



## 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?

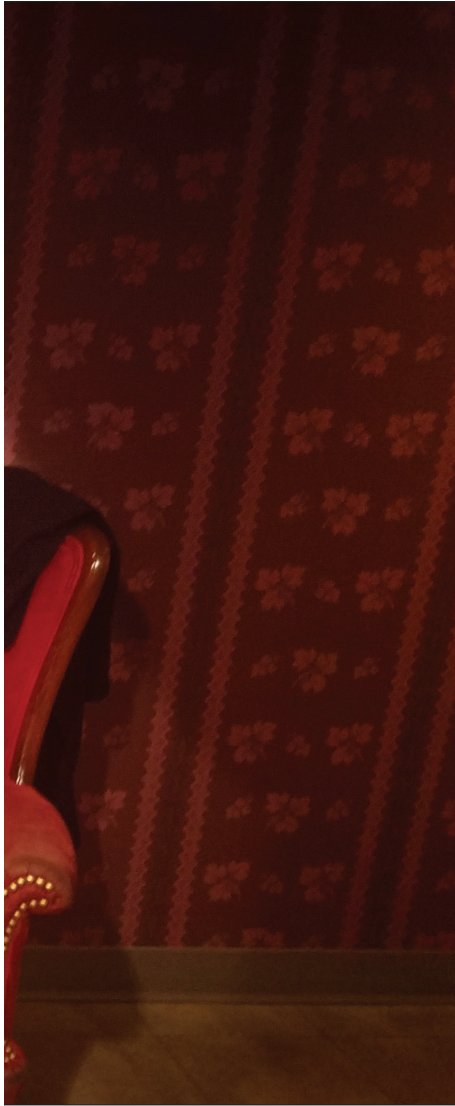
By the way, the answer is creamy ... but one of the questions my sister asked really made me think. She asked, "There are two kinds of people in this world. What are they?"

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.**

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

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.*