Youth Tour: Shaping Our Youth for 50 Years

MESSAGE FROM
GENERAL MANAGER LEROY T. SKLOSS

THE GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR just turned 50! And oh, what a tour it's been.

"I love this trip. Every year is a new adventure," says Esther Dominguez, the Texas delegation's statewide Youth Tour coordinator.

Youth Tour brings together teens from 43 states (about 120 students from Texas) for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: a week in Washington, D.C. Students visit monuments and museums and get to know the roots of American history. They meet their congressional representatives and learn about electric co-ops and political advocacy. They dance on a boat cruising down the Potomac River. They live in close quarters for up to a week and are given a small taste of freedom and independence. They sleep little and talk a lot.

Youth Tour participants pose with U.S. Rep. Ralph Hall.

Honor and a Blessing

For those accepted into the Youth Leadership Council, the Youth Tour experience is even richer. These students—one representative from each participating state—work in the congressional action center at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual meeting. They also participate in a special meeting to delve more deeply into leadership and co-op grassroots issues.

"It was an honor and a blessing to be chosen as the 2014 Texas representative," says Michaela Gardner, last year's Texas representative from Lovelady. "The YLC has not only given me a better understanding of our government and history, but also it has inspired me and broadened my horizons."

Labor of Love

For the chaperones and state coordinators, Youth Tour is an enormous amount of work all year long, culminating in just a handful of fun and frantic days each year. Flexibility and being able to roll with the punches are must-haves. But it's a labor of love for most: "Rewarding" is a common refrain heard from those involved in the program, from administrators and coordinators to parents and participants.

"I've had parents come up to me after the program and say, 'I don't know what you did, but you brought back a different kid than you took.' To hear that from parents is gratifying and humbling," says Tracy Begley, a 2013 Youth Tour chaperone from Grayson-Collin EC.

Rooted in Politics

The Youth Tour was born from a speech at the 1957 NRECA annual meeting by then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson. An advocate of electric co-ops, he had lobbied for their creation in Texas in 1937. "If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital, where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents," the future president said.

With that encouragement, Texas electric co-ops began sending summer interns to work in the senator's Washington, D.C., office. In 1958, an electric co-op in Iowa sponsored the first weeklong study tour of the nation's capital.

In 1964, the NRECA began to coordinate activities among the state delegations. The first year of the coordinated tour included about 400 teens from 12 states. As word spread over the years, the program grew to more than 1,600 in 2014.

Lifelong Connections

It's not uncommon for Youth Tour friends to keep in touch long after everyone's gone home. Many reconnect in college or in their later careers, sometimes becoming roommates, coworkers, colleagues—and sometimes even spouses. For all the participants, Youth Tour plays a part in forming the people they will become.

"We're excited to see what our future leaders accomplish," says Martin Bevins, a Youth Tour chaperone from Texas Electric Cooperatives. "To know that electric cooperatives played a small part in their development is truly something special."

To find out more about Karnes EC's participation in the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, visit karnesec.org.

WANT TO WIN A TRIP TO THE NATION'S CAPITAL?

It's Youth Tour Time Again!

June 10–19, 2015

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES SEND HUNDREDS of high school students from around the country to Washington, D.C., annually for the Government-in-Action Youth Tour.

The winner of the Karnes Electric Cooperative Youth Tour Essay Contest will receive a travel package valued at $2,350 to join other Texas high school students at the White House, the U.S. House and Senate chambers, the Supreme Court, Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Smithsonian Institution and many other important national sites. The travel package includes air transportation to and from Washington, D.C., hotels, meals, entrance fees and $250 cash for miscellaneous expenses.

The 2015 Youth Tour will begin in Austin June 10 and return to the state capital June 19. This year, to give participants a snapshot of our state government in action, Youth Tour will include visiting the Texas Capitol and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin.

Applicants must be high school students who have completed their sophomore year by the end of June 2015 and be a member or the legal dependent of a member of Karnes Electric Cooperative. For complete information, contact Janet Scheffler at (830) 780-3952. Applications may be picked up at any Karnes Electric Cooperative office or by request at jscheffler@karnesec.org.

