

SEPTEMBER 2019

C[~]urrents

Graham County Electric Cooperative

Alaska Villagers Care For Their Own

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Students Get Whirlwind Experience in D.C.,

Youth Tour program provides insights to how
cooperatives and government work.

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Graham County Electric
Cooperative Foundation
sponsored students who got
to go to Washington, D.C.,
for a week this summer.

PHOTO BY KYLER NAPIER





Students from Arizona and Southern California gather outside the U.S. Capitol during their trip in June.

Students Get Whirlwind Experience in D.C.

Graham County Electric-sponsored students join 1,800 others on a weeklong trip to learn about co-ops and how our nation is governed

What an experience for seven local high school juniors! They joined 50 other Arizona and Southern California participants for the all-expense-paid Washington Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., in June.

After getting acquainted with the participants and chaperones for the Arizona/California group in Phoenix, they traveled by airplane to Washington, D.C.,

the next day. The first night was spent learning about co-ops during a two-hour co-op 101 session.

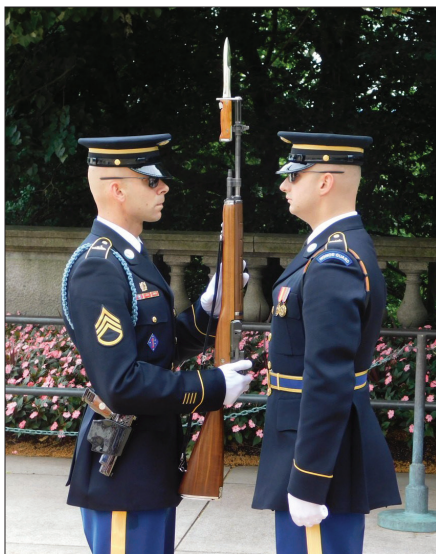
Instructor Adam Schwartz with Cooperative Way said, “Cooperatives are the best business model on earth. And what I’m trying to do is make sure that young people really understand the value of this business model and the fact that it’s a member-owned

and member-governed business. I want young people to understand that they can have a career, and indeed a purpose by working for cooperatives.”

Students visited many points of history during the weeklong trip. They spent time at the Smithsonian Institution, visited George Washington’s home in Mount Vernon, and Arlington National Cemetery. They also visited the Jefferson



Above, one of the perks of the trip was meeting with Arizona U.S. Rep. Tom O'Halleran, who spent time listening to students and answering their questions.



Left, the visit to Arlington National Cemetery left a lasting impression on many of the students.

Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, WWII Memorial, Korean War Memorial, the National Cathedral, the Natural History Museum, Native American Museum, 911 Pentagon Memorial, Holocaust Memorial Museum. They visited their congressman, toured the Capitol, took a riverboat cruise down the Potomac River and enjoyed watching a Diamondbacks versus Nationals baseball game.

Ella Peterson from Safford High School made the journey.

"I think this trip means a lot of different things to me," she said. "But the main point would be that through little things, great things can come to pass—just like little decisions that our Founding Fathers made years ago are still impacting us today for the better. I think my favorite part of the trip was visiting the National Cathedral, just seeing the different services and everything that they've done for our nation and trying to unify us."

"Arlington Cemetery really made a big impact on me, just seeing the history that's there, with all the many people that served and died for our country," said Grace Haller of Thatcher High School. "It really made me love and appreciate that history so much more. It really meant a lot. It is important to have these opportunities. I've learned so much more about co-ops than I ever have before and it has

just been super cool to see what they really do."

Vivianna Talgo from Ft. Thomas High School said what surprised her the most was the Native American Museum.

"There was a guy demonstrating different types of songs that Native Americans use all throughout the United States," she said. "I think that was pretty cool to me because I thought he was from only one tribe, but he was out there singing different types of songs and telling us about different cultures. That was pretty interesting."

Morgan Miller from Pima High School loved seeing the memorials.

"The Korean War Memorial was probably my favorite," she said. "I've seen pictures of it in history classes and I've wanted to see it. I didn't really realize it was here."

Levi Thygerson, also from Pima High School, liked the Air and Space Museum, specifically the Tuskegee Airmen exhibit.

