



KATHRYN CLAXTON



‘Soda pop co-op’ offers experience, knowledge

The annual Washington Youth Tour (WYT) offers Georgia delegates many opportunities. They spend a week bonding with peers while learning about leadership, meeting legislators and touring iconic locations in the nation’s capital.

A smaller group of WYT delegates also carries home firsthand knowledge about the inner workings of a cooperative through participation in a “soda pop co-op.” In the process, they save their fellow delegates (and themselves) some money and gain leadership experience.

The student-run soda pop co-op is organized much the same as an electric co-op, with a manager and board, including a chairman. The groups come up with a name for their co-op, determine what kind of soft drinks and sports drinks members would like to buy and collect \$1 per person as a membership fee. The board has the option to take out an interest-free startup loan of up to \$100 from Georgia EMC for the manager to purchase the co-op’s drink supply for the week.

Georgia has been offering the soda pop co-op to WYT delegates since 2017, says Senior Tour Director Gale Cutler. Several other states also utilize the soda pop co-op activity.

There is a separate co-op for each of the three tour buses the Georgia delegation uses

in Washington, D.C. Drinks are kept in the bus storage area and are available for purchase at designated stops each day.

Brooke Bridges, a 2019 Hart EMC delegate, served as manager of her co-op, Kaleb’s Pop Shop. “My duties were to ensure continued availability of cold soft drinks to co-op members, ensure that clear and current records are kept of cooperative sales, maintain liaison with board members, assist with planning and carrying out the annual meeting, hire an assistant manager and additional staff, if needed, and delegate and oversee responsibilities of any staff,” she says.

“After watching the co-op for a week, I saw how useful EMCs truly are,” says Leilah Harshbarger, a 2019 Jefferson Energy Cooperative delegate. “EMCs provide energy for rural areas, and our co-op provided low-price drinks in a tourist location, where drinks are typically almost double the regular price.”

On the last night, each co-op holds a group meeting. After repaying their loan, the teens return any profits to members, although often they vote to donate earnings to a site they visited or tip their bus driver, as Kaleb’s Pop Shop did in 2019.

“He truly deserved it, as he drove us around all week and helped us out as much as possible,” Bridges says.

Enjoying a cold drink during a break in the 2019 Washington Youth Tour are, from left, delegates Sarah Edwards (Habersham EMC), Brooke Bridges (Hart EMC), Ericka Lord (Irwin EMC) and Sadie Wicks (Flint Energies). Bridges served as manager of Kaleb’s Pop Shop, and Wicks was a Peachy Pop Co-op board member.

The 2020 Washington Youth Tour will take place June 18-25.

For more information, contact Coweta-Fayette EMC



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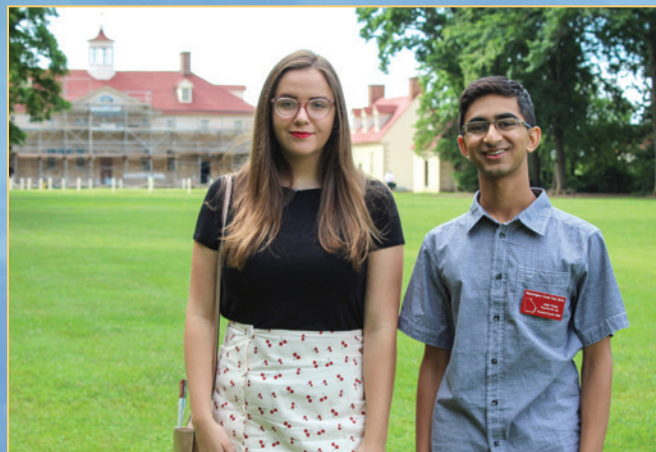
Gathering for a photo at the Georgia section of the World War II Memorial are, from left, 2019 Washington Youth Tour delegates Rian Philip (GreyStone Power), Haylee Ward (Diverse Power) and Ahema Gaisie (Jackson EMC).

Washington Youth Tour 2020 tentative itinerary

- **June 18:** Kickoff banquet, Atlanta
- **June 19:** Team-building activities; flight to Washington, D.C.
- **June 20:** Tour and lunch at Mount Vernon; photo op at White House; dinner at Union Station; evening guided tour of memorials, including World War II, Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Thomas Jefferson
- **June 21:** Guided tour of Lincoln, Korean War and Vietnam Veterans memorials; Arlington National Cemetery guided tour; lunch at the Kennedy Center; dinner performance of "Spamalot" at Toby's Dinner Theatre in Columbia, Md.
- **June 22:** All States assembly; tour Smithsonian Institution museums; U.S. Archives; dinner in Old Town Alexandria, Va.; cruise on Potomac River
- **June 23:** Tour Supreme Court, 9/11 Pentagon Memorial; Sunset Parade at U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima statue)
- **June 24:** Meet with Georgia's congressional delegation; tour U.S. Capitol and visit House and Senate galleries; All States farewell event
- **June 25:** Return flight to Atlanta

Note: Itinerary is subject to change

A look back at the



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From left, Coweta-Fayette EMC 2019 Washington Youth Tour delegates Kaitlyn Smith, from Northgate High School, and Jatin Patel, from Fayette County High School, started their action-packed trip in our nation's capital with a stop at Mount Vernon.

