

The Trip of a Lifetime

Washington Youth Tour offers leadership skills and a history lesson to high school kids

By Diane Junion

Margaret Mead once said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Four local students had the privilege of spending a week in Washington, D.C., to see government in action and to visit the memorials of forefathers who formed this nation, perhaps planting the seeds

Students Brianna McBride, Conner Palmer, Aleesha Clonts and Tevin Broadhead, along with chaperones Lynette and Tad Jacobson traveled with another 45 students from Arizona and Southern California to tour the nation’s capital.

“I still feel as if it were a dream, with standing on hallowed grounds of Arlington and gazing at the countless rows of my brothers and sisters laying side by side as martyrs for their country,” says Conner, a student from Thatcher High School. “I looked at the amazing memorials built to honor and pay tribute to some of our nation’s greatest leaders.

“I was brought to tears reading the constitution and was able to stand with nearly 1,000 youth to salute and pay respect to our beautiful flag. This trip and experience has taught me I can be leader and make a difference.”

Brianna, also from Thatcher, says, “I gained greater appreciation for our country and the sacrifices that are made to keep our country free. As we visited Arlington cemetery and attended the military parade of the Iwo Jima monument, I realized the sacrifices that have been made so I can have so many freedoms, and the people that have helped shape this nation.”

Tevin, a student from Safford High



From left, the Graham County delegation includes chaperones Tad and Lynette Jacobson, Conner Palmer, Tevin Broadhead, Aleesha Clonts and Brianna McBride.

School, says his favorite part of the trip was the reverence felt at Arlington National Cemetery. Seeing all those who

served and died while protecting our country was moving.

“I never realized how patriotic



Washington was,” says Aleesha, also from Safford. “I’ve always heard of the death counts at the Arlington Cemetery in history, but going there and seeing all of those soldiers was insane. They pinned names to those numbers and made it way more personal. And just when you think you’ve reached the end of the cemetery,

Above, the Arizona delegation, which joined 1,700 other students from across the country. Left, the Washington Monument. Right, a Marine stands guard the Tomb of the Unknowns.

there’s another hill with even more white crosses.

At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, during the changing of the guard, I was watching the well-trained soldiers marching, and yet the air was filled with such respect and patriotism. It made me think of my great-grandpa who served as a Marine.”

Chaperones Lynette and Tad noted that in addition to Arlington National Cemetery, the peace and reverence felt during the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns was a tremendous experience. Tad is a history teacher for Safford High School. He says he could keep going back every year and still learn something different, and noted this was a great opportunity for the kids.

The students and chaperones advise other local juniors to apply for this trip, as it was an experience of a lifetime. The application process begins mid-October for the 2017 trip. Contact GCEC for details. ■



Graham County is on Facebook

Graham County Electric Cooperative and Graham County Utilities is now on Facebook. Please like and share



with your family and friends who are on our lines. The purpose of our page is to present helpful information and matters of interest to GCEC and GCU members.

Scholarship Winners Announced

Graham County Electric is excited to provide scholarships to six students from five local schools.

Greg Smith graduated from Safford High School and is excited for the next chapter in his life. Born in Middletown, Ohio, he was sick and struggled to survive. After two years of being in and out of hospitals, the doctors recommended he move to the desert.

Around age 15, he landed in Safford and found teachers and people ready to help. After playing football as a freshman, he found huge benefits in FFA.

“The qualities I learned from my coaches and teammates carried over to every aspect of my life and helped me to succeed in the FFA and automotive circles for the next several years,” says Greg.

Safford teachers, coaches and volunteers have prepared Greg for the future. His parents, Scott and Brenda Ratliff, express pride in his accomplishments as FFA Star Chapter Businessman for 2015 and 2016, autos secretary in 2016. He graduated with a 3.5 GPA and ranked 42nd in his class of 168. He is attending Eastern Arizona College and majoring in engineering.

Alexandra Alvarado, from Mt. Graham High School, was born in Denver, Colorado, and moved to Safford when she was 5. Alexandra attended Safford Schools most of her life. She plans to pursue the medical or psychology field at Eastern Arizona College.

Alexandra, the daughter of Santos Alvarado, has a 1-year-old son.

Corrie Hawkins is from Thatcher High School and ranks 17th out of 109 in her class.

Corrie volunteered at the Graham County Rehabilitation Center to help with Special Olympics and in the back-to-school clothing drive. While at THS, Corrie participated in the art and fashion club.

She is attending Eastern Arizona College to study graphic design, then transfer to a four-year university. Corrie is the daughter of Betsy Kay and Mark Layton Hawkins.

