



Media Release

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Visit to nation's capital inspires Youth Tour students

Since the 1950s, high school students representing electric cooperatives from all across the United States have participated in the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour event in Washington, D.C. This year more than 1,800 of America's best and brightest students, representing 42 states, participated. They visited the nation's capital, taking in historic sites and educational opportunities made available to them through this life-changing, memory-making experience.

Pearl River Valley Electric sponsored two of the 81 students representing Mississippi electric cooperatives—Hannah Phipps of Oak Grove High School and Eli Johnson of Columbia High School. While the tour is filled with fun activities, its primary mission is to educate students about our country's legislative and political process as well as the significance of rural electrification. The students met and visited with many of Mississippi's elected officials to learn and see first-hand how the federal government operates and how legislation affects every American.

Hannah, the daughter of Jamie and Stephanie Phipps of Oak Grove, and Eli, the son of Mike and Kristi Johnson of Columbia, were chosen to participate through an essay and interview process in November 2018. In February 2019, they attended the Youth Leadership Workshop in Jackson.

During the seven-day Youth Tour, the students visited historical and cultural sites, monuments and memorials, including Arlington Cemetery, the Washington National Cathedral, the World War II Memorial, Korean War, FDR, Lincoln, Air Force, Jefferson, and United States Marine Corps War Memorials, and the memorial dedicated to the victims of the tragic 9/11 terrorist attack at the Pentagon.

In addition, they also toured museums, including the Newseum, a seven-floor, interactive museum dedicated to first amendment rights, journalistic ethics and popular historic news events. Another favorite tour was the Smithsonian Museums of Air and Space, American History, Natural History and the National Gallery of Art. New additions this year included the National Portrait Gallery and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, both of which are a part of the Smithsonian Institute.

The pinnacle of each Youth Tour is the day spent on Capitol Hill. Freshman Rep. Michael Guest of Mississippi's 3rd Congressional District graciously continued the tradition of guiding the students on a VIP tour of the United States Capitol building that kicked-off with a tour of the U.S. House Floor.

After the tour, the day was filled with special visits with Mississippi's Congressional delegation. Eli and Hannah visited with Rep. Steven Palazzo and the group also had the opportunity to meet Sen. Roger Wicker and Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith.

"Youth Tour has not only taught me how to get out of my comfort zone and see what the world has to offer, but it has made me so proud to be an American," said Hannah.

“I enjoyed being able to make new friends with people from all around the nation along with being able to spend time with my friends,” Eli noted. “I had a great time seeing our beautiful capital and learning about our history. I have made many close friends and made many memories.”

“We are proud to take part in this program, which not only gives students an opportunity to learn about cooperatives and our nation’s history, but also helps to teach leadership and impresses upon them the importance of participating in their government,” General Manager Randy Wallace said.

High school juniors living in PRVEPA’s service area can apply to participate in next year’s program beginning in October. More information can be found at www.PRVEPA.com.

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