ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES:
GOING BEYOND THE WIRES
More than 6,000 high school juniors from across Tennessee have participated in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour since it started in the 1960s.

Before you lies a unique opportunity. Winners of the Electric Cooperative Writing Contest not only earn spots on a once-in-a-lifetime tour of our nation’s capital, but they also qualify for additional trips and thousands of dollars in scholarships and have a chance to network with other young leaders from across the nation.

Exciting stops on the Washington Youth Tour include the U.S. Capitol, above, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, right, and Lincoln Memorial, opposite page. Seeing the sites they’ve studied in school is a highlight of the delegates’ D.C. experience.

This booklet will tell you more about the trip, let you hear from previous delegates and outline the requirements and resources to help you write the best short story. It will also tell you a little bit more about electric cooperatives and the reasons they have provided this opportunity to students for more than 50 years.
Your prize for showing the benefits of cooperative power: an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., June 8-14, 2018, with nearly 2,000 other students your age from across the country.

Each day of the Washington Youth Tour brings more impressive sights, opportunities for photos and lots of memories. Among activities filling the agenda are tours of Washington, D.C., and all its landmarks, memorials and museums. Highlights include the Smithsonian Institution, White House, U.S. Capitol, Mount Vernon and Monticello.

Food, travel and lodging expenses are paid by Tennessee’s electric cooperatives. But the benefits of the Youth Tour go far beyond an expense-paid trip.

During the tour, delegates have the opportunity to compete for Tennessee’s spot on the Youth Leadership Council to represent the state at the 2019 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting in Orlando, Florida.

And don’t forget about the chance to help pay for your college education with scholarships of $3,000, $2,000 or $1,000 awarded by the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association if your story is judged one of the top three in the state.

Finally, you may choose to participate in our Cooperative Youth Ambassador program. Delegates who stay active and engaged with their co-op in the 12 months following Youth Tour qualify for a drawing for a $10,000 scholarship to the school of their choice.

Electric cooperatives are different from other utilities. Your locally owned electric co-op gives a lot back to the community. In fact, that’s a major part of its business plan. Electric cooperatives invest thousands of dollars to...
send high school students to Washington because it’s important to the long-term prosperity of their communities for their leaders of tomorrow to learn about the political process. Youth Tour participants return to their hometowns stronger leaders with confidence that they can make a difference.

SO MUCH MORE THAN A TRIP

The Washington Youth Tour is just the beginning. Tour delegates have the opportunity to receive additional trips and a share of more than $16,000 in scholarships. Plus, the experiences and contacts you make will last a lifetime.
HEAR FROM THE WINNERS

“The trip to D.C. was easily one of the best weeks of my life — if not the best. The places I visited, people I met and memories I made are irreplaceable. I could not be happier with how the trip turned out.”

Seth Bishop, Riverside Christian Academy
Pickwick Electric Cooperative

“The Youth Tour was definitely the opportunity of a lifetime! It’s the best trip I’ve ever been on, and I can’t wait to go back to D.C. It was almost all of the capital in one week, and I’m so thankful to have gone.”

Kendra Chaney, Stewart County High School
Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation

“They say pictures are worth 1,000 words, but who knew my 900-word short story could be worth thousands of laughs, memories and lifelong friendships?”

Sawyer Pendergrass, Bledsoe County High School
Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative

“Being able to be a part of the 2017 Washington Youth Tour was an experience of a lifetime! I had such an amazing time and met many great people. I can truly say this was the best week of my life!”

Jada Worles, Fayette Ware High School
Chickasaw Electric Cooperative
Each day of the Washington Youth Tour brings more impressive sights, opportunities for photos and lots of memories. Among activities filling the agenda are tours of Washington, D.C., and all its landmarks and memorials.

2017 ROBERT MCCARTY SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Destinee Gilchrist,
Collinwood High School,
Tennessee Valley Electric Cooperative,
$3,000 Scholarship

Taya Lewis,
Van Buren County High School,
Caney Fork Electric Cooperative,
$2,000 Scholarship

Hope Newell,
South Gibson County High School,
Gibson Electric Membership Corporation,
$1,000 Scholarship

2017 CO-OP YOUTH AMBASSADOR SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Candace Hargrave,
Huntland High School,
Duck River Electric Membership Corporation,
$10,000 Scholarship

Delegates who stay engaged and active with their local co-op in the year following the Youth Tour have a chance to win a $10,000 scholarship to the college or trade school of their choice.

JOIN A NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Politicians, authors, athletes and business leaders, including Apple CEO Tim Cook, are proud Youth Tour alumni.
There are a few rules you need to follow:

1. Only juniors in high school are eligible to participate.

2. Every short story must be titled “Electric Cooperatives: Beyond the Wires.”

3. Submissions must not exceed 900 words, including articles (“a,” “an” and “the”). The exact word count must be included on your cover page. Entries must be typewritten and double-spaced.

