

# C<sup>w</sup>urrents

SEPTEMBER 2018

Graham County Electric Cooperative

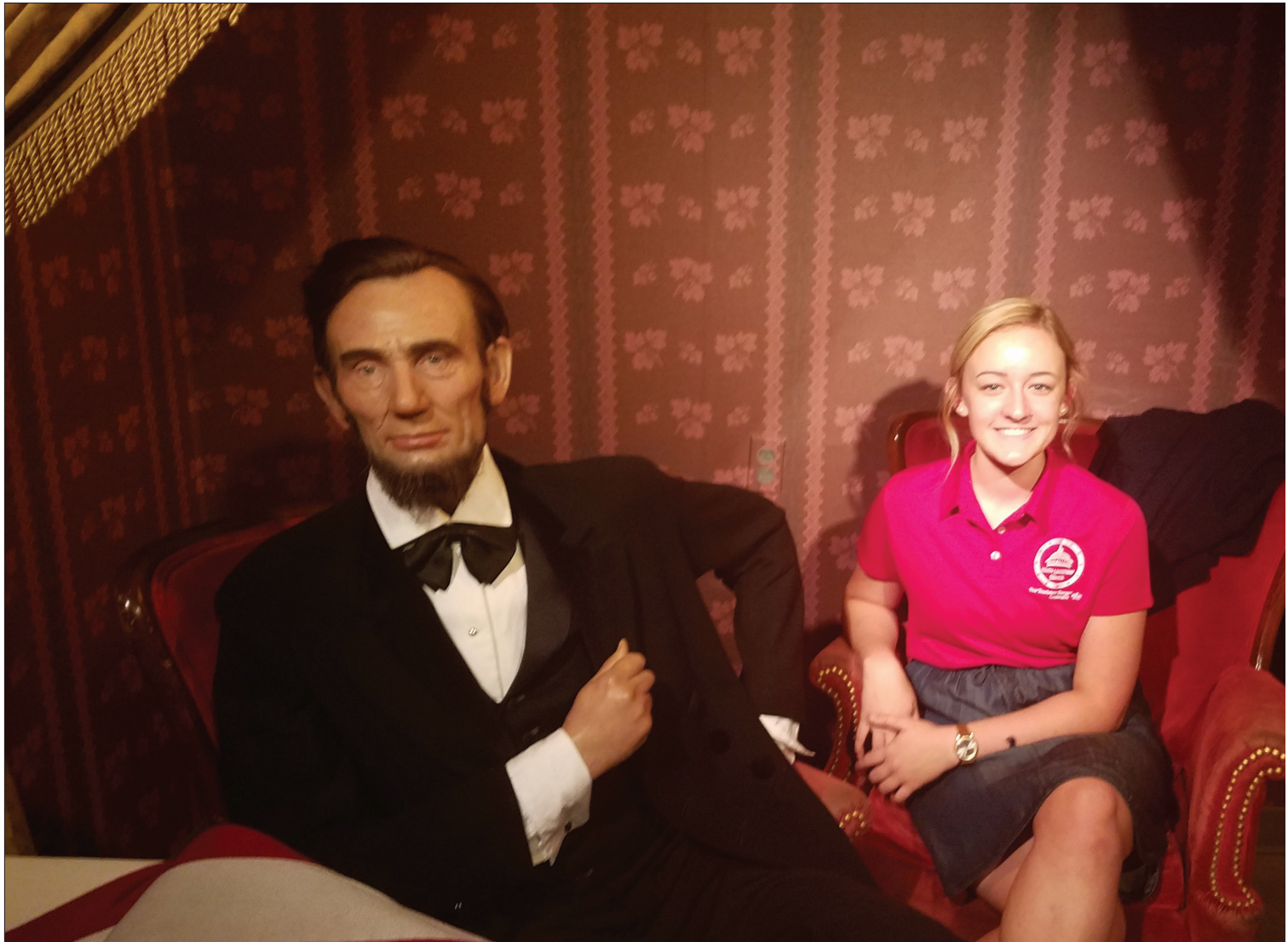
## The Trip of a Lifetime

Area students visit Washington, D.C.

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The Washington Monument is one of many sites visited by area students on their trip in June.

PHOTO BY HAYDEN ASHBY



## Those Who Care, and Those Who Don't

*Washington Youth Tour adds perspective for area teen*

**By Camilla Larson**

Earlier this summer, I was on a long car trip with one of my sisters. We decided to pass the time by asking each other some get-to-know-you questions.

We traded questions back and forth, some of them deep

and thought-provoking, and others simple, such as crunchy or creamy peanut butter?

