

Coastal Electric Cooperative employee recognized for lifesaving actions after Sapelo Island dock collapse

A day devoted to celebrating the Gullah Geechee culture on Sapelo Island quickly became an emergency situation when the gangway connecting the stationary dock to the floating dock and the Anne Marie Ferry came crashing down.

When Erika Blocker-LeCounte saw the Sapelo Island gangway collapse, sending 20 people into the Duplin River, she didn't dive into the water or gather around the slippery metal to pull people in. A fisherman's daughter and a lifelong coastal resident, Blocker-LeCounte knew the tides and used that local knowledge to make a split-second decision. She ran away from the river, jumped off a pier into the marsh and sprinted across the beach to get ahead of people being carried away by the current. Others followed to help. Blocker-LeCounte then waded in over waist deep—careful to avoid drop-offs—and began pulling people out of the water.

Just before the collapse, Blocker-LeCounte was talking with a woman on the gangway who is a Coastal Electric Cooperative member and a distant relative of her husband's. As Blocker-LeCounte ran down the beach, she could hear the woman calling her name. Blocker-LeCounte was able to pull her from the water and



Erika Blocker-LeCounte

onto the beach to safety. She also saved the life of another woman and assisted with helping others out of the water after they had gone in.

In recognition of her heroic actions, Blocker-LeCounte, an employee of Coastal Electric Cooperative, received a Lifesaving Award from Georgia

EMC* during the state association's Annual Meeting on Nov. 11, 2024, in Savannah.

"One thing I would like everyone to know is that you can do something," Blocker-LeCounte says.

And because she did, at least two lives were saved that day.

Blocker-LeCounte notes that many people from coastal Georgia do not know how to swim. Just two years before this tragic accident, she took swimming lessons for the first time in her life. Following her heroic actions, Blocker-LeCounte is even more convinced that encouraging others to learn to swim is part of her life's mission.

Blocker-LeCounte is one of 12 employees from seven electric cooperatives in Georgia to be recognized with a 2024 Lifesaving Award, which honors co-op employees whose quick thinking and actions are instrumental in safeguarding others from dangerous or potentially deadly situations.

**Georgia EMC is the statewide trade association representing the state's 41 electric cooperatives, Oglethorpe Power, Georgia Transmission Corp. and Georgia System Operations Corp.*

Members donate more than \$40,000

The Coastal Electric Cooperative Foundation recently awarded more than \$40,000 in Bright Ideas Education Grants to local teachers. Co-op staff surprised teachers with the good news in their classrooms at schools across Bryan, Liberty and McIntosh counties.

Primarily funded by Coastal Electric Cooperative members who allow their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar through Operation Round Up,

Bright Ideas Education Grants bring teachers' innovative classroom project ideas to reality.

Since the Bright Ideas program's inception in 2002, around half a million dollars has been awarded to give local teachers the power to put their creative teaching ideas into action.

Below is a summary of the winning grant project ideas. To see more, check out Coastal Electric Cooperative's Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels.



McIntosh County Academy teacher Christine Stutler beams as she celebrates her Bright Ideas Education Grant award from CEO Chris Fettes.



Natalie Mondesir and Liberty Elementary School students celebrate as they prepare to put her Bright Ideas Education Grant to use learning to sew patches using conductive thread and LEDs.



Jeni Lee plans to use her Bright Ideas Education Grant to teach Button Gwinnett Elementary School students about simple machines like levers, pulleys and inclined planes.

000 to local schools



Snelson-Golden Middle School's Sascha Moody accepts her Bright Ideas Education Grant from CEO Chris Fettes, alongside Principal Dr. Anthony Johnson.



Cassandra Breckenridge tells CEO Chris Fettes how students will use her grant to design a rain garden to prevent flooding and collect water on Richmond Hill High School's campus.



Richmond Hill Middle School's Philip Lyons explains how students will program robotic arms to simulate feeding dinosaurs as part of his grant project.



Mary Bowden accepts a Bright Ideas Education Grant in front of her students at Richmond Hill Middle School.