Remember, you’re writing a short story, which gives you more creative freedom than the rigid guidelines of an essay. Your story should be an entertaining, informative description of electric cooperatives.

Visit youthtour.tnelectric.org to learn more about electric co-ops. Resources there will provide you with lots of information and material to write your story.

CO-OP CONTACT PERSON

EMAIL ADDRESS

DUE DATE
JUDGING CRITERIA

Be creative in your writing, utilizing the information in this booklet and your own distinctive voice. Your writing will be judged on three factors:

50% Appropriate treatment of theme and knowledge of subject

To gain full credit in this category, you’ll have to effectively weave the information relating to the theme throughout the short story. Judges will see indications of additional research, a grasp of what information is vital to making your story believable and credible and creative ways of presenting that information.

35% Originality and Creativity

Use a different, entertaining, effective way of presenting information that will educate a reader and get your points across.

15% Grammar and Composition

If you need an explanation here, check your English textbook.

LEARN MORE ONLINE AT YOUTHTOUR.TNELECTRIC.ORG

There are several resources on our website at youthtour.tnelectric.org to help you write your story.

TECHNOLOGY

Co-ops have developed and embraced technological innovations that allow us to monitor and serve our rural service areas more effectively and efficiently.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Tennessee’s electric cooperatives are committed to improving the communities we serve by recruiting jobs and investment, philanthropic giving and educating future leaders.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Co-ops work to help you use less of the product they sell. This seems odd, but it reflects our primary purpose: serving our members. Co-ops provide tips and incentives to help members use energy wisely.
Gemma Winchester’s mother, Olivia, stood with a board game in her hands. “Recently, while in town, I decided to buy this Electric Cooperative Association-themed Monopoly game! I had the impression the game would be enjoyable to play on rainy days such as today.”

Olivia positioned the game’s board and situated the Chance and Community Chest cards in the two placeholders.

“Which piece would you want to play as?” she asked her family, holding out 10 different miniature, metal objects.

After much debate, Gemma’s brother, Kurt, decided he wanted to play as the television, while their sister, Iris, decided she wanted to play as the lightbulb. Gemma selected the laptop, and Olivia selected the lightning bolt. Gemma, Iris and Kurt’s father, Ben, settled upon the electricity pole’s transformer. Each person placed his or her preferred game piece onto the square that read “Go.”

“I’ll go first,” Olivia insisted as she picked up the dice. The children’s mother rolled the dice and moved her lightning bolt three spaces to the Plateau Electric Co-op square and decided to purchase the cooperative.

“Cooperatives have developed and incorporated technological innovations that allow people to oversee and serve their own rural service areas more effectively and efficiently,” informed Olivia.

Gemma decided she wanted to roll the dice second, and she advanced two spaces to the “Take a Chance!” square. The teenager picked up her “chance” card and read aloud:

“The Cooperative Connections Card Program saved Tennesseans more than $2.9 million on prescription drugs. Collect 200 watts in gratitude from each member.”

Gemma collected 200 electricity watts, while Kurt rolled the dice and maneuvered his television to the Duck River Electric Membership Co-op square. After rolling the dice, Iris landed on the Community Chest block and picked up a card.

Iris read her card aloud: “Collect 1,000 watts because the cooperatives provided power to 1.1 million homes, farms and businesses across rural and suburban Tennessee areas.”

The children’s father threw the dice, moved his transformer six times and landed on the Volunteer Energy Co-op. Ben contemplated whether he wanted to purchase the co-op; in the end, he decided to invest in the cooperative.

“Electric cooperatives improve communities by recruiting jobs and investment, giving to philanthropic causes and educating future leaders.” Ben enlightened his wife and three children with the fact.

Olivia shuffled her piece to a Chance square and chose a card that read, “The cooperatives provided $94 million in payroll and benefits for Tennessee families. Collect 500 watts.”

Gemma was the next person to take a turn; when she rolled, she ended on the Caney Fork Electric Co-op. Noticing her parents speak so highly of cooperatives, she decided to buy the co-op.

“In the 1930s, there wasn’t any power in rural Tennessee, but homeowners and farmers joined to create co-ops...
that brought power to their homes," Ben educated his children. "The principal goal the co-ops had hasn't changed, despite the changes from the 1930s to now."

“What was the primary objective?” inquired the youngest in the family, Iris.

“The cooperative's main goal is to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to the people they serve." Her mother answered.

Kurt took the dice in his hands and watched as the two cubes tumbled on the board; the 13-year-old landed on the square that read Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative. Kurt decided to follow his parents and his older sister's decisions and buy the co-op.

“Another interesting fact about cooperatives: The co-ops exist solely to serve the communities and not shareholders," Olivia informed. "The cooperatives distribute and sell energy at cost and invest in any excess revenue back into the electric system.”

The 12-year-old girl's turn landed her at another Community Chest card, which she read aloud: "Collect 500 watts because electric co-ops secured more than $4 million in economic development loans in 2013."

