

Washington Youth Tour returns to nation's capital

The Washington Youth Tour (WYT) celebrated its 57th year in Georgia by returning to an in-person experience in Washington, D.C., June 16-23, 2022. Seventy high school delegates sponsored by 26 electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) throughout Georgia and by Georgia EMC made the trip, in addition to seven chaperones and three staff members from Tucker-based Georgia EMC.

"The trip was a triumphant return of Georgia's EMCs to Washington, D.C.," says Beth McMillan, WYT coordinator and senior communications specialist at Georgia EMC. "On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and with all the logistical challenges that presented in the planning stages, I'm proud of the program we put together and the experiences we provided to the delegates."

McMillan, who represented Marietta-based Cobb EMC as a delegate in 2004, says there's something special about a large group of strangers who meet and become close friends in just one week.

"Late high school is such a pivotal time for developing character, and the high caliber of the students our EMCs send on this tour each year creates a perfect environment for young people to discover themselves as individuals, as well as learn how many others there are across the state with their same passion, drive and enthusiasm for making a difference," she says.

A few of the group's standard stops were not on the program in 2022 because some buildings had not been reopened to the public or large groups since the onset of the pandemic, but McMillan says they managed to include a majority of their traditional tour stops.

"Travel disruptions were certainly our biggest setback, but in many ways, this offered delegates opportunities to see and demonstrate leadership in action," McMillan adds. "Resilience, positive attitude, problem-solving and teamwork were all on display in reacting to sudden changes in our plans, and these are all areas in which we encourage growth during a normal tour. Student evaluations were extremely positive, with many describing the tour as a life-changing experience."

The eight-day Youth Tour kicked off with a visit to Roosevelt's Little White House State Historic Site in Warm Springs.

The hope was to introduce former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the creator of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA)/rural electrification movement and the Little White House as its birthplace, thus giving delegates a better understanding of the history and purpose of their local electric co-op and the statewide network of EMCs that provided this leadership experience for them.

KATHRYN GREEN, SOUTHERN RIVERS ENERGY



Georgia's 2022 Youth Tour delegation tours Roosevelt's Little White House in Warm Springs June 17, 2022.

The group viewed an introductory video upon arrival, then enjoyed a self-guided tour of the museum, house and grounds.

"That visit helped tie together nicely the sponsoring EMCs with our nation's capital, which we were about to visit," McMillan says. "And it helped demonstrate the power local folks have to effect change, better their own communities and better the nation as a whole."

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The 2022 WYT also included visits to:

- National Mall
- Smithsonian Institution
- Holocaust Memorial Museum
- National memorials: World War II, Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Korean War, Vietnam War, Air Force, 9/11 Pentagon, U.S. Marine Corps
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Lafayette Square of White House
- George Washington's Mount Vernon
- Washington National Cathedral
- Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center
- National Portrait Gallery
- International Spy Museum

Hill Day offers meaningful opportunities for Georgia delegates

DANIEL PECK

The 2022 Georgia congressional delegation meeting, referred to as Hill Day, was held June 22, 2022, on Capitol Hill. Delegates met with U.S. senators and representatives from Georgia, asked them questions and took photos with them. They also toured the U.S. Capitol and visited the Library of Congress.

During the Congressional Town Hall held in the Rayburn House Office Building, delegates heard from and participated in a Q&A with U.S. Reps. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.), Drew Ferguson (R-Ga.) and Rick Allen (R-Ga.), as well as Kenneth Cutts, chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.).

After the town hall, delegates had an opportunity to meet and hear from U.S. Sens. Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.) and Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.) on the Capitol steps.

During the meetings, delegates asked members of Congress a variety of questions related to topics like energy, environmental considerations and renewables, rural broadband and their relationships with other legislators from opposite political parties. A few delegates also asked how U.S. representatives and senators are able to balance living in Washington, D.C., with representing constituents living in rural communities in Georgia.



Georgia Youth Tour delegates meet with U.S. Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff on the steps of the U.S. Capitol June 22, 2022.



KATHRYN GREEN

Above: While visiting the White House in our nation's capital, Coweta-Fayette EMC WYT delegates Niyah Cameron (left) and Jack Terrell pose for a picture. Right: Jack Terrell of Newnan places a rose at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall.



BETH McMILLAN



KATHRYN GREEN

Niyah Cameron of Fayetteville explores Mount Vernon.

Pictured (l-r): Coweta Fayette EMC 2022 WYT delegates Niyah Cameron from Whitewater High School and Jack Terrell from Newnan High School, and Rachel Camp, Coweta-Fayette EMC's Integrated Communications Coordinator.