Holiday office closing

Coastal Electric Cooperative offices will be closed Monday, Jan. 20, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. As always, you can manage your account or report an outage by using the MyCoastalEC app or the member portal online at CoastalElectric.Coop, or by calling (800) 421-2343.



It's scholarship season!

Don't miss these opportunities to fund your future.

Visit CoastalElectric.Coop/scholarships for more info and to apply.



Washington Youth Tour Scholarship

Deadline: Jan. 20

Purpose: One-time \$2,500 scholarship for Washington Youth Tour delegates and one-time \$500 scholarship for alternates.

Eligibility: High school juniors attending school in south Bryan, Liberty and McIntosh counties may apply to attend the 2025 Washington Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid leadership trip to Washington, D.C., and earn the scholarship. Visit CoastalElectric.Coop/washington-youth-tour to apply.



Walter Harrison Scholarship

Deadline: Jan. 31

Purpose: One-time \$1,000 scholarship for undergraduate studies.

Eligibility: Residents of south Bryan, Liberty and McIntosh counties pursuing an undergraduate degree to an accredited Georgia school are eligible to apply. The recipient's primary residence must be the household of a Coastal Electric Cooperative member or employee.



Coastal Electric Cooperative Foundation Academic Scholarship

Deadline: March 7

Purpose: \$5,000 renewable scholarship for undergraduate studies.

Eligibility: Graduating high school seniors who are residents of Liberty, Long, McIntosh and south Bryan counties are eligible to apply.



Coastal Electric Cooperative Foundation Technical College Scholarship

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-round.

Purpose: Renewable scholarship amounts determined by number of credit hours for the next semester enrolled in technical college or lineman school.

Eligibility: Scholarships are available to students of all ages pursuing a diploma, degree or certificate program from any of Georgia's technical colleges or recognized lineman schools. Applicants must have a home mailing address within Liberty, Long, McIntosh or south Bryan counties.



Educational opportunities like these are funded by Georgia's electric cooperatives and Coastal Electric Cooperative members who want to invest in local students because they see the value they bring to the community. Funding for foundation scholarships comes from Coastal Electric Cooperative members who allow their electric bills to be rounded up to the next dollar through Operation Round Up. Those nickels and dimes are pooled together and invested back into the community through the Coastal Electric Cooperative Foundation.

WYT DELEGATES

among Georgia's best and brightest

By Lindsay Penticuff



Georgia's 2024 Washington Youth Tour delegation poses in front of the White House in Washington, D.C.

CHRISTY CHEWNING

Georgia's 112 delegates representing 37 electric membership corporations (EMCs) were among nearly 1,800 high school students nationwide who visited Washington, D.C., in June for the Washington Youth Tour (WYT).

The event June 14-21 was the 59th year Georgia's EMCs sent students on the Youth Tour.

Once a year, high school students are selected by the state's EMCs to represent Georgia as delegates on the all-expenses-paid trip. This leadership experience includes meetings with state and national leaders,

leadership training and visits to many major sites.

"The Washington Youth Tour continues to bring the best and brightest students from across our state together for a fast-paced week in Washington, D.C.," says Andy Paul, WYT director and public relations representative with Tucker-based Georgia EMC. "Our goal is for Georgia's delegates to learn about history and leadership while on the trip and, most importantly, be excited about returning home afterward to share the cooperative difference within their communities."

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Sumter EMC delegate Trey Stewart (left) poses with the United States Marine Band drum major during a visit to the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial in Washington, D.C.



KATHRYN GREEN

The 2024 Washington Youth Tour included visits to the following sites:

- National Mall
- Smithsonian Institution
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
- National memorials: World War II, Martin Luther King Jr., Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jefferson, Lincoln, Korean War Veterans, Vietnam Veterans, U.S. Marine Corps
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Lafayette Square at the White House
- George Washington's Mount Vernon
- Washington National Cathedral
- National Museum of African American History and Culture
- Library of Congress
- National Archives

Georgia students experience nation's capital

The Washington Youth Tour experience gives delegates an opportunity to visit as many as 25 of Washington, D.C.'s most historic sites. They also participate in team-building activities and events during which they can learn more about one another and meet delegates from throughout the United States.