By the way, the answer is creamy ... but one of the questions my sister asked really made me think. She asked, "There are two kinds of people in this world. What are they?"

After thinking on it, I couldn't come up with an answer, so I asked for her response. She said, "I think that the two types of people in this world are those who care and those who don't."

We continued our conversation, but her answer really stuck with me throughout the

next few weeks as I traveled to Washington, D.C., for the Washington Youth Tour.

Having the opportunity to tour the nation's capital was incredible and awe-inspiring. I saw the documents that established our basic rights as a nation and the signatures of those who fought for



**Camilla Larson poses in Ford's Theatre, where Abraham Lincoln was shot. She was in Washington, D.C., as part of the Washington Youth Tour.**

they care about. There was evidence of these kind of people all over Washington, D.C., from the National Museum of the Marine Corps to the representatives that my state met with.

Not only did I learn about the nation's capital on the youth tour, I also learned about cooperatives and how unique and special they are.

I come from a small town, and by small town I mean all those corny small-town jokes you hear? Like the McDonalds only has one golden arch, or a night out on the town only takes 11 minutes? Those actually apply to some people, and I'm one of them.

But my small town depends largely on agriculture, and has for a long time. So when electricity started to become a household word and necessity for those hoping to stay in the agriculture business, small rural areas such as mine began to realize that if providing electricity to their communities was important to them, they would have to provide it themselves.

So Graham County Electric Cooperative was created. In 1945, began to provide electricity and new possibilities to the homes and businesses in our small community. Today, it continues to provide power

to more than 9,000 members, including my family.

Those who care and those who don't.

After touring the heart of our nation for a week, I can say with confidence that those who are honored there, whether for their government leadership or military service, cared about our nation and fought to make it a better place.

I can also say, and I think I speak for all the Youth Leadership Council delegates, that after the Washington Youth Tour, I have a newfound appreciation for my co-op at home, cooperatives all over the country, and those who work to keep cooperatives running and their mission known.

I can say that I am someone who cares, because of my experience in Washington, D.C., and what cooperatives have done for my community. I care, and hope to support cooperatives and their purpose, and to give back to those who have given so much

So, now I ask, which are you?

Are you those who care, or those who don't?

But I don't have to ask you that, because I know the answer.

And because the answer is

that you do care about cooperatives and their mission, I know that you all stand up for what you care about.

The first and second cooperative principles say "Membership in a cooperative is open to all persons who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership;" and "Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions."

As YLC's, we have the capability to accept responsibilities and actively make decisions. As YLC's we have such a unique opportunity to use our knowledge and skills gained from experiences like this to benefit cooperatives across the nation, and even the nation itself.

So I hope that even though this trip will end in a few short days, we will continue to learn about and advocate for cooperatives, because in the words of Dr. Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." ■

*Camilla Larson was a Graham County Electric Washington Youth Tour representative for 2018. During the trip, she was selected to return as a Youth Leadership Council member, representing Arizona, to help plan the next trip.*

those rights. I stood in awe in front of the Washington, Lincoln, and MLK memorials and marveled at the men they were built for.

And all the time my sister's answer kept coming back to me: those who care and those who don't.

But I decided to change it a little bit. I decided that there are those who don't care, those who care, and then those who care and decide to support and fight for what

## 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. ■

## GCEC Provides Scholarships to Local High School Seniors

In May, Graham County Electric Cooperative and Graham County Utilities board members presented scholarships to deserving seniors to continue their education.

GCU President Jeff Larson presented a scholarship to **Bryanah Cervantez** of Thatcher High School, the daughter of Angela Guzzo and Gregory Cervantez.

During high school, Bryanah participated in many clubs and community service projects, including Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Produce On Wheels With-Out Waste and culinary arts. She received the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizenship award, which is given to a student who shows dependability, leadership and service.

“The GIFT classes inspired me to get a career in the medical field,” Bryanah says.

With a pharmacy technician license in hand at the end of the summer, she plans to attend Eastern Arizona College in the fall and earn a bachelor’s degree in science in human biology. She will continue her education through the University of Arizona and hopes to have a career in obstetrics and gynecology.

GCEC Vice President Mark Claridge presented a scholarship to **Sydney Fite** with her scholarship, who graduated from Safford High School. Her parents are Chase and Randi Fite. She was involved in Safford FFA, National Honor Society and volleyball. Sydney graduated with honors and was ranked 15th out of 180 students.

She participated in four Arizona FFA Champion teams: Dairy Management, Livestock Evaluation, Forestry and Agronomy. Sydney was Safford FFA president in 2017-18. She will attend Arizona State University, majoring in sports journalism and mass communications. Sydney hopes to write and report for the



**Bryanah Cervantez**



**Madison Michaels**



**Sydney Fite**



**Kasiah Montano**



**Brynn Pritchard**



**Brittany Carrizoza**

sports industry.

