

The Arizona delegation from the 2016 youth tour trip in front of the Capitol building.

Washington Bound

Four local students have been selected for the Washington Youth Tour trip in June 2017. Each year, Graham County Electric Cooperative provides an opportunity for a weeklong all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

The competition requires students to take a written test and write a 350-word essay on an

assigned topic. This year, students wrote on “How to balance free speech with respect to our national symbols; such as the American flag.”

Finalists are interviewed by a panel of judges. Juniors selected for the 2017 trip are Thatcher High School students Alyson Wakefield, Kayla West and Leisel Griffin; and Pima High School’s Dillon Jones.

Alyson Wakefield

Alyson Wakefield is the daughter of Shawn and Candace Wakefield. She is involved in many activities. She loves backpacking, camping, playing basketball, volleyball, the ukulele, piano and doing puzzles with her family. Being a member of National Honor Society and Student Council has taught her to be a leader and helped her gain confidence.

Alyson has a fondness for elderly people and loves to serve them. She helped raise money for the Remembering Russell Race, singing at a nursing home, helping clean up Thatcher Cemetery and helping an elderly neighbor.

"I'm honest, friendly, happy, good at problem solving and easy to get along with," she says. "I enjoy meeting new people and learning about new things."

She plans to attend Dixie State University or Northern Arizona University to become a pediatric dental hygienist.

Leisel Griffin

Leisel Griffin, attends Thatcher High School and is the daughter of Wayne and Antoinette Griffin. Playing sports is Leisel's favorite thing to do. She is on the varsity soccer team, runs cross country and track, and participates in swimming and weight lifting. She is in the high school show choir, Drama Club, Knowledge Bowl, and was selected for National Honor Society.

Leisel helped the Bureau of Land Management move rocks to prevent erosion, in addition to gathering and stacking firewood for the U.S. Forest Service.

One of Leisel's goals is completing the sports medicine program at Eastern Arizona College. She is CPR and first aid certified, and is a certified lifeguard.

Leisel is excited about representing Graham County Electric Cooperative and loves learning about the civil war in history at school.

"I am a hard worker with job experience and good people skills," she says. "I am friendly, and I try to always treat everyone with kindness and respect."

Kayla West

Kayla West is the daughter of Jennifer West. She loves spending time with her family. She is a driven and motivated student athlete with a desire to learn and grow.

Kayla is a forward on her high school soccer team, in addition to playing softball and running cross country. Kayla's mother started teaching her to play the piano at age 4. She plays in her high school orchestra and also sings in the choir.

Through her membership in National Honor Society, Kayla contributes to many community projects. She has not finalized college plans, but is interested in Stanford with a major in biomedical sciences with specialized study in cardiothoracic surgery or joining the Air Force.

"I strive to give 100 percent to every task put in front of me," she says.

Dillon Jones

Pima High School Junior Dillon Jones loves playing games, football, wrestling, tennis, Knowledge Bowl, sightseeing, traveling and listening to music. The son of Sam and Rane Jones, Dillon has been involved in Future Business Leaders of America, Student Council, and was Link Crew leader and Homecoming Committee president.

"Besides my love for history and travel, I feel I would make a great representative because I am personable," says Dillon.

Dillon says he loves to travel and plans to become a commercial airline pilot and earn his bachelor's degree in business.

These students will travel to Washington, D.C., in June with a delegation of 50 from Arizona and southern California, where they will join another 1,500 students from across the United States to learn about our nation's government. ■

Our Ambassadors

Each of these students is involved in the community and wants to make a difference. It was a difficult decision for our judges to pick only four, but these youth will be great ambassadors for Graham County Electric Cooperative in fighting for our electric issues. They will learn the importance of being active participants in our democracy and how they can contribute to rural America. Congratulations, recipients, and have a great trip in June.



Alyson Wakefield



Leisel Griffin



Kayla West



Dillon Jones

How Plants Can Help You Save Energy

Q: I plan to redesign my yard. Are there landscaping features that will help my home be more comfortable indoors?

A: Late winter and early spring are great times to think about making changes to your home's landscape. While the goal of most lawn and garden projects is to bring beauty to your outdoor space, a well-designed project also can so improve your energy bill; increase the overall value of your home; and provide additional benefits, such as reduced noise pollution, optimized water use and cleaner air around your home.

The two best strategies for improving energy efficiency with landscaping are incorporating shading in the summer and blocking wind in the winter.

Summer shading. Shading your home is the most cost-effective way to reduce heat gain from the sun and reduce your air conditioning costs, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Having more plants and trees in your yard can reduce the air temperature by up to 6 degrees.

Planting deciduous trees on the south, southwest and west sides of your home can cut heating during summer months, while allowing sunlight through during the fall and winter, when trees have lost their leaves.

When planting trees, consider the expected shape and height of the mature trees and where they will shade your home. Tall trees planted on the south side of a home, for example, will provide all-day roof shading in the summer. A shorter tree on the west side of your home can protect your home from the lower afternoon sun.