Irwin EMC's Thomas Holt of Fitzgerald, who was selected by Georgia's 2024 delegation to represent the Peach State on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council, says attending the Youth Tour meant the world to him.

"I had a great time and found it to be a wonderful learning experience due to great mentors, excellent chaperones and incredible fellow delegates," he says. "These 'strangers' quickly became my family—people I would count on, confide in, laugh with and, eventually, cry with [when parting ways]."

Learn more about what Holt and the other delegates experienced during the 2024 trip.



LAURA GAYLE DAILLEY



KATHRYN GREEN

Above: Delegates from Canoochee EMC, Sumter EMC, Planters EMC, Irwin EMC and Middle Georgia EMC pose with WYT director Andy Paul (third from right) in front of the Lincoln Memorial. **Left:** Irwin EMC delegate Thomas Holt joins a group of Georgia's delegates for a selfie in front of the White House.

White House

One of the first stops on the weeklong Youth Tour was a photo opportunity at the White House. The location at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W. in Washington, D.C., was selected by former President George Washington in 1791 as the future home of our nation's president. There are 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms and six levels in the White House, and, on average, 6,000 people visit it daily.

Library of Congress

The Library of Congress was founded in 1800 and is the oldest federal cultural institution in the nation. It is the largest library in the world, with

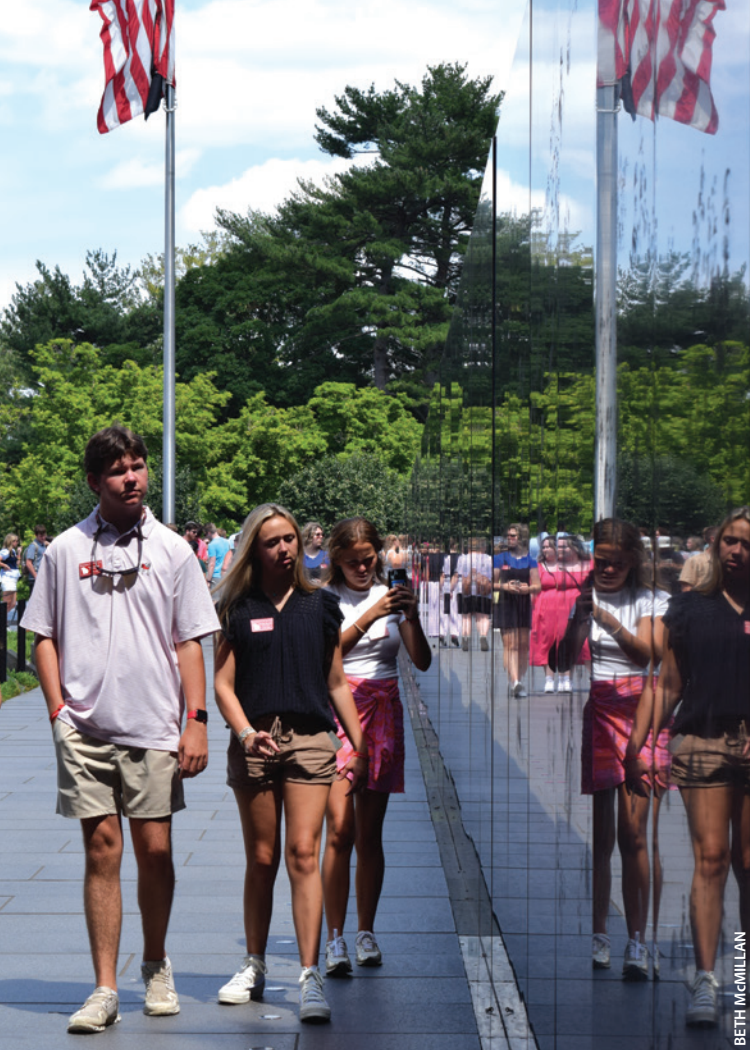
millions of items in a variety of formats. It includes international collections, a law library, rare books and manuscripts, and audiovisual collections.