Ben's roll entitled him to a Community Chest card that revealed he could collect 1,000 watts because Tennessee's 23 electric cooperatives provide energy for 2.5 million Tennesseans across 71 percent of Tennessee's landmass.

Back to Olivia's turn, she made her way to the square reading Middle Tennessee Electric Membership Co-op. Gemma picked up the dice, rolling the number eight and landing on Tri-County Electric Membership Co-op; the girl then bought the cooperative.

“Our electric cooperatives are owned by the people they serve," Olivia stated, "which means the cooperatives are not owned by the government."

During Kurt's turn, the boy rolled a two and a three, which allowed him to move five spaces to a "Take a Chance!" block. The boy drew his chance card from the deck, the card read, "Collect 500 watts because $63 million was paid in taxes for roads, schools and parks."

Iris threw the two spotted cubes on the board and proceeded to move her lightbulb seven places to the box reading, "Community Chest." She drew out her card and proceeded to read aloud: "Electric cooperatives serve one in three Tennessee homes. Collect 200 watts.

The children's father rolled the dice, which permitted him to draw a card that read, "Tennessee cooperatives kept the lights on 99.96 percent of the time despite the horrendous weather. Collect 1,000 watts."

“So that's why our electricity hasn't switched off during this terrible storm!” exclaimed Iris.
TENNESSEE’S ELECTRIC CO-OPS

Tennessee’s electric cooperatives provide power to more than 1.1 million homes, farms and businesses across rural and suburban Tennessee. Unlike other businesses, electric cooperatives are owned by the consumers they serve and operate as not-for-profit businesses. This may not sound important, but it means that consumers are the priority. Rates are kept low because there are no stockholders to pay, and the co-op is responsive to members because they vote on co-op leadership.

In the 1930s, there was no power in rural Tennessee. Homeowners and farmers came together to create co-ops that would bring power to their homes.

Today, co-ops are modern businesses that use technology to efficiently operate a large, advanced grid. Despite these changes, the primary goal of co-ops have not changed: provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our neighbors, the very people who own the co-op.

MEMBER-OWNED AND -REGULATED

Electric co-ops are owned by the people they serve, not by government. Members elect board members to represent their interests and set policy and procedures for the co-op.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Co-ops exist to serve their communities instead of shareholders. They distribute and sell energy at cost and invest any excess revenue back into the electric system.

COMMITTED TO IMPROVING COMMUNITIES

Keeping the lights on. Recruiting new industry. Educating the leaders of tomorrow. Electric co-ops take seriously their responsibility to improve lives in their communities.
Because of their local ties, co-ops are committed to improving lives in their communities. Going beyond simply keeping the lights on, co-ops recruit businesses and investment, help members operate their homes and businesses more efficiently and prepare students to be tomorrow’s leaders.

ELECTRIC CO-OPS SERVE

2.5 MILLION TENNESSEANS

1 IN 3 TENNESSEE HOMES

$2.8 BILLION IN POLES, WIRES, SUBSTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

99.96% RELIABILITY
CO-OPS INVEST $10 MILLION A MONTH IN MAINTENANCE AND UPGRADES.

CO-OPS MAINTAIN 86,000 MILES OF LINE
CO-OP HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES

CO-OP HISTORY IN TENNESSEE

MID-1880S
Electricity was available in many of America’s larger cities, but electrification of rural areas was deemed unfeasible.

EARLY 1930S
For-profit power companies considered it unprofitable to build lines in sparsely populated rural areas. Without electricity, the economies of rural areas were tied exclusively to agriculture.

MAY 18, 1933
President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Tennessee Valley Authority Act, which created a federal agency to provide river navigation, flood control, electric generation and economic development in the Tennessee Valley.

THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP
Co-ops are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.

DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL
Co-ops are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

MEMBERS’ ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
Members contribute equitably to the capital of their co-op. Members allocate surpluses to further develop the cooperative or support other activities approved by members.
President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration, which made federal funds available to provide rural electric service. The leaders of farm organizations proposed the formation of nonprofit electric cooperatives.

**MAY 11, 1935**

President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration, which made federal funds available to provide rural electric service. The leaders of farm organizations proposed the formation of nonprofit electric cooperatives.

**1935-1948**

Tennesseans formed 23 electric cooperatives to bring electricity to rural areas.

**1949**

Postwar enthusiasm and adaptations of military technology, materials and equipment propelled rapid growth of rural electrification. By the 1950s, the Tennessee Valley Authority had become the nation’s largest energy supplier.

**TODAY**

Tennessee’s 23 electric cooperatives provide energy for 2.5 million Tennesseans across 71 percent of Tennessee’s landmass. Co-ops rely on the latest technology to efficiently and reliably serve one in three Tennessee homes.

**AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE**

Co-ops are autonomous organizations controlled by their members.

**EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION**

Co-ops provide education and training for their members, representatives and employees on the nature and benefits of cooperation.

**COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES**

Co-ops serve their members most effectively by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

**CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY**

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.