



U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock speaking to 2021 WYT delegates.



Washington Youth Tour Through a **different lens**

The Washington Youth Tour (WYT) looked quite a bit different in 2021, as the annual in-person event was shifted to a virtual platform and hosted online June 22-24 because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) Virtual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour was packed with leadership lessons for 39 delegates from 13 EMCs across Georgia.

Whether from the comfort of their own homes or in an EMC's conference room, students heard from experts and alumni on topics such as internship ideas, insights on how to meet people and gracefully leave conversations, identifying their top strengths using the CliftonStrengths talent assessment, how to get involved in their communities and tips on choosing their college experience.

The theme for 2021 was leadership, and delegates had a chance to focus on leadership from three perspectives: Leadership and Me, Leadership and My Community, and Leadership and My Nation.

And just as they would have during an in-person tour of Washington, D.C., the 2021 group met and asked questions of state and national leaders. Georgia Lt. Gov. Geoff Duncan, U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, and U.S. Reps. Sanford Bishop, Buddy Carter and Drew Ferguson joined the students via online meetings. Students were also assigned to mentor groups and met in those groups each day.

"Of course we'd always prefer to be in Washington, D.C., hosting an in-person event, but when logistical challenges made that impossible, our

team here at Georgia EMC was able to create a virtual three-day event that engaged the delegates and helped them learn about themselves, while also cultivating their leadership skills with students from across the state," says Kaleb Frady, public relations representative with Georgia EMC.

Having never created or hosted a virtual event of that magnitude, Georgia EMC wasn't really sure what to expect, but Frady and his team say that their expectations were wildly exceeded, and the entire Georgia EMC staff did a phenomenal job.

"The positive, grateful and appreciative feedback we received from the delegates has confirmed the efforts were very well-invested," Frady says. "Delegates remained engaged each day and actively participated."

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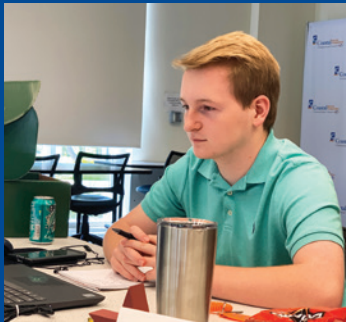
In their own words

While the 2021 version of the Washington Youth Tour looked quite a bit different, participants were excited to virtually meet guest speakers and attend online seminars. Several of them shared what they learned during the Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) Virtual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour and what it meant to be a part of this unique opportunity.

Ethan Falls ▶

Coastal Electric Cooperative, Midway

"It means so much that my EMC went to so much effort to give us the best experience possible."



Kameron Dunnings

Sumter EMC, Americus

"I felt so empowered with my new knowledge of what it takes to be a leader, of how co-ops are formed and operated, the ins and outs of the business world, as well as how to never lose sight of what makes you genuinely happy." ▼



Kameron Dunnings, left, and Collin Fillingame

Collin Fillingame ▲

Sumter EMC, Americus

"I made new friends, got great advice regarding my career choice and listened to some great speakers. This experience was enjoyable, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a part of it."



◀ Leah Lockhart

Flint Energies, Reynolds

"I learned how to be a better leader in my community and how to be a better conversationalist. I also learned the importance of building connections with people for internship opportunities."



◀ Claire Pope

Grady EMC, Cairo

"This experience has been so great, and it has opened my eyes to all of the things that the future may hold for me. Georgia EMC has invested in our future and shown many students that they can do anything they desire to do."



Kara Hendrix ▶

Southern Rivers Energy, Barnesville

"Thank you so much for still finding a way to do the tour despite the hardships of finding a new way to make it happen!"



Jackson Martin ▲

Coastal Electric Cooperative, Midway

"[This experience] has helped me feel more empowered than I have in recent times, and it has helped me to feel more enthusiasm toward the future and my ambitions."

Where are they now?

There's no doubt in 23-year-old Jacob Cone's mind that the Washington Youth Tour (WYT) helped train him for his experiences in college and the responsibilities of his current position as special assistant to the first lady of Georgia, Marty Kemp.

"The WYT helped push me out of my comfort zone early on. When you arrive, you are one of a lot of students from across Georgia, and when you leave, you are all a family," Cone says. "And whether it be talking to everyone, speaking with our adult chaperones or interacting with people in Washington, D.C., you are challenged to a great extent. The WYT was vital to my success at the University of Georgia (UGA) and even now in Atlanta."

Cone was a delegate from Cairo-based Grady Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) during the 2016 Washington Youth Tour. He was selected to represent the southwest Georgia cooperative alongside Savannah Padgett and Shelbie Jordan. He heard about the opportunity from one of his favorite



Jacob Cone (left), a 2016 WYT alumnus, is pictured here with the first lady of Georgia, Marty Kemp, at a recent UGA football game. He is her special assistant.

teachers at the Thomasville High School Scholars Academy in Thomasville.

"Participating in the tour was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had," Cone says. "Everyone on the trip was so kind, every detail was fine-tuned and the trip created so many memories that I will never forget."