"It was really cool to visit the Main Reading Room," says Holt, referring to one of the principal reference and book-service points of the Library of Congress' general collection.

Riverboat Cruise

Holt says he had an amazing time on the Washington Youth Tour Riverboat Cruise, which allowed delegates to get a picturesque view of the landscape along the Potomac River.

During the nearly three-hour cruise, Georgia students were joined by WYT delegates from North Dakota and Montana.



BETH McMILLAN

While visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, Holt (left) and fellow students look over the inscription of nearly 60,000 names of men and women who gave their lives or remain missing following the war.

George Washington's Mount Vernon

Located about 13 miles outside Washington, D.C., George Washington's Mount Vernon is the former home of the United States' first president and his wife, Martha. The estate features a mansion and dozens of historic outbuildings, a blacksmith shop, farm and wharf.

During their visit, WYT delegates toured the grounds, checked out the inside of Washington's mansion, visited the tombs of George and Martha Washington, listened to



KATHRYN GREEN

U.S. Sen. Jon Osoff (left) stands with Holt while addressing Georgia's delegation on the United States Capitol. The senator took time to chat with students, answering their questions, and taking photos.

historic reenactors describe the former president's farming practices and enjoyed lunch at the famed Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant.

Presidential and war memorials

There are seven presidential memorials and nearly 20 war memorials in Washington, D.C. These include the Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial and the National World War II Memorial.

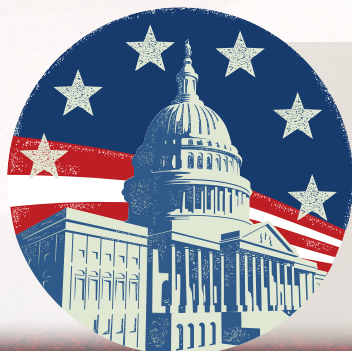
Georgia's delegation learned the history of many memorials from experienced tour guides, snapped photos along the Tidal Basin near the National Mall and at memorial parks, and read Father's Day messages left by family members at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Arlington National Cemetery

Established in 1864, Arlington National Cemetery encompasses 639 acres and is the final resting place for more than 400,000 active-duty service members, veterans and their families.

Located within the cemetery is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where delegates attended a special wreath-laying ceremony honoring U.S. military members and veterans.

MORE ▶



Apply for the 2025 Washington Youth Tour

The 2025 Washington Youth Tour is scheduled for June 13-20. This all-expenses-paid event 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 Smithsonian Institution, Arlington National Cemetery and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Visit CoastalElectric.Coop/washington-youth-tour to learn more about the 2025 tour and to apply.

Where are they now?

Tucker Green, 27, enjoyed his experience so much as one of Amicalola EMC's Washington Youth Tour (WYT) delegates in 2015 that he didn't hesitate to say "yes" when asked to serve as a chaperone for the weeklong experience in 2022.

"When the opportunity presented itself, I didn't think twice about it," he says. "It was a great experience, just like my original trip as a delegate! I grew close with many people and made new friends, both with fellow chaperones and my group of student-delegates.

"It's been awesome to keep up with several of the students, too, as they've now started college. Chaperoning gave me encouragement for our future, with these bright young leaders on the horizon."

In reflecting on his own experience as a delegate, Green says his favorite takeaways from participating in the WYT are the friendships he developed and continues to hold dear.

"In one week, we went from being strangers to being like family," he says. "Several of my fellow delegates and I still keep up today. It's great seeing how everyone has started their lives and careers."

Green was one of four delegates selected to represent Amicalola EMC in 2015. At the time, he was a rising senior at Pickens High School in Jasper, where he was raised.

Today, Green is president of Jasper-based Tucker Green and Associates Inc., a government relations and association management firm he started in 2020 that supports trade associations and small businesses, primarily in the construction industry.

"In this capacity, I serve multiple roles. I'm the registered lobbyist for several clients, representing their interests at the local and state levels," Green says. "Additionally, I serve as executive director for two trade associations, providing all necessary management services for their operations."