"It's one of my favorite historical stories that seems almost unreal but it is. My favorite thing was standing where Martin Luther King Jr. stood, on the Lincoln Memorial, overlooking the reflecting pool. Not until that exact moment did I feel the magnitude of the history there and everything about it."

Kyler Napier of Ft. Thomas High School enjoyed seeing the Lincoln Memorial.

"I was really excited to see it because I've seen it in so many pictures and the Martin Luther King speech," he said.

"The thing I was most looking forward to was the Natural History Museum, one of the Smithsonians, because I heard they had a new dinosaur exhibit," said Katelyn Miller of Thatcher High School.

The students also had the opportunity to meet students from other states and trade pins.

"Most of them have three or four different kinds of pins or they have stickers," Kyler said. "It's just great to get to talk to

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Washington Youth Tour

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them and hear their different accents and cultures. It's a really neat experience."

"My Georgia pin that I got was from these kids at the WWII Memorial," Morgan said. "I still just talk to them and we're like good friends now."

Making friends that will last for a lifetime is one experience many students talked about on the trip home.

"I definitely think that they're going back changed," Chaperone and GCEC employee Diane Junion said. "I saw the interaction with our Congressman O'Halleran. At first, they were a little bit quiet. But then they warmed up and asked great questions of O'Halleran, and I definitely believe that they will come back changed. It is important for them to gain leadership skills, to be able to communicate with other people and to gain a knowledge of our history."

Ella enjoyed the visit to the Capitol.

"I was looking forward to the Capitol tour and just being able to meet a senator or a representative that is making changes, representing Arizona and being able to have our voice heard on the hill."

Katelyn summed up the trip.

"It just made me think about how there's a lot more options in politics than what you see on TV," she said. "You could be the lobbyist that we met concerning energy issues; solving energy and cooperative issues. Also, helping lobby for our smaller areas and just how big that is in and of itself."

The students said they were grateful for Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation sponsoring them for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. They encourage others to take the opportunity to apply when the time arises, as it is a huge opportunity to get out of their comfort zone and travel.

"This trip single-handedly changed my life," Katelyn said. "From writing the essay to boarding the plane, there were many new experiences and friendships. From exploring downtown Alexandria or the vast acres of Mount Vernon, there was always something to learn. This experience was educational, exciting and enlightening. It opened my eyes about how cooperatives and even our national government worked. I would recommend every local junior to learn more about their local cooperative and apply for this amazing opportunity." ■

Watch for posters at your high school in mid-October for the application process or talk to your school counselor.

Top, the Arizona Diamondbacks were in town playing the Washington Nationals. Right, a tour bus ferried the group around town to the various memorials and museums.



Graham County Electric Scholarship Winners

Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation honored seven students in our community with scholarships.

Caitlin Hinton

of Ft. Thomas High School is from the San Carlos Apache Tribe. Her parents are Edwin and Dorothy Pike. She enjoys riding horses and her horse recently had a baby colt. Caitlin's hobbies and interests include round-ups, cattle drives and pretty much anything with horses. Her academic plans are to attend Eastern Arizona College to study wildlife biology. Caitlin stated she was grateful to have received this scholarship and knows it will be a big help.



Leigh Dona

lives in Bylas and graduated from Ft. Thomas High School with a 3.1 GPA. She is excited to attend Eastern Arizona College to begin her education as a registered nurse and to follow in the footsteps of her mother, Sharon Lang. Leigh says she appreciates this opportunity.



Mark and Ruth

Vining are the proud parents of **Michael Vining**, who graduated a semester early from Mt. Graham High School. He has many interests: Future Business Leaders Association, dancing, backstage areas of theater and working with the elderly. Prior to Mt. Graham, he attended Thatcher High School, where he served as the president of the chess club and was also the Eagle mascot. He plans to use his scholarship at Eastern Arizona College to get his



associate degree.

"I'm sincerely appreciative of the generosity I received from Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation. Thank you".

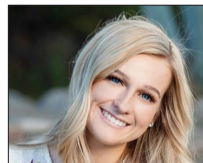
Alexis Cassady

has a passion to help others and work with children. She attended Mt. Graham High School with a 3.0 GPA. She loves spending time with her 1-year-old son, James, and her family. She enjoys fishing, going for walks and watching movies. While attending school, her favorite subject was English, and she enjoys reading and writing. Alexis enjoys working with children and is employed at the Boys and Girls Club of the Gila Valley. She is the daughter of Justin and Cassandra Amundson.



