

# 2025-2026 RESOURCE BOOK



*Energizing  
every moment*

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WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR





## INTRODUCING THE TENNESSEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

# CREATIVE WRITING AND SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

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, thousands of dollars in scholarships and a chance to network with other young leaders from across the country.

More than 6,000 high school juniors from across Tennessee have participated in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

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.

Exciting stops on the Washington Youth Tour include a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, above, and the many monuments along the national mall, right. Seeing the sites they've studied in school is a highlight of the delegates' D.C. experience.



# What's in it for You?

Your prize for showing the benefits of cooperative power: an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., in **June 2026** 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.

Youth Tour winners can compete to represent Tennessee on the **Youth Leadership Council**. One student from each state is selected to return to Washington, D.C., for a leadership workshop, which focuses on the electric cooperative industry.

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.

You can also choose to participate in our **Cooperative Youth Ambassador** program. Delegates who stay active and engaged with their co-ops in the 12 months following Youth Tour qualify for a drawing for a **\$10,000 scholarship** to the school of the winner's choice.

Other scholarships, including the **Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation Scholarship** and the **Engineers of the Future Scholarship**, are available through the Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation.



TRAVEL



RECOGNITION



SCHOLARSHIPS



CONNECTIONS





## HEALTH AND SAFETY WILL BE A PRIORITY

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our ability to take students to Washington, D.C., for the past few years. Tennessee's electric co-ops will follow the advice of medical experts and public health officials as we plan for the 2025 tour. If we are unable to ensure the safety of our winners, the trip will not be possible, and other prizes may be awarded in place of the trip.

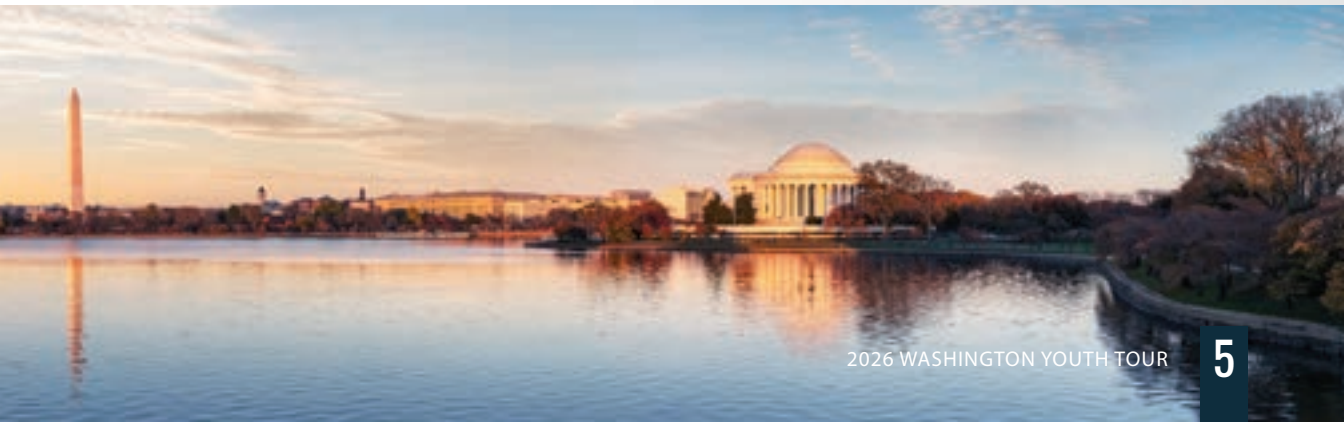
In addition to scholarships provided by the electric co-ops, **Union University** in Jackson and **Carson-Newman University** in Jefferson City have recognized the leadership potential of Youth Tour delegates. The universities have agreed to provide dozens of scholarships worth up to \$10,000 a year for four years.



### THERE'S MUCH MORE ONLINE

Visit our website for more information about the trip, scholarships and other opportunities:

[youthtour.tnelectric.org](http://youthtour.tnelectric.org)



# Hear from The Winners



"It was truly a blessing to be given the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C. At the time, I never knew how much my life would have changed from writing one story. But I am so thankful I did. I not only learned so much about our nation's history but made so many amazing friends, and I grew. This trip allowed me to step out of my shell and challenged me to go beyond my fears. I am so thankful I wrote that short story!"

**Kaitlyn Roberts, Van Buren County High School  
Caney Fork Electric Cooperative**



"My favorite part of the trip was definitely the people. I was surrounded by a bunch of people all trying to make the most out of the trip, and it turned out to be an awesome time. I loved every second."

**Brian Robertson, Gibson County High School,  
Gibson Electric**



"Attending the Washington Youth Tour was truly life-changing. I'm so grateful to my electric co-op for giving me the chance to connect with leaders, make lifelong friends and see our nation's capital in a whole new light. It showed me the power of community and the impact local co-ops have beyond just keeping the lights on."

**Destiny Bear, Johnson County High,  
Mountain Electric Cooperative**



"This has been one of the most fun experiences I've had so far in my life. I was nervous about meeting everyone, but people have been very nice and sociable. They will just come up to you and start a conversation, which has made it fun. I feel like I've gotten to know everyone really well."