Green's wife, 24-year-old Kayla Roberson Green, grew up in Ellijay and was an Amicalola EMC delegate in 2017. She is director of communications for Georgia Speaker of the House Jon Burns.



Tucker and Kayla Green

2024 Washington Youth Tour delegates

Altamaha EMC, Lyons

Slade Holland
Brie Jackson-Buchanan
Noah Varn

Amicalola EMC, Jasper

Farah Jones
Tlung Mang
Addy Poole
Deacon Shull

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC,

Young Harris
Kaylee Eubanks
Ansleigh Hardin
Mikala Souther

Canochee EMC, Reidsville

Kaidence Allred
Destiny Hanna
Liam Porter
Will Wasson

Carroll EMC, Carrollton

Emily Dutton
Aanyah Lovett

Central Georgia EMC, Jackson

Dylan Brimberry
Ike Sanders

Coastal Electric Cooperative, Midway

Addison Brooks
Bianca Duncan
Michael Jones
Autumn McLean
Alli Piatt
Emily Rowe

Cobb EMC, Marietta

Sophia Joya
Kaitlin Long
Lily Meredith
Ashley Wallace

Colquitt EMC, Moultrie

Isaiah Lockhart

Rece Poole
Trinity Sherman

Coweta-Fayette EMC, Palmetto

Grace Faison
Adalynn Jordan

Diverse Power Corp., LaGrange

Savannah Joiner
Katie Swann
Claudia Walker

Flint Energies, Reynolds

Adeline Barbour
Harper Bishop
Reid Black
Jeremiah Walker

Georgia EMC, Tucker

Jeremy Best (Canochee EMC)
Lydia O'Neill (Jackson EMC)

Grady EMC, Cairo

Jacob Bennett
Kaiden Gibbs
Heali Patel

GreyStone Power Corp., Hiram

Gini Amaeze
Alexandria Criner
Sade Kangas
Aniyah Springer

Habersham EMC, Clarkesville

Everett Rudeseal
Chesney Tanksley

Hart EMC, Hartwell

Raegan Duncan
Haylee Vu

Irwin EMC, Ocilla

Shelby Branch
Thomas Holt

Jackson EMC, Jefferson

Alvaro Saldarriaga Arcila

Mason Bass
Grace Koster
Jabez Melaku

Jefferson Energy Cooperative, Wrens

Brandon Harrison
Chasade Norris
Judi Vasquez
Nya Williams

Middle Georgia EMC, Vienna

Kathryn Akin
Ben Howard
Sam Sampson
Ruby Witt

Mitchell EMC, Camilla

Bryant Collins
Sam Summerlin

North Georgia EMC, Dalton

Emalee Collins
Brody Haddock

Ocmulgee EMC, Eastman

Brynnon Bell
Adriana Randall
Scout Totty

Oconee EMC, Dudley

Bennett Karoly
Coleman Rogers

Okefenokee EMC, Nahunta

Chase Grantham
Owen Hopkins
Brittany Reyez
Karis Richardson

Planters EMC, Millen

Laura Gayle Dailey
Sam Kyzer
Ann Parker

Rayle EMC, Washington

Andee Claire Dellinger
Kaylee Grimaud

Hannah Grace Moon

Satilla REMC, Alma

Hannah Bonvechio
Gabby Burns
Christina Davis
Rhianna Lewis

Sawnee EMC, Cumming

Sapna Annambhotla

Slash Pine EMC, Homerville

William Bates
Madaline Bennett

Snapping Shoals EMC, Covington

Ethan Barlay
Ryan Bell
Hannah Mock
Shelby Moore

Southern Rivers Energy, Barnesville

Amy Boggs
Joanna Hernandez

Sumter EMC, Americus

Maggie Irvin
Ila Johnson
Trey Stewart
Olivia Van der Walt

Tri-County EMC, Gray

Nichole Botsoe
Delaney Johnston

Upson EMC, Thomaston

Lily Baity

Walton EMC, Monroe

Matthew Bovenkerk
Rahul Mohanty
Hailey Mott
Vy Nguyen

Washington EMC, Sandersville

Chloe Bray
Trojan Stapleton