Plant trees a distance away from your home so they do not disrupt your foundation or your roof as they grow. It may be five to 10 years before a newly planted tree will begin providing shade to your roof, but it can start shading windows immediately. Incorporate other plants to provide shade to windows and walls such as shrubs, bushes and vines.

Also consider any paved areas around your home and how you can shade them during the summer. Think about walking across your driveway barefoot on a hot July afternoon. If your driveway or patio is unshaded, it is probably hot. That absorbed heat also reflects onto your home, causing your air conditioner to work harder. You can use trees, hedges and other landscaping structures such as arbors to shade these paved areas.

Wind-blocking techniques. If your home is in an open area without many structures around it, cold winter winds may increase your heating bills. A windbreak on your property can help deflect these winds over your home.

The most common type of windbreak uses a combination of conifer trees and shrubs to block wind from the ground to the top of your home. For the best windbreak effect, plant these features on the north and northwest sides of your home at a distance of two to five times the height of the mature trees. Incorporating a wall or fence can further assist with the windbreak.

Another technique is to plant shrubs and bushes closer to your home. Check your building code for recommendations on how far away to plant from your home's foundation. The space between plants and your home is dead air space, which helps insulate your home during winter and summer months.

Landscaping strategies depend on your climate zone. If you live in a hot, arid climate, focus on maximizing shading to your roof and windows for much of the year. In a hot, humid climate, maximize summer shade.

If you live near power lines, talk with your electric utility about how far away newly planted trees should be from lines before making any final design decisions to your yard. ■

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Amy Wheelless of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information, visit www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.



An arbor or trellis over a door or window can provide both an interesting focal point and summer shade.

Photo by Ruth Hartnup



To ask a question, send an email to **Patrick Keegan** at energytips@collaborativeefficiency.com.

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What is on the Horizon for 2017?

Graham County Electric and Graham County Utilities went through a computer conversion mid-2016. This brought much-needed technology upgrades to the cooperative.

Management continues to review programs that will benefit the members. Some of the exciting developments coming in 2017 are a bill roundup program and E-Business Solutions.

The bill roundup program will allow members to support worthwhile projects

in the community. Participating will be easy. Each month, GCEC/GCU rounds up the utility bill of participating members to the next highest dollar.

The fund is overseen by three GCEC board members, one GCEC employee and one community member, all selected to serve by the GCEC Board of Directors.

E-Business Solutions will allow GCEC/GCU members to view their billing statements online. Paperless statements will be available by logging into a secure

page. The most exciting enhancement this program brings is online bill payment. Payments will be posted immediately, and the cost per transaction will be reduced.

The board of directors and management are excited about rolling out these two enhancements in 2017. Look for announcements in the coming months on our Facebook and web pages (www.gce.coop) when these products are ready to roll out. ■

2017 Annual Meeting

President Reuben McBride welcomed members to the 72nd annual meeting of Graham County Electric Cooperative members on February 11. The Pima High School Show Choir performed the national anthem. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the choir sang Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA."

The agenda included updates from Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative, GCEC's partner on state and federal levels; Arizona G&T Cooperatives; and the general manager's report, updating projects and the financial status of the cooperative.

Members approved a bylaw change allowing unclaimed capital credits to stay local. The money will help educational programs for youth and other local charities. An established cooperative nonprofit foundation will administer these funds and programs.

Door prizes are the highlight at the end of the meeting. Besides giving away several small items, Danny Battraw and retired GCEC General Manager Steve Lines each won a 32-inch TV. ■



Steve Lines gives a thumbs up as Operations Manager Rusty Sherman delivers a new TV.

Arizona Co-ops Reach Out to Legislators

Directors and management teams from several Arizona electric cooperatives participated in the annual Legislative Conference January 24-25. Numerous GCEC/GCU directors and management staff visited with Sen. Gail Griffin, Rep. Brenda Barton, and newly elected Reps. Drew John and Becky Nutt. The teams discussed important issues facing electric cooperatives in Arizona.

Additional teams made contact with Sens. Frank Pratt, John Kavanagh, David Farnsworth, Sean Bowie and David Bradley, and Reps. Paul Boyer, Cesar Chavez, Jay Lawrence, Diego Espinoza, Wenona Benally, Phil Lovas and Athena Salman.

General Manager Kirk Gray and Duncan Valley Electric's Steve Lunt met with Arizona Corporation Commissioners Andy Tobin, Doug Little, Tom Forese, Bob Burns and Boyd Dunn.



Sen. Gail Griffin was on hand to hear about issues important to co-ops.



Turnover at State Capitol a Challenge for Rural Electric Cooperatives

Freshman legislators get a crash course on electric cooperatives

By Geoff Oldfather

Above, Phil Bashaw, left, GCSECA director of Government Relations and Grassroots Advocacy, discusses the legislative schedule with, from left, Harold Burdick, Anza Electric Cooperative; and Rusty Sherman and Steve Hooper, Graham County Electric Cooperative.