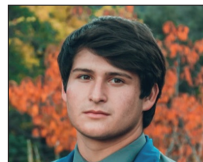
Danika

Derrick, the daughter of Mike and Raime Derrick, attended Pima High School with a 4.0 GPA and was 10th in her class. She was involved in the Link Crew Program, which assists freshmen through their first year of high school. She participated in volleyball and track, and since sixth grade was involved in the Gila Valley Juniors club volleyball. After high school, she plans to attend South Mountain Community College to play volleyball and study nutrition.



Dante Bryce

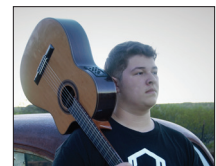
is the son of James and Julie Bryce. He completed his Safford High School career with a 3.79 GPA. He was a member of National Honor Society, Academic Team and student



council, serving as student body president. He played soccer, which earned him an athletic scholarship to attend Gillette College. His goal is go to a university to obtain a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology and complete his soccer career. Dante represented the city of Safford as an Arizona Boys State delegate. He is excited and appreciates all who have helped him turn his college dreams into reality.

Thatcher High School recipient **Frederico (Rico) Garcia**,

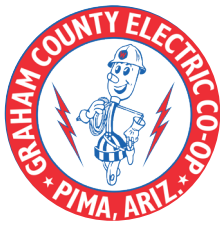
is the son of Frederico and Millynda Garcia. He participated in FBLA, FCCLA and Skills USA, serving as vice president for two consecutive years in FBLA. Rico earned the following awards: Building Better Members (two times), Business Achievement and Community Service. His interests are business, computer aided drafting and design, mechanical engineering and music.



To further his education, Rico plans to attend Eastern Arizona College to earn an associate degree. He has been playing and writing music since the age of 5. He hopes to make it big in the music industry. He hopes to own a drafting business, where he will draft architectural plans and mechanical parts for clients as well as tour the world as a DJ and music producer.

One of the reasons Graham County Electric Cooperative Foundation was created was to support learning and education for youth in our community. All the recipients are thankful for this opportunity to continue their education. ■

Seniors can apply for a scholarship through their councilor at Ft. Thomas, Mt. Graham, Pima, Safford and Thatcher high schools.



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Manager's Message

Changing Our Energy Future

As I have shared with you before, the electric energy industry is in a period of transformational change. Electric utility industry leaders, retail consumers and energy regulators are all trying to define what our energy future should look like. Deploying new energy technologies and the associated regulatory framework are at the center of the change.

There are no fewer than five major regulatory actions being contemplated by the Arizona Corporation Commission. The commission's constitutional charge is to protect the consumer from unfair rates and be an advocate for the consumer. In performing its duty to protect the consumer, the commission has taken it upon itself to set Arizona energy policy. The problem is that the contemplated energy policies only apply to public service corporations that are regulated by the commission, such as Graham County Electric Cooperative. It does not apply to municipal or quasi-governmental utility providers.

Renewable energy portfolio standards, retail electric competition, and electrification of the transportation sector are a few of the major policies being considered.

GCEC—through our statewide cooperative



association, Grand Canyon State Electric Cooperative Association—is making sure cooperative utility concerns are heard by regulators. Each one of these initiatives have costs associated with them, and we the ratepayers must pay for those costs. As demonstrated by the defeat of the Clean Energy for a Healthy Arizona ballot initiative last November, Arizonans are not willing to pay for change that is not economically feasible.

GCEC and the other Arizona cooperatives have done a credible job telling the co-op story. As I have stated many times, GCEC is opposed

to any energy policy that places an undue burden on rural Arizona ratepayers. GCEC directors and staff continually look for innovative and environmentally sound ways to provide electric energy at the lowest cost possible, and we will continue to do so on your behalf.

Please stay informed concerning your energy future and energy policies that affect you, our member/owners, by visiting www.gce.coop and by following us on Facebook and Instagram.

—Kirk Gray