

TEXAS YOUTH TOUR | VOLUME 7

YOUR

**JOIN THE
YOUTH TOUR
ADVENTURE**

**TRAVEL WITH YOUR
NEW BEST FRIENDS
TO WASHINGTON, DC**



WELCOME

AFTER MORE THAN 85 years, electric cooperatives in Texas and across the country continue to do what they've always done: power communities and empower members to improve the quality of their lives. It's that sense of purpose that has always guided cooperatives and their members.

And that purpose is represented in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which takes 100-plus cooperative-sponsored high school students to Washington, D.C., every summer for more than a week of learning.

Youth Tour emphasizes lessons in American government, history and culture, and the experience helps each participant understand how electric cooperatives make a difference in the world. Participants return to Texas excited about their new friends and unforgettable experiences.

If you're reading this magazine as an alum of the program, you're part of something special. If you're considering applying, I'd encourage you to do so and experience your own trip of a lifetime.



Best Regards,

Mike Williams
President/CEO
Texas Electric Cooperatives



**"I would come back
and do it all over again
IN A HEARTBEAT."**

—SYDNEY REARDON, TRI-COUNTY EC, 2022



**"This week has
been incredible,
and it's opened
up our eyes to the
inner workings of
government. We've
been able to see
the beautiful sights
of D.C. while also
reflecting on what
makes our nation
so great."**

—AUDREY BISHOP,
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC, 2022



YOUR TOUR | TEXAS YOUTH TOUR

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ALL YOUTH TOUR PHOTOS: CAYTLYN PHILLIPS | TEC



**ZACH SIMS
2018**

YOUTH TOUR KEEPS GIVING

BY ALEX DAL SANTO

Zach Sims embarked on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour in 2018, but its impact lasted much longer.

Sims earned \$10,000 to put toward his bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University after he was named the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's 2022 Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation Scholarship recipient. The foundation's scholarships are awarded annually to Youth Tour alumni. Sims, a Lubbock native, was sponsored by Golden Spread and South Plains electric cooperatives.

"Youth Tour changed my life as it reset and redirected the path in front of me," Sims said. "It led me to realize deep and universal life lessons more fully, and it also planted the seeds for future career goals. But above all, it demonstrated the principle of the NRECA's modeling by providing the Youth Tour alumni scholarship: that people, relationships and positive impacts on others matter most."

Sims is a junior majoring in political science and history, inspired by his trip to Washington, D.C.

LINCOLN
Memorial

MOUNT VERNON

JOIN THE
YOUTH TOUR
ADVENTURE

TRAVEL WITH YOUR
NEW BEST FRIENDS
TO WASHINGTON, DC

U.S. CAPITOL

Kennedy
Center

PLUS SO MANY MORE
GREAT PLACES

WASHINGTON MONUMENT

Smithsonian Institution
Museums and Galleries

NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

CAPITOL HILL
Photo Session

Congressional
Representatives
VISITS



POTOMAC RIVER CRUISE



Vietnam
Veterans
Memorial

YOUTH TOUR takes you from museums and memorials to the U.S. Capitol and Supreme Court. There's a little bit of something for everyone in Washington, D.C.

Join more than 100 other Texas teens on this all-expenses-paid summer adventure. Youth Tour is sure to be the trip of a lifetime.

WANT TO GO?

LEARN MORE AT
[TEXASYOUTHTOUR.COM](https://www.texasyouthtour.com)



HOW TO APPLY



SEE THE VIDEO

WHERE BESTIES BECKON

GRANT CARLISLE leaned in close as he studied a section of a giant map of North Texas on the wall of Rep. Van Taylor's office on Capitol Hill. The teen's face was inches from the surface as he scoured a sea of red pushpins that denoted visitors to the office.

Suddenly he pulled his face away, wide-eyed. "That's like literally right where my house is," he said. "This pin right here."

He was connecting the dots.

Carlisle's Frisco home has a special place in Washington, D.C., and you could see that realization all over his face that day in June 2022.

That's the power of the Government-in-Action Youth Tour—stirring, life-changing experiences, one after another. Texas' electric cooperatives have sent more than 4,400 teens to Washington on this annual trip of a lifetime since 1965. The trip was canceled for the first time, in 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But last June, 123 students from Inez, Muleshoe, Rusk, Stamford and points in between began their adventure in the state capital as strangers. They returned home 10 days later as friends for life, bonded by text chains, social media and deeply moving shared experiences.

"This trip was full of many firsts: first time being homesick, first time flying, first time having dance lessons in a lobby, first time chanting 'the stars at night are big and bright,'" said Naomi Abrego of San Juan, who was sponsored by Magic Valley Electric Cooperative. "I genuinely didn't think I would create life-lasting bonds with others, but I was wrong. I've witnessed people go from strangers to besties."

Youth Tour was conceived by then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson in 1957, when he charged electric cooperatives with sending teens to D.C. to "see what the flag stands for and represents." Soon after, Texas sent its first group of 58. And this June, more than 150 will tour Washington's many monuments, museums and memorials; learn about democracy, government and electric cooperatives; and even meet their representatives on Capitol Hill.

Nine years before Cole Shirley, manager of metering and fiber infrastructure for Tri-County Electric Cooperative, was hired by the co-op, he was first exposed to the co-op world on Youth Tour in 2009.

"MidSouth Electric Cooperative was my sponsoring

Youth Tour—the co-op-sponsored trip to Washington, D.C.—is back, continuing a decadeslong tradition BY CHRIS BURROWS



GRANT CARLISLE
2022

cooperative, and they furnished an internship as part of the tour and scholarship package," he said. "My time working for them in the summer after Youth Tour showed me the family environment common to all cooperatives and let me experience a range of tasks from working with cashiers to pulling wire for an underground service."

Some participants—like Vanessa Alvarado of Gholson, outside Waco—feel called to serve their country.

"I was overwhelmed with heartfelt respect when we visited Arlington National Cemetery," said Alvarado, who was sponsored by HILCO EC in 2019 and enlisted in the Air Force. "And just knowing how all these men and women paid the ultimate price for their country inspired me even more to continue and be a part of something bigger than myself."

Not every participant can attest to that kind of invigorating experience. But all can vouch for the unique bonds forged by going through first after first with a busload of strangers. Between belt-ing out *Deep in the Heart of Texas*, dancing in hotel lobbies and posing for selfies, they couldn't have connected the dots

between small-town Texas

and big-city D.C. without the friends they made along the way.

Fellow CVEC delegate Kenley Cox of Haskell put it bluntly.

"My favorite thing about the trip wasn't the architecture or the beauty of the things we saw," she said. "It was the friendships that were made.

"We came, we saw, and we represented Texas."

"I made so many friends. We still talk to this day. We have a group chat with 124 people on it, and they're not lying when they say you have another family. It's 124 extra family members all across the state of Texas, and it's amazing."

—LUKE HOELSCHER,
CONCHO VALLEY EC, 2022



JOIN US NEXT YEAR

ASK YOUR ELECTRIC
CO-OP HOW TO APPLY
FOR YOUTH TOUR 2024

"I do wish I could
do it again and
if I was offered
another chance
to go, I would.
If you get the
chance to go,
take it, apply, you
won't regret it."

—CAYDEN COX, HEART
OF TEXAS EC, 2022