Camryn Wilson, born in Phoenix, is from Pima High School, with a graduating class of 55. Her parents are Kiley Pearson and Rory Wilson. Camryn participated in PHS choir and show choir

for two years. She is attending Eastern Arizona College and plans to become a film director.

Savannah Talgo of Ft. Thomas High School is the daughter of Geron and Tammie Talgo. She ranks 7th in her class of 26 and loves math and reading. Savannah participated in art club, Skills USA, Future Business Leaders of America and the March of Dimes. She is attending Eastern Arizona College.

Deidra Chase graduated from Ft. Thomas with a 2.94 GPA and ranked 6th out of 26. During high school, her interests included FFA, playing volleyball and basketball her freshman year and then being manager for both teams. She received a certificate for passing carpentry CTE testing. She is attending Central Arizona College in radiology and plans to complete a bachelor's degree at a four-year university. Her parents are Debra Chase and Loren Jackson. Congratulations to all of the recipients.

For more information on GCEC/GCU scholarships, speak with your high school counselor. ■



Greg Smith



Alexandra Alvarado



Corrie Hawkins



Camryn Wilson



Savannah Talgo



Deidra Chase

GCU Welcomes New Board Member

The Graham County Utility board welcomes its newest member, Steve Hooper. Elected by the membership in June, Steve's first meeting was July 11.

Born in Safford to Leo and Ruby Hooper, Steve was raised in Ft. Thomas and graduated from Ft. Thomas High School in 1969. During the summers, he worked on local farms and later in construction.

Steve earned an associate degree from Eastern Arizona College and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Arizona State University in 1975. He served a two-year mission for his church in Ireland.

Steve taught elementary

school for 41 years, 40 of them at Thatcher Elementary. He retired in 2016.

For 27 summers, he fought fires with the Bureau of Land Management fire crew, serving as engine foreman for 26 years. He also served three years on the Type I Fire Management team.

Steve met Talana Smith while attending EAC. They married in 1973. They have six children and 26 grandchildren, raising their children in Central where they have lived for 40 years.

They have had two small ranches part time in conjunction with Steve's father. Although they have sold the ranches, they continue to run a small farm in Central.



Steve Hooper has joined the Graham County Utility board.

Steve has served on the Spear Ranch board. He also has had various callings in his church through the years.

Steve replaces outgoing director Bob Brown, who

served since June 1998.

Bob will be missed on the GCU board. The management and staff would like to thank Bob for his 18 years of service and wish him the best. ■



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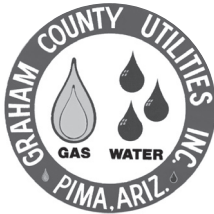
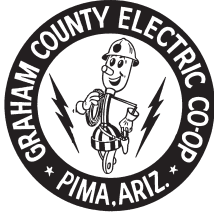
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Manager's Message

Education, Training and Information

Graham County Electric Cooperative Inc. and Graham County Utilities Inc. are pleased to announce the rollout of our social media and information program. The goal of these programs is to provide pertinent, real-time information concerning outages, information on safety tips, cooperative news and events, and community events.

We have established a Facebook page titled Graham County Electric Cooperative. Please like our page to receive information on operations and events affecting our members. Soon, we will roll out other social media platforms to better communicate with our members.

During large scale outages, our phone system can become overloaded with call volume. This situation creates potential safety concerns because consumers may not be able to reach our dispatch personnel to report any other outage-related information. By posting outage information on Facebook, we keep our members informed.

If you experience an outage, go to our Facebook page first to receive updated outage information. If your outage-related questions are not sufficiently answered by our Facebook posts or if you have additional information, such as where or what potentially caused the outage, please call our dispatch service at (928) 485-2451.

If you have an emergency situation associated with an electric, natural gas or water



outage and you are unable to reach our dispatch operator, please call 911. This process will help keep you updated on the most current outage information and help keep our phone system from becoming overloaded during outages.

In keeping with our effort to highlight the benefits of being a cooperative member/owner, our social media and information program aligns with the fifth cooperative principle, Education, Training and Information, which states:

“Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so that they can contribute to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.”

Please join us in connecting with you, our member/owners, by participating in our social media platforms. Be sure to read our page policy in the About tab on our Facebook page then give us a like to receive cooperative information.

Our goal is to provide a site where our members can go for current information, as well as create a way to monitor our membership's attitudes and thoughts concerning the cooperative and its programs.

Remember, this is your cooperative.

—Kirk Gray