After graduating from the Scholars Academy, Cone attended UGA in Athens. There, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and was a member of the Student Government Association Freshman Senate. He also worked at the Athens Country Club and earned the UGA Sig Ep Balance Man Scholarship Award.

Cone graduated from UGA in May 2021 and now works for Kemp. In his role as her special assistant, he travels with her, helps with staff events and drafts speeches. He also supports her initiative on fighting human trafficking in Georgia and her promotion of the Georgia Grown program and animal adoption.

2021 scholarship winners

Delegates had a chance to compete in a post-event video contest in 2021. Students were broken up into groups of three, and each group had three weeks to collaborate on a video project that required them to highlight:

- What they learned during the Georgia Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) Virtual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour that would be useful for them in the future;
- How they felt knowing that their EMC invested in developing their leadership skills through the Youth Tour; and
- Why they felt it was important for their EMCs to invest in young people.

Each video had to be no longer than three minutes, and videos were judged by WYT alumni who work in media and TV, as well as National Rural Electric Cooperative Association staffers who produce videos as part of their jobs. The winning group was announced at the end of July, and each member received a \$5,000 scholarship.

2021 scholarship winners were:



Sam Figiel
LaGrange
Diverse Power



Claire Pope
Thomas County
Grady EMC



Isaac Breiding
Douglasville
GreyStone Power Corp.

MORE ▶

Oh, the places they may go!

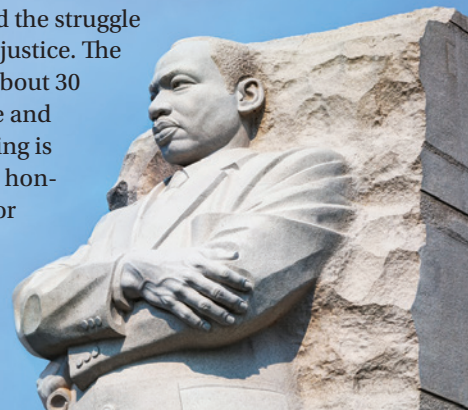
During the seven-day Washington Youth Tour (WYT), which is scheduled for June 17-23, students from electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) throughout Georgia may have a chance to visit some of the most exciting tourist spots in our nation's capital. Here are some of the places students may visit during the 2022 WYT and the history behind these sites.

Arlington National Cemetery

The first military burial at Arlington National Cemetery took place on May 13, 1864, for Pvt. William Christmas, who was killed in the Civil War. Today, it is the final resting place of 400,000 service members, veterans and their families, and more than 3,000 ceremonies and memorial services take place there each year.

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial

Located in downtown Washington, D.C., this memorial honors the late Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy and the struggle for freedom, equality and justice. The memorial, which stands about 30 feet tall, is made of granite and opened in August 2011. King is the first African American honored with a memorial on or near the National Mall and only the fourth nonpresident to be memorialized in such a way.



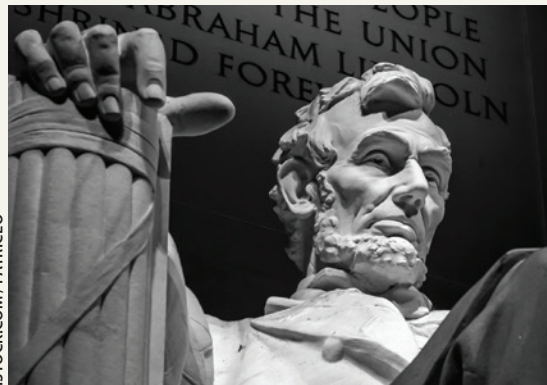
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Smithsonian Institution

Known as the world's largest museum, education and research complex, the Smithsonian Institution comprises 19 museums, 21 libraries, nine research centers, historical and architectural landmarks, and the National Zoo. It was founded in 1846 and is named after British scientist James Smithson, its founding donor. The Smithsonian Institution has 156 million pieces of art, artifacts and specimens in its collections.

Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon is the historic home of America's first president, George Washington. Located just a short drive from Washington, D.C., this tourist spot includes a mansion, gardens, tombs, a farm and a museum. Restoration began in 1859 by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, the nation's first historic preservation organization, and the estate now looks just like it did in 1799 when Washington died.



ISTOCK.COM / PATRICEO

Lincoln Memorial

The Lincoln Memorial Commission was incorporated in 1910 and tasked with building a national memorial to honor former president Abraham Lincoln. The Lincoln Memorial is made of stone from several U.S. regions and encompasses about 27,000 square feet of space. Construction began in February 1914 and concluded with the declaration of the memorial in May 1922.

Plans for this year's WYT had not been finalized as of press time, but organizers are hopeful that it will return to an in-person format.

2022 Washington Youth Tour June 17-23

The Washington Youth Tour is an opportunity for high school students to learn more about our nation's capital alongside classmates and friends throughout Georgia. It is an all-expenses-paid trip on behalf of Georgia's electric membership cooperatives (EMCs). To be eligible to participate, students must be juniors in high school, and their families must be members of **Coastal Electric**. Visit www.CoastalElectric.Coop/washington-youth-tour to learn more and/or submit an application.