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Karnes Electric Cooperative

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Leroy T. Skloss

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Main Office
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Pay your bill, submit meter readings and view your account summary at karnesec.org.

Contact Us

For information and outages during office hours

(830) 780-3952 Karnes City
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To report a power outage after 5 p.m. and on weekends and holidays

(830) 780-3952
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(830) 569-5538
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FIND US ON THE WEB
karnesec.org

Operating Your Generator Safely

SNOWSTORMS, ICE AND FALLEN TREE BRANCHES can all cause blackouts. When the electricity goes out, generators can help you get through and stay warm until power is restored. However, before ever starting a generator, it is vital that you have educated yourself on how to use one safely.

There are two types of generators for homeowners to choose from: standby and portable. Standby generators are connected directly to the house and typically are powered by natural gas or propane. These generators start automatically when the power goes out.

A portable generator is usually gasoline-powered and is movable. You can power appliances by plugging them into it. Your generator should have a greater output than the wattage of the electronics you plan to plug into it. This way, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure there is nothing plugged into the generator when you first turn it on.

When you refuel a generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire should the tank overflow. Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.

Generators pose electrical risks especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary during moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it.

Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on a generator can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors, at least 10 feet from your home.

If you are not careful with the installation of a portable or standby generator, you can put the lives of others in danger because of backfeed—a situation where a generator is feeding electricity back through your electrical system into the power lines. To prevent backfeed, standby generators should have a transfer safety switch installed by a professional.

Portable generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system; use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator.

It is recommended that a generator be operated once a month for 10 minutes to ensure that it will run properly when needed. Store a standby generator in an easily accessible, weatherproof area. Have enough fuel for at least 24 hours in case of a power outage.

When the electricity goes out, a generator can help you get through and stay warm until power is restored. However, it is vital that you know how to use it safely.

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Resolve To Be an Active Co-op Member

MAKE 2015 THE YEAR you convert from being a "customer" of your electric cooperative to being a "member."

The fact is, you're already a member. You buy your electricity from a utility that is organized as a member-owned cooperative, which means that every one of its customers owns a part of it.

As a consumer-member, you have some privileges that customers of investor-owned, city-centered electric companies don't have. For example, you have the right to vote in elections for the cooperative's board of directors.

You can even run for the board, yourself, if you want to. Any cooperative member can.

This year, become an active member. Start by planning to attend your cooperative's annual meeting. And ask at the cooperative office about volunteering on a committee.

How many other kinds of businesses give you a say in what they do with your money? Exercise your membership privileges and get involved with your cooperative this year.

Evolution of Your Electric Meter

ASIDE FROM THE POLES AND WIRES, the electric meter is probably the most recognized part of your cooperative's delivery system. This device is an integral part of the objective that Karnes Electric Cooperative focuses on: providing the highest possible quality electric service at the lowest possible cost. Without the meter, we would be forced to rely on less dependable and less equitable methods to calculate the cost of each member's electric service.

Like all technology, the electric meter has evolved over the years. The original style of meter would make a watchmaker proud. It relied upon an intricate set of gears to accurately measure the amount of electricity used, in the same way a mechanical watch relies on its gears to tell time. Many members will recognize the flat spinning dial, with its black mark rotating under the glass cover and the set of dial hands moving. So how does this electromechanical type of meter function?

The rotating disk is mounted to a geared vertical shaft set between a pair of electromagnets. The flow of electricity through the meter causes the magnets to power up, and their interaction makes the disk rotate. The speed of rotation depends on the amount of electricity used at the time. The shaft meshes with the gear train that turns the dial hands. The first dial registers in increments of single kilowatt-hours; the next dial registers 10 kWh; then 100 and so forth, up to 10,000 kWh.

Although highly accurate and reliable, the drawback to the mechanical meter is that a human must read the consumption and input it into a billing system—a process both time-intensive and susceptible to human error.

The next major evolution of the meter came with the introduction of an electronic module. This module is added to the mechanical meter just described. It reads the rotations of the meter's flat dial and captures that data in memory. At regular intervals, this module reports consumption via the power lines or radio signals to the electric co-op's offices, where it is automatically entered into the billing system. This advancement eliminates human error and wasted time, and greatly reduces costs for the cooperative.