**Watson Snider, Stewarts Creek High School  
Middle Tennessee Electric**



## JOIN A NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Politicians, authors, athletes and business leaders, including Apple CEO Tim Cook, are proud Youth Tour alumni.



ACC Photo | Catalin Abagiu

## 2025 ROBERT MCCARTY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



**Nila Parrott**  
Grainger High School,  
Appalachian Electric  
Cooperative,  
\$3,000 Scholarship



**Cam Stanley**  
DeKalb County High School,  
Caney Fork Electric  
Cooperative,  
\$2,000 Scholarship



**Claire Bradford**  
Lincoln County High School,  
Fayetteville Public Utilities,  
\$1,000 Scholarship (Tie)



**Elsa Spraggins**  
Central Magnet High School,  
Middle Tennessee Electric,  
\$1,000 Scholarship (Tie)

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL REP

The winner of an optional public speaking contest is named the state's delegate to the Youth Leadership Council and will represent Tennessee at leadership events throughout the year.



**Luke Morris**  
Greenback Public School,  
Fort Loudoun Electric  
Cooperative

## 2025 CO-OP YOUTH AMBASSADOR

Delegates who stay engaged and active with their local co-ops 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.



**Olivia Griffin**  
Munford High School  
graduate,  
Southwest Tennessee Elec-  
tric Membership Corp.,  
\$10,000 Scholarship



# Rules and Resources

The energy provided by electric co-ops has far-reaching impacts on Tennessee. Write a short story explaining how co-ops are “Energizing Every Moment” by providing communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more.

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 “Energizing Every Moment.”
- 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](http://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.

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CO-OP CONTACT PERSON

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EMAIL ADDRESS

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DUE DATE





## JUDGING CRITERIA

### CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS:

The tips below can help you get one step closer to D.C. Use these suggestions to make your story stand out.

#### **Characters, time and place**

Spend some time to develop the characters, location and time frame of your story.

#### **Get specific**

Include at least three specific examples of the many ways electric co-ops energize their communities. The expansion of broadband, availability of reliable energy, efforts to recruit new businesses and jobs and leadership development for young people are just a few examples.

#### **Include one (or more) co-op principles**

The seven principles of electric co-ops are listed on pages 14 and 15. Include these in your story to demonstrate your understanding of the many things that make electric co-ops unique.

#### THERE'S MUCH MORE ONLINE

Find additional resources on our website to help you write your story:

[youthtour.tnelectric.org](https://youthtour.tnelectric.org)

Be creative in your writing, using 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. The use of AI is not allowed.

#### **15%** Grammar and composition

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



## Last Year's Winning Story

Barbie and Ken struggled to agree on a place to settle after they decided to move in together. Ken wanted somewhere that had plenty of reliable energy and expansive broadband to watch sports, but he still wanted a rural area for his Mojo Dojo Casa House and all of his horses. However, Barbie wanted somewhere that had an inexpensive energy source with tons of job opportunities for her many previous careers and leadership development opportunities for her younger sisters.

They both sat down one day to discuss a potential home. Ken seems to have a specific place in mind.

"I have no idea," Barbie said disappointedly.

"Tennessee is just right for us. It has horses and Wi-Fi!" Ken said excitedly.

"No, Ken. I need somewhere that provides strong support for Skipper, Stacie, and Chelsea. I also need chances for new jobs I haven't gotten to try out yet. I'm not sure we can afford to run the Dreamhouse Elevator there with the electrical cost in rural areas," Barbie replied.

"Barbie, hear me out. XYZ Electric Cooperative can fulfill both of our requirements in a new home. They are completely here to serve their communities, which means they can offer affordable energy to their members," Ken argued.

"They are very reliable, too. They serve over 2 million people in Tennessee, which is about one in three homes. With all those people, they have a 99.96% reliability rate. That is just wonderful, Barbie," Ken continued.

"And... they provide rural Tennessee which was overlooked by other internet companies with high-speed internet access. This means I could have a TV with streaming services in my barn. I can't even

believe that," Ken said before Barbie could speak a word.

"That's great, but what about my sisters?" Barbie asked.

"XYZ Electric Cooperative covers it all. They maintain a strong presence in the local school systems that could provide amazing learning opportunities like the Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest for Skipper, 4-H Electric Camp for Stacie, or Little League sports for Chelsea. They could learn new leadership skills, participate in hands-on activities, and maybe even earn money for college!" Ken added.

"Wow, that is impressive. What about job opportunities? There is no way rural Tennessee can provide different careers to try," Barbie asked sarcastically.

"Oh, there is a way. Electric cooperatives provide so many different jobs. You could be an engineer, service lines one day, and be a public relations manager that controls social media," Ken said with even more attitude than Barbie.

"Okay, fine. You're starting to convince me. I don't know how we are going to adjust to this new way of life, though. How will we get involved in the community and access communication outlets? These cooperatives sound so different," Barbie stated concerningly.