The agenda may have changed, but the reason for being at the state Capitol in Phoenix was the same: rural electric cooperatives need to be heard in the halls and offices of the state legislature.

The challenge of having co-op voices heard is greater than in previous years, as a third of state lawmakers are freshman, many of whom know little or nothing about Arizona's rural electric cooperatives.

Adding to that challenge is two legislators from legislative district 14 (LD-14)—the district that includes Arizona G&T Cooperatives and the Apache Generating Station at Cochise, south of Wilcox—were term-limited and did not return to office: David Gowan, former Republican Speaker of the House; and David Stevens, also a former senior Republican House member.

State Sen. Gail Griffin, also a senior lawmaker, was re-elected to a two-year term and was elected by her caucus to serve as majority whip. She will be a

strong voice for cooperatives.

More than 50 people from Arizona's electric cooperatives, including managers and CEOs, board members and key staff, visited with state lawmakers during the annual meeting and legislative summit held by Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association, January 23 to 25.

The co-op representatives were divided into 15 three- to five-member teams, and each team was assigned a roster of state representatives and senators to visit. Another team visited with the five members of the Arizona Corporation Commission.

A key piece of legislation the teams discussed with lawmakers was SB1129 Electric Nonprofit Cooperatives, a bill introduced by Griffin with 20 bipartisan co-sponsors. The legislation authorizes electric cooperatives to use unclaimed capital credits for financial assistance to students, education institutions, low-income cooperative members and other charitable purposes.

Phil Bashaw, GCSECA director of Government Relations and Grassroots Advocacy, said there are many reasons to visit with state legislators besides advocating for specific legislation.

"The priority is, of course, to make sure they know about our electric cooperatives and the unique perspective we bring," Bashaw said. "When we are able to show them the cooperative difference, how we return margins to the members in the form of capital credits, and how we put members first and contribute to our communities in other ways, it helps set us apart."

"Another important reason for being there is to thank those lawmakers who supported us in the past. A simple thank you and a recognition of past support has a real impact when we ask for their support again."

The math also shows why educating state lawmakers about co-op issues is critical: There are 90 legislators. Only nine legislative districts and the 27 legislators from those districts have electric co-op service territory in their districts.

The bottom line is, less than a third of state lawmakers have a direct connection to electric cooperatives and the neighbors, businesses and communities that rely on an electric cooperative to deliver safe, reliable and affordable power.

"Educating lawmakers, regulators and most of all, our members, is critical if we're going to continue providing safe, reliable and affordable rural electric power," Bashaw said. ■



State Rep. Rebecca Rios, (D-LD27), top center, reviews a summary of SB1129, a bill that would allow electric cooperatives to use unclaimed capital credits to support students, schools, community organizations and charities. Representing Arizona G&T Cooperatives on the legislative visit are, from left, J.D. Wallace, Jon Martell, Shane Sanders and CEO Patrick Ledger.

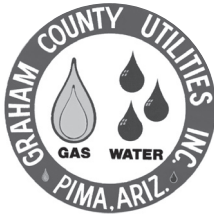
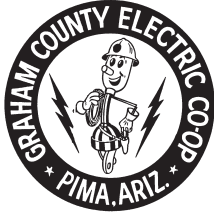
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—Phil Bashaw
GCSECA director of Government Relations and Grassroots Advocacy

Your Vote Matters

Remember, rural voices matter! For more information on voter registration or voting, visit www.vote.coop.





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Manager's Message

THANK YOU

I am writing this shortly after our 72nd annual meeting, where the membership in attendance overwhelmingly approved a bylaw change that allows the cooperative to use unclaimed capital credit retirements to fund programs for our youth and other programs.

By the time you read this, the Arizona Legislature should pass legislation exempting cooperatives from Arizona Unclaimed Property Statutes, which is the final hurdle in allowing us to use these unclaimed funds for our youth scholarship program, Washington Youth Tour and utility assistance program.

After many years in business, I particularly enjoy the cooperative business model because cooperative members make such a difference in their communities. The exemption from the Arizona Unclaimed Property Statutes is a case in point, where your local cooperative governing boards realized an opportunity to make a positive difference in the communities we serve.

We put together a game plan at the state legislature with the assistance of Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association staff. The grassroots advocates



crafted and executed an incredible plan to get this through the state legislature with bipartisan support. The bill should be heard in the Senate and voted on in February, and will be passed on to the House of Representatives, which we believe will pass it easily.

I want to thank John Wallace, Phil Bashaw, Jorge Canaca and the entire GCSECA staff for all the hard

work they put in on behalf of cooperatives in Arizona. I also want to thank Graham County Electric's legal counsel, Grant Walker, for guiding us through this process.

Most of all, I want to thank you, our cooperative membership, for making a difference. Cooperative members across the country made a huge difference in the 2016 election cycle. This just goes to show that when a group gets together and works cooperatively, we can collectively accomplish great things.

The cooperative business model and cooperative members make a difference in the communities they serve. I am proud to be a cooperative member helping make a difference.

Stay "plugged in" for more changes to come.
—General Manager Kirk Gray



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