BETH McMILLAN

Beth McMillan, WYT coordinator and senior communications specialist at Georgia EMC in Tucker, says the statewide organization hopes these congressional delegation meetings show delegates that their input can contribute to the political process and that their elected representatives want to hear what they have to say.

"Talking with their representatives in person will, I hope, help them feel more accessible to delegates as they continue engaging in politics after we leave Washington, D.C. I also like when legislators discuss their paths to Congress so delegates can see there's not one set route to public service," says McMillan.

"That week was such a blast!" says Niyah Cameron, a Coweta-Fayette EMC (CFEMC) delegate from Fayetteville. "I have to say my favorite parts of the tour were visiting the International Spy Museum, touring the Holocaust Memorial Museum—because it was such a humbling experience—and being able to walk the National Mall and bond with my new friends that I made there."

Jack Terrell, a CFEMC delegate from Newnan, agrees that the trip was incredible.

"I honestly can't choose a favorite stop, but if I had to choose one, it would have to be the Smithsonian Institution," Jack says. "Just seeing all the exhibits with parts of our history, it was such a rewarding experience that I can't even put it into words."

CFEMC Integrated Communications Coordinator Rachel Camp also attended the 2022 WYT as a chaperone.

"Having the opportunity to chaperone the trip this year was such a treat!" Camp says. "It was an eye-opening experience to watch Georgia delegates grow and gain so much knowledge throughout the week."

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2022 Washington Youth Tour delegates

Statewide Delegates

Amber Brown, Midway
Henry Corbitt, Perry

Altamaha EMC

Hollan Coleman, Kite
Seth MacGregor, Ailey

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC

Brady Hussion, Blairsville
Nathan Plemmons, Hayesville, N.C.
Sarah Shook, Young Harris

Canoochee EMC

Estrella Salas-Mendoza, Daisy
Emma Todd, Claxton*
Eli Waters, Claxton
Lanie Yancey, Claxton

Carroll EMC

Anna Ayers, Carrollton
Jackson Burns, Bowden
Shyann Woods, Carrollton

Central Georgia EMC

Sara Beth Harbin, Jackson
Grace Perez, McDonough

Coastal Electric Cooperative

Emma Beasley, Midway
Andrew Norton, Midway
Lekhan Patel, Richmond Hill

Coweta-Fayette EMC

Niyah Cameron, Fayetteville
Jack Terrell, Newnan

Diverse Power

Wesley Bartlett, LaGrange
Cam Cannon, Edison
Jakob Hines, Hogansville

Flint Energies

Collin Key, Warner Robins
Chris Onyonyor, Ideal
Grace Pham, Kathleen

Grady EMC

Bishop Jackson, Thomasville
Lauren Jones, Whigham
Logan Rich, Bainbridge

GreyStone Power Corp.

Samuel Noonan, Douglasville
Davis Ondieki, Dallas
Nathan Riediger, College Park

Hart EMC

Hannah Justice, Canon
Abby Whitfield, Toccoa

Irwin EMC

Brooks Tucker, Camilla

Jackson EMC

Dawie Boers, Suwanee
Isaac Miller, Jefferson
Ansley Robinson, Hull
Jillian Vacha, Suwanee

Middle Georgia EMC

Lola Grace Floyd, Cordele
Nancy Patel, Bonaire
Darci Simmons, Hawkinsville
Parker Wall, Hawkinsville

Mitchell EMC

Hannah Glass, Camilla
Nic Patton, Albany

Ocmulgee EMC

Sophie Knight, Cochran
Niyal Patel, Hawkinsville
Chase Walker, Chauncey

Oconee EMC

Ansleigh DeLaCruz, Dublin
Lindsey McCollough, Dublin

Okefenoke REMC

Emma Dyal, Blackshear
LizAnn Hughes, Blackshear*
Julianna Pittman, Hortense
Joash Wollitz, Hilliard, Fla.