"It is alright to not know, Barbie. XYZ offers education and training to their members, so we can learn more about electric cooperatives. They also sponsor *The Tennessee Magazine* which communicates current programs, services, and events to its members. They even have an app that provides real-time notifications to keep us up to



## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

date," Ken assured.

"I don't know, though. What if we don't like the way things are run there?" Barbie asked.

"Luckily, electric cooperatives are autonomous organizations which means they are controlled by their members. This also means they are democratic organizations. Members can actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. It is also completely voluntary and open. We get to choose to join and use their services," Ken continued his argument.

"I have a few more questions. This sounds too good to be true. How do these electric cooperatives keep prices so cheap? We have to worry about expenses while we are in between jobs after our big move," Barbie reminded him.

"Well, Barbie. XYZ Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit organization that is committed to serving its community. They buy wholesale electricity from the Tennessee Valley Authority and sell it to members at affordable costs. Their membership only costs \$5!" Ken shouted.

"I am glad they can provide us with energy at such low costs. It is truly a lifesaver. However, is it ethically run? I don't want to become a member of a shady business!" Barbie replied.

"Of course, Barbie. XYZ Electric Cooperative supports Project Help, which allows members to donate as low as \$1 in support of families who might need additional help with their electric bills. They also provide children with Christmas gifts and food drives for people in need," Ken added.

"Ken, you've sold me. Tennessee is the perfect place for us. XYZ Electric Cooperative is going to take great care of our family. They can connect

Nila Parrott, a student at Grainger High School in the Appalachian Electric Cooperative service area, was the state winner of the 2025 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, earning her a \$3,000 scholarship.



This year's theme is "Energizing Every Moment." Write your story about the many ways co-ops energize their communities.

me with career opportunities. They can connect Skipper, Stacie, and Chelsea with their future. They can connect you with sports. They also connect the community with all the potential resources and support they could need," Barbie concluded.

"They're an amazing company that I would love to be a part of," Ken replied.

"I believe it is settled. We are moving to Tennessee!" Barbie exclaimed.

"I'll start packing the Mojo Dojo Casa House, and you start packing the Dreamhouse. We can start planning our Mojo Dojo Dreamhouse together now that we have a place with a connection to energy and community," said Ken.

# Tennessee's Electric Co-ops

Tennessee's electric cooperatives provide power to more than 3 million Tennesseans. Unlike other businesses, electric cooperatives are owned by the consumers they serve and operate as not-for-profit businesses. This might 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 has not changed: provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our neighbors, the very people who own the co-op.

Because of their local ties, co-ops are committed to improving lives in their communities. Going



## 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

Electric co-ops work to improve everyday life in their rural and suburban communities. They do this through reliable energy and efforts in education and community development.



beyond simply keeping the lights on, co-ops recruit businesses and investments, help members operate their homes and businesses more efficiently and prepare students to become tomorrow's leaders.



## ELECTRIC CO-OPS SERVE

# 3 MILLION TENNESSEANS



1 IN 3  
TENNESSEE  
HOMES

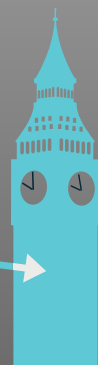


84/95  
TENNESSEE  
COUNTIES

## 99.96% RELIABILITY

The power lines co-ops own and maintain would stretch from Nashville to London, England, more than

24 TIMES



# Co-op Careers and Principles

## CO-OP CAREERS

Electric co-ops provide career opportunities that are close to home but far from ordinary. If you are looking for an opportunity to provide for your family and serve your community, consider a co-op career.



### ELECTRIC LINEWORKER

These professionals keep the power on. They not only construct, replace and maintain the electric lines – they get the power back on when storms or other disasters strike.



### ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

Engineers are detail-oriented problem solvers. Using state-of-the-art equipment, they design, plan and monitor the transmission, distribution and service lines.



### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT pros ensure that technology functions efficiently. They develop programs, evaluate hardware and software needs, manage cybersecurity and maintain communications systems.

## 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.



## FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

Finance professionals ensure co-ops can build and maintain infrastructure to keep the lights on. Duties include risk management, forecasting and overall financial management.



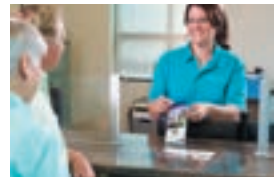
## PUBLIC RELATIONS

The co-op's storytellers, marketing and communications professionals tackle a variety of responsibilities, including reputation management, social media and media relations.



## HUMAN RESOURCES

HR pros help engage with co-op employees and manage multiple responsibilities, including payroll, benefits administration, recruiting, employee training and leadership.



## MEMBER SERVICE

Member service reps are the voice of the co-op and the initial point of contact for co-op consumers. They answer phones, assist new members, solve problems and collect payments.

## 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, elected officials 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.



## WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR

**PRESENTED BY YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AND**

**TECA**

Tennessee Electric  
Cooperative Association

2964 Sidco Drive, Nashville, TN 37204

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