'I knew I wanted to go into politics someday, but being here and speaking to individuals on Capitol Hill makes me want it even more. I want to make changes for our future by becoming a congresswoman or even president.'

ALEXIS GONZALEZ
Flint Energies



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'Going to Arlington National Cemetery was such an impactful and meaningful experience. Not only did I lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier but I was able to visit the gravesite of an old family friend who was instrumental in raising me. Words cannot express what that meant to me.'

JERE PEARSON
Coastal Electric Cooperative

KATHRYN CLAXTON

2019 Washington Youth Tour



BETH McMILLAN



KATHRYN CLAYTON



'Before the Washington Youth Tour, I was never the first person to introduce myself or initiate conversation. I also had a hard time discussing issues and ideas around people I'm not necessarily adapted to. Now, I am able to confidently be the friend and leader that I always knew I had in me.'

KATIE DENISON
Irwin EMC

'Be ready to be tired, be ready to be rushed, be ready for large crowds [and] get excited for inspiration, for new, amazing friends and for your world to get a whole lot bigger.'

SETH BOULDIN
Amicalola EMC



KAREN EWING

Former WYT delegates show artistic touch

Dylan Mulligan

2010 WYT delegate
(Canochee EMC, Glennville)
Attorney in Tattall County
Known as “The Georgia Sandman”
for his elaborate sandcastles

Since a young age, I have been involved in community life and enjoy giving back and serving at every opportunity. That—coupled with my interest in history, politics and law—converged and convinced me that I could best serve my hometown of Glennville as an attorney. I had already settled on that career path well before I attended the Washington Youth Tour, but the Youth Tour solidified my choice.

I grew up spending my summers on the beautiful coast, boating and building sandcastles on Blackbeard Island. Blackbeard is an undeveloped wildlife refuge, accessible only by boat.

When I was 4 years old, I learned to build “drip” castles using mud. The drip castles grew to include small, hand-stacked towers and walls. As I got older, the towers and walls became larger and more elaborate. Then came arches, bridges, doors, windows and other fine details. In more recent years, I have begun using custom tools, which enable me to build larger and far more elaborate creations.

The most meaningful sandcastle I have built would have to be my replica of the historic Glennwanis Hotel in Glennville. I am a member of the Friends of the Glennwanis Hotel, a nonprofit organization raising funds to restore the hotel as a home for our local museum and for community use. All profits I generate from the sale of my books, prints or other products related to my sandcastles are donated to the restoration of the Glennwanis.

To prospective WYT delegates: If you are like me, the WYT will be the greatest civics lesson of your life. It will have a profound impact on you and will enable you to truly understand just how richly God has blessed us all to be Americans.



LAURA MULLIGAN POPE



MIKE A. MULLIGAN

One of Dylan Mulligan's sandcastle creations depicts Glennville United Methodist Church.

The Georgia Sandman,
thegeorgiasandman.square.site; [facebook.com/thegeorgiasandman](https://www.facebook.com/thegeorgiasandman);
[facebook.com/glennwanis](https://www.facebook.com/glennwanis); bit.ly/glennwanisfriends

Frankie Brown

2004 WYT delegate
(Okefenokee REMC, Nahunta)
2017 WYT chaperone
Artist
Art teacher, Lincoln County

Art is a vulnerable subject, and kids make good art only when they feel safe. Most students who don't like art don't like it because they believe they are not good at it. If I can break it down for students to understand or show them a genre of art they can relate to, I can usually hook them in some way.

I want students to understand that I don't care if it's “good”! I just want them to create. I want them to think. I want them to connect. I started gaining confidence in my art when I stopped worrying whether it was good. I want kids to know that too.

Mostly, I paint with acrylics. But I love working with clay and making paper and bookbinding. I've also gotten the opportunity to do quite a few murals, and I love painting on that scale.

My great-grandmother was a painter, and I spent a lot of time with her. Her house was filled with easels and oil paints and paintings of ships. All of her sons were artists—painters, photographers, sculptors. My grandfather would take me to art museums and bring home stacks of cardboard from the paper mill where he worked so my brother and I could draw.

My mother and father are very creative. My mom used to collect all of the broken wood from our karate expositions and make art with it. My older brother is a working artist in La-Grange. All of those people had a great influence on my art.

To prospective WYT delegates: You will be surrounded by greatness the whole trip! Take it in. You will learn a lot from the places you will go, but the people will impact you the most. Step out of your comfort zone. Talk to new people. Give a good, firm

handshake. And definitely, definitely keep up with whom you meet!



Left: This painting by Frankie Brown was done completely with non-traditional supplies. “I used sticks, old credit cards, my hands and a fork,” she says. “It was a freeing experience.”

Frankie Brown's art: frankienicole.com, [facebook.com/frankienicole](https://www.facebook.com/frankienicole)



CARLIN GIBSON

Art teacher Frankie Brown works with ninth-grader Grace Deal.