The evolution of meter technology has eliminated the need for members to read a series of dials to determine electric use each month.

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RICK PATRICK

Today's meters seamlessly provide readings and outage information to the cooperative, reducing cost and increasing efficiency.

The all-digital meter reflects the current stage of meter evolution. As the name suggests, there are no longer any gears or rotating disks. Using electronics, the meter measures the use of electricity, stores the data and reports that data in the same manner as the electronic module. In a little homage to the original spinning disk, many digital meters replicate that feature with a series of horizontal bars that march across the face of the display. Depending upon the meter make, some members can use a button to cycle through the display to get basic service data.

So where will meters go from here? It seems that the next step in meter evolution will depend largely upon how far the "smart home" develops. As ever more appliances, devices and even lightbulbs become accessible via the Internet, members may drive the development of a new generation of meters that can also communicate with their smartphone, tablet or PC.

Seems like we'll have to wait and see, but it should be interesting. Rest assured, Karnes EC will make the best use of available technology to control costs, render accurate bills and keep your service quality high.

Stay Safe and Warm During a Winter Storm

LAST YEAR SHOWED US HOW THE POLAR VORTEX can bring high winds, subzero temperatures and ice to many parts of the country, even those that aren't accustomed to winter weather. This dangerous winter weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines and extended power outages. Be sure to stay safe before, during and after a winter storm hits.

If power lines go down because of a winter storm, you may be in for a prolonged power outage as utility crews work to get the lights back on.

The National Weather Service tells us that winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to storms. Many hazards can remain after a winter storm is gone.

Karnes Electric Cooperative offers tips on how to stay safe and warm during a winter power outage:

Stay inside and dress warmly. Close off unneeded rooms and place draft blocks at the bottom of doors to minimize cold air entering the house. Cover windows at night.

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Dangerous winter weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines and extended power outages.

Be aware of the temperature in your home. Infants and elderly people are more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you cannot keep your home warm enough.

When the power is restored, there will be a power surge. To protect your circuits and appliances, switch off lights and unplug appliances. Leave one light switched on as a signal that the power is restored.

Apart from the cold, there are other dangers winter storms can bring. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice, making them difficult to see. Therefore, you and your family should stay indoors if possible.

If you must go outside, use caution and treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized. Stay away, warn others to stay away, and immediately contact your utility company if you see downed lines.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. This kit includes: bottled water, nonperishable food, blankets, warm clothing, a first aid kit/medicine, a flashlight, a radio, extra batteries and toiletries.

If you are using an alternative heating source during a power outage, be sure that you know how to use it safely and that you have already gathered all the supplies for it. You should have enough supplies in your preparedness kit to last everyone in your household three to seven days.

SafeElectricity.org

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Karnes EC
will be closed
Thursday, January 1,
to allow employees
to ring in the new year
with their families.

We wish you and yours
a healthy, prosperous
and happy new year!

NRECA

Teach Kids Electrical Safety

HOME SHOULD BE a place of comfort, familiarity and safety for you and your family. But safety requires education, especially with kids in the house.

Some important lessons that Karnes Electric Cooperative recommends sharing with your kids are:

- Water and electricity are a dangerous mix. Never touch, sit or stand in, or attempt to walk through water that is in contact with an electric appliance or toy.
- Electronics and accessories must be handled with care. Younger children should ask for help when they want to use an electronic device.
- Never stick fingers or objects into toasters or other electrical appliances, or into outlets or extension cords.

When you have toddlers around the house, childproof using these tips:

- Childproof outlets with simple outlet covers or tamper-resistant outlets, which have a shutter system that only accepts electric plugs.
- Keep cords out of sight so that children are not tempted to play with them.
- Never leave chargers or extension cords plugged in after use. A curious child may put a cord into his or her mouth and suffer an electric burn.
- Supervise children closely when they play with electronic toys.
- Repair or dispose of damaged electronics and cords.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters to detect and prevent shocks. You should have GFCIs anywhere that water and electricity may meet, such as bathrooms, kitchens and basements.