College brought him to the Gila Valley, where he met his wife, Keri. They have four kids ages 17, 14, 11 and 7. Being involved with family activities keeps Wes busy when he is not at work. Wes also enjoys hunting and fishing. ■



Left, Wes Reidhead brings a lot of experience to his new duties as gas and water superintendant.

Above, Wes is comfortable working in the field, here he welds a gas line.



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Manager's Message

Change Is Certain

Benjamin Franklin said there were only two things certain in life: death and taxes. I believe we need to add a third certainty.

Throughout the 240-year history of the United States, change has occurred with certainty.

As with many organizations, Graham County Electric and Graham County Utilities are going through some changes. Changes in technology, regulation and governance. With change, new opportunities and new ideas are created.

As part of the change and with recent retirements here at GCEC and GCU, we want to introduce our new management team.

Randy Hawkins has been employed with the

co-op for more than 27 years. His responsibilities include supervising all metering activities, customer service and new services, as well as purchasing agent for the electric, gas and water utilities.

Kirk Gray has been the finance manager for the past six years and recently accepted the responsibilities of the general manager for GCEC and GCU.

Dennis Kouts has been with the co-op for more than 39 years and has experience in many of the operational functions of all three utilities. Dennis' responsibilities include oversight of all operational activities of the electric, gas and water utilities. Dennis is also the

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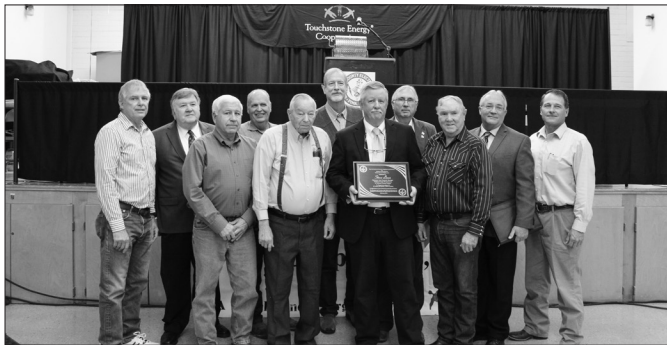
Meet the new management team at Graham County Electric and Graham County Utilities. Seated, from left, is Meter Department Supervisor Randy Hawkins, General Manager Kirk Gray and Operations Specialist Dennis Kouts. Standing, from left, is Communications, Human Resources and Benefits Administrator Diane Junion, Assistant Electric Line Superintendent Trent Bingham, Safety and Loss Control Coordinator Brent Wiltbank, Finance Manager Than Ashby, Gas and Water Superintendent Wes Reidhead and Electric Line Superintendent Rusty Sherman.

71st GCEC Annual Meeting Summary

Graham County Electric Cooperative held its annual membership meeting February 13. Board of Director incumbents re-elected were: Reuben McBride, District 1; Robert Reed, District 2; Tommy Clonts, District 3.

State and federal cooperative summaries were provided. Recognition was given to retiring General Manager Steve Lines. Retiring CFC Regional Vice President Kathy Buhl Witter and professional engineer Bob Witter were named honorary GCEC members.

Numerous door prizes were awarded. Brian Wright and Cherie Lines were grand-prize winners of televisions. ■



GCEC and GCU directors bid farewell to retiring General Manager Steve Lines.



President Reuben McBride, left, presents thank you plaques to retiring General Manager Steve Lines and retirees Kathy Buhl Witter of CFC and professional engineer Bob Witter.

Manager's Message

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manager of the electric utility's distributive generation program, known as the Sun Watts program.

Diane Junion came into our cooperative family from another cooperative, Arizona State Savings and Credit Union, three and a half years ago. Diane's primary responsibilities are human resources and benefits administration. She is also the co-op's communications coordinator.

Trent Bingham has been with the co-op for more than 14 years. His responsibilities include supervision of the day-to-day operations of the electric utility, and assisting with new services construction and substation operations and maintenance.

Brent Wiltbank joined the co-op in October of 1999. Brent has held several positions in the cooperatives, including GPS/GIS specialist. Brent recently completed the requirements to become the co-op's certified loss control and prevention manager. Brent oversees all safety aspects for GCEC and GCU.

Than Ashby has been employed by the co-op for nine years. He recently became the finance manager. Than oversees all aspects of the finances of both GCEC and GCU, including rate filings and compliance filings with regulatory oversight agencies.

Wes Reidhead has been employed with the co-op for almost 18 years. He recently was named the gas and water utility superintendent. His duties include oversight on all operational aspects of the gas and water utilities, including new services and regulatory compliance.

Rusty Sherman has been with the co-op for 25 years, serving in many capacities, including electric line foreman, assistant electric line superintendent. He recently was named electric line superintendent, which includes oversight of all operational and regulatory aspects of the electric utility.

This is your new management team at GCEC and GCU. As with any new management, some change will occur. We will make some changes in how we operate and maintain our electric, gas and water utilities. We will make changes in how we communicate with our members and employees. What will not change is our commitment to providing you, our member/owner, safe, reliable and affordable electricity, natural gas and water.

—General Manager Kirk Gray