**Brynn Pritchard** from Pima High School is the daughter of Shelley and Jason Pritchard. Director Gerald Schmidt presented her scholarship. She has a 3.9 GPA and ranked 11 out of 53. Brynn received a special award from her senior English teacher for excellent writing. She participated four years in music classes and band, serving as band president and section leader in choir. She plans to earn a nursing degree from Eastern Arizona College and Arizona State University, with a minor in music.

This was the first time Willcox High School participated in the scholarship program. Recipient **Madison Michaels** received a scholarship from Director Steven Hooper. The daughter of Mark and Shelley Michaels, Madison was involved in volleyball, basketball, FFA, Arizona high school rodeo, Willcox junior rodeo, 4-H and vacation Bible school.

She received many awards and held

leadership positions in FFA and 4-H. She was freshman class treasurer and senior class secretary, and a State Star Farmer finalist in 2018.

Madison loves helping her family on their cattle ranch. She plans to major in animal science with a minor in agricultural business at New Mexico State University. After receiving a bachelor’s degree she plans to apply to a veterinary school.

Brother and sister **Austin** and **Kasiah Montano** were presented their scholarships from Director Gene Larson at Mt. Graham High School. Their parents are Anthony Montano and Shondee Preston.

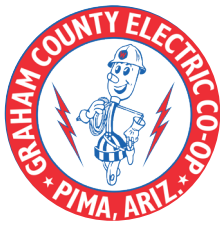
Austin (photo not provided) was ranked fourth out of 71. Kasiah ranked sixth. Kasiah was involved with Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, preparing lunches and making contacts in the community. Both plan to attend Eastern Arizona College where Austin will study biochemistry and Kasiah will study dental hygiene.

**Brittany Carrizoza** and **Devon Cobb** of Ft. Thomas High School received their scholarships from Director Chris Claridge. Brittany lives in Bylas and is the daughter of Lucille Kitcheyan and Manny Carrizoza. While Brittany loves to read for relaxation and play basketball for fun, she had time to participate in a running club and FFA. She plans to earn a dental hygiene degree at Eastern Arizona College and Pima Community College.

Information about Devon was not provided.

This is the first time funds were provided by the Graham County Electric Foundation Inc, which administers money from unclaimed capital credits and Operation Round-Up.

The GCEC Foundation will continue to support leadership, learning and education for youth in our community. ■



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**Manager's Message**

# Technological Obsolescence

The past few decades, we have witnessed a technological revolution in the marketplace. Many long-standing, thriving businesses have become obsolete.

The major contributing factor to once-thriving businesses losing market share or going out of business is a condition known as technological obsolescence. Businesses that have not embraced technological changes in the marketplace no longer exist or exist in a completely different business model or product mix.

That begs the question: is the electric generation and distribution industry becoming technologically obsolete?

The electrification of rural America provided the energy needed to produce the greatest economy the world has ever known. But with the emergence of alternative sources of generation and distribution of electricity, we as an industry face a new set of challenges.

A few factors contribute to the electric utility industry being able to react to market demands and technological changes in a timely manner. Regulatory burden, regulatory lag and uncertainty in the regulatory environment concerning state and federal energy policy are a few of the obstacles. Retail deployment of distributed generation has little or no regulatory burden. My question is, why not? Federal and state governments routinely pick winners and losers through subsidization of these energy sources. Without incentives, would alternative energy sources be viable in the marketplace?

Another contributing factor in the ability of the electric industry to respond to market



demands and technological change is whether all consumers have the ability to participate in the market. In rural Arizona, two consumer classes are created by subsidizing alternative energy sources. A large segment of rural consumers cannot afford distributed generation, yet they are required to subsidize those who can. As technology evolves, maybe all consumers will be able to participate. As electric storage technology becomes economically viable and efficient, this will be a “game changer” for the electric utility industry.

The good news is, during the past 80 years the rural electrification program has built the largest and most reliable distribution system in the world. The proliferation of new technology and alternative energy sources will not replace traditional generation and distribution of electric energy in the near term, but it certainly affects it.

In response to market demands and technological change, we must change the way we do business. We must be consumer driven, rather than taking a monopolistic view of the marketplace. We must embrace new technology and alternative energy sources. Cooperatives have always been leaders in addressing consumer needs, and that responsiveness is even more important today.

Just as our predecessors faced the challenges of electrifying rural America, we face the challenges of delivering what the market demands. We must accept this challenge to not become technologically obsolete.

—Kirk Gray