Satilla REMC

Ariel Hill, Douglas
Sammy Martinez Jr., Willacoochee
Jane Ashley Rowell, Douglas
Lex Steedley, Baxley

Snapping Shoals EMC

Jordan Foster, Conyers
Victoria Kirk, Stockbridge
Carson Lawler, Covington

Southern Rivers Energy

Adam Boggs, Barnesville
DJ Jordan, Thomaston

Sumter EMC

Cole Reynolds, Leesburg

Upton EMC

Peyton Chapman, Thomaston

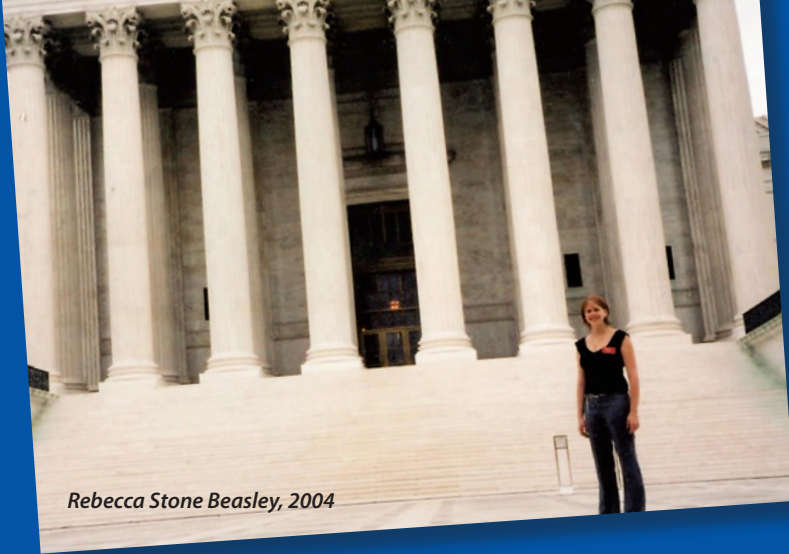
Walton EMC

Kenna Fortingo, Lawrenceville
Michelle Li, Watkinsville
Cam McCullers, Watkinsville
Viveka Mehrotra, Bogart

Washington EMC

Meya Adams, Sandersville
Carson Carter, Wrightsville

**Selected but unable to attend WYT.*



Like mother, like daughter

Rebecca Stone Beasley knew that her daughter, Emma Beasley, couldn't miss out on the annual Washington Youth Tour (WYT) experience.

Rebecca, a 2004 WYT delegate sponsored by Coastal Electric Cooperative and a 2005 graduate of Liberty County High School in Hinesville, learned about the opportunity from her guidance counselor.

"I wasn't well-traveled, but I was very social," she recalls. "Our guidance counselor thought it was something I'd be interested in, and I was."

It was the first time Rebecca had ever flown.

"It was just such a diverse experience with the activities we were engaged with, the people we got to meet, the politicians we got to engage with and even some of the girls that I went with," she says. "I'm still friends with them all these years later, and every time someone shares the *Georgia Magazine* cover from that year on Facebook, we tag each other."

Her favorite experience during the visit in 2004 was seeing the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"It really was the most impactful thing I remember from the whole trip," she says. "And that shaped my interest in that time period today. I read a lot of historical books from that time period now, because it was just so interesting."

When the opportunity arose for Emma to apply for the Washington Youth Tour, her mother urged her to do so.

"I definitely knew that once she saw what all the trip entailed, she'd be interested in it on her own," Rebecca says. "The work that goes into putting this together is tremendous, and you develop such an appreciation for the people at your local EMC and within the statewide program.

It's a lot of work and effort, and it's an experience that you'll remember for a lifetime."

Emma, who is a senior at Liberty County High, says she remembers her mother talking about the WYT ever since she was a little girl.

"It was something I heard about several times in my childhood," she says. "So, when my junior year came around, she kept telling me to figure out when the application was due. My media specialist at my school sent me the link for it, and I thought it was really cool."

Today, Emma is grateful for her mom's influence in participating in the Youth Tour.

And her favorite part of the trip?

"I really liked Mount Vernon," Emma says. "I thought it was very cool to see where George Washington lived. That was also the day that my friend group on the trip formed. I got a lot closer with people that day, and we traveled through all of Mount Vernon together."

Emma also enjoyed meeting the U.S. representatives and senators. "It was really cool to get to see those politicians without the media aspect of it—just being able to talk to them and interact with them without any extra distractions and seeing who they are. Their individuality was pretty cool, and we got to see them as an actual human rather than just a figure you see on TV."

Emma's advice to students interested in participating in the WYT in coming years is simple: "Embrace your difference."

"You're going to meet all different kinds of people, but just having an open mind and wanting to be welcoming and kind to everyone is super important," she says.

2023 Washington Youth Tour

The 2023 Washington Youth Tour is scheduled for June 15-22. This all-expenses-paid, eight-day event once again will feature visits to, and tours of, some of the United States' most iconic and historic venues, such as George Washington's Mount Vernon, the National Museum of Art, Arlington National Cemetery and the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Applications for the 2023 Youth Tour are due Feb. 17. Apply today by visiting www.utility.org or submitting an application to Rachel Camp at rcamp@utility.org.