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Youth Tour: An Eye-Opening Journey

When one of my mom's coworkers told me about an application for Central Alabama Electric Cooperative's Youth Tour, I looked into the program and thought it would be a chance for me to experience things I'd never seen before. A possible trip to Washington D.C. — a place I had never had the opportunity to visit — was what I was hoping to walk away with. Little did I know, that my participation would involve so much more—and that while traveling to our nation's capital was a once in a lifetime experience, it was not the most impactful part of my journey.

I was chosen to be a CAEC Youth Tour representative in 2014. Six other CAEC delegates and I began with a trip to our own state's capital. Being from this region of Alabama, I have driven through and past Montgomery many times, but it was while on Montgomery Youth Tour that I realized the amount of history our capital embraces. All these years, I've been so close to it, yet didn't see what people from all over the world come to see, learn and hear about. From sitting in the pews of Dexter Avenue Church, where Dr. Martin Luther King gave countless sermons, to walking the halls of our Capitol, our state's history surrounded me and came to life. I was able to sit in the State House, meet Alabama senate and house members and come to the realization that politics doesn't just happen in Washington, D.C., but right here in our own back yard; and that people, like you and me, can and should speak with these representatives and let them know our viewpoints on issues that matter to us.

On the next leg of my Youth Tour journey, I was selected to be a Washington Youth Tour delegate. Without Youth Tour, going to Washington D.C is something that I would not have been able to do. Monuments, such as the Lincoln Memorial, gave me a greater appreciation for our nation's history and the men and women who have made it what it is today. The next step of the political process allowed me and the other members of our group to speak with our national congressional representatives.

Along this journey, I encountered and formed relationships with fellow youth leaders from across the country and heard their stories and discussed issues they also face. Together, through leadership exercises, we realized the power of working together and what teamwork can accomplish, no matter how hard or impossible a task may seem. Motivational speakers encouraged us to not only do our best, but to exceed in order to make an impact on the world around us.

This program has helped me in so many ways and has given me more opportunities than one teenager could ever ask for. In addition to being a Youth Tour representative, I also served as an intern for the co-op during my senior year of high school which encouraged me to apply for and gain full-time employment as a Customer Service Representative. Not many people have the experiences that I have been blessed with, and for that I am grateful to CAEC and its members for allowing me to go on this eye-opening journey. Youth Tour is something that upcoming juniors can participate in, and I encourage them to do so. I want them to know that the world is theirs, and Youth Tour is a great way you can find your way through it. ■



Karragan Ratliff
2014 CAEC
Youth Tour
Delegate



Experience Youth Tour

Each year, as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour, CAEC sends young leaders to Washington D.C. to serve as representatives with more than 1,500 fellow youth leaders from across the country. In our nation's capital, they meet and speak with their congressional delegates and share their perspective on issues impacting them while also partaking in leadership activities and exploring our country's history. Are you ready to serve as one of our 2016 Youth Tour representatives?

CAEC selects high school juniors from public, private or home schools to participate in three, once-in-a-lifetime, opportunities for leadership training: the Montgomery Youth Tour, the Youth Leadership Conference and the Washington Youth Tour. Each part of the Youth Tour/Youth Leadership program offers lasting memories and experiences.

The following is a description of each Youth Tour activity.

Montgomery Youth Tour

Learn more about our state's capital, government and history during a unique experience that allows you and fellow

students from across Alabama to tour state buildings, the Civil Rights Museum and more. You will also spend a day at the State House and meet state representatives and other elected officials to talk about issues that concern you as well as participate in leadership training activities.

Youth Leadership Conference

Held at the 4-H Center in Columbiana, Ala., students participate in leadership exercises and learn about the many roles co-ops play and how the cooperative business model makes an impact in today's world.

Washington Youth Tour

A few applicants will be selected to fly to our nation's capital and tour monuments, federal buildings and other exciting landmarks. This is also a great opportunity to meet other youth leaders from across the

country and members of your Congressional delegation.

To apply, download an application from our website (caec.coop) or contact us at (800) 545-5735, ext. 2125.

Application deadline is Dec. 4. ■



Grants Available to Help Fund Classroom Projects

Developing leadership abilities, studying microscopic organisms, learning about space and building medieval weaponry are just some of the many projects funded through the Bright Ideas Grant program. For the past 17 years the grant program has given educators the opportunity to provide excellent learning experiences for students in creative ways.

The grant program provides a total of \$16,000 to teachers annually in order to support valuable, hands-on initiatives and activities designed to stimulate students' imaginations and desire to learn. Bright Ideas Grants assist teachers in public, private and

home schools within CAEC's service area.

Teams of teachers, or individual teachers, can apply for funding through a simple application process. Individual teachers can apply for grants from \$250 to \$750, while teams of teachers are eligible for grants up to \$1,500. Just think what that resource could mean for your students.

Since 1998, CAEC has awarded approximately \$256,000 to local schools through the program. More than 100,000 students in all grade levels and subject areas have benefited from the Bright Ideas grants.

The deadline to submit an application is Nov. 20. For more information or an application, visit our website at caec.coop or call (800) 545-5735, ext. 2125.



Principle #5: Education, Training and Information

Official Founding Principle #5:

Cooperatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative. Members also inform the general public about the nature and benefits of cooperatives.

Did you know just by reading this story, you are participating in one of the seven principles that govern cooperative operations? By looking through the pages of *Alabama Living* magazine, one of our main conduits of communicating to our members, you are experiencing the fifth cooperative principle of education, training and information.

Through tools such as a printed and digital magazine, social media, our website, information included with your bill and more, we communicate a variety of topics directly to you, our members. This data includes director elections, outages, efficiency and safety tips as well as important energy issues being discussed by our country's elected officials and regulatory agencies that directly impact how much we all pay for power.



Since 1998, The Bright Ideas Grant Program has benefitted more than 100,000 students in our service area.

But we don't stop there. We also endeavor to educate everyone, co-op members and the general public, about the cooperative business model.

Our educational outreach includes all ages. We sponsor programs to both educate and empower our youth in our service area with programs such as the Youth Tour, (featured on page 5) which sends rising high school seniors to Washington, D.C. as part of the nationally organized Rural Electric Youth Tour. Additionally, we take part in high-school career fairs to show future members of the workforce the many options the cooperative world could offer. For younger ages, we provide safety and energy efficiency education to help them make smart decisions when around electricity. And for children of all ages, the Bright Ideas Grant Program (also featured on page 5) allows area educators to give our future leaders the educational tools they need to build a solid foundation.

It is also important that we educate our elected officials on the role of cooperatives and the issues that we, and our members, are facing in today's regulatory climate. Equally important is our effort to inform representatives on how co-ops operate as a business as well as the many issues that have a direct effect on how we produce and deliver power. We also work to help educate you on how to find avenues to open a dialog with your elected representatives on energy issues concerning you.

Our educational efforts extend to our employees as well. We encourage and support them in taking courses



Value of **Membership**

to improve on-the-job skills through our statewide organization, Alabama Rural Electric Association (AREA), or the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). We believe well-trained employees are more valuable to the co-op and can provide you, our members, with the high quality of service you've come to expect. We also provide safety training and seminars for every employee. This education is vital to keep our workforce safe and it helps reduce costs involved with lost-time accidents; in addition to keeping our members and the public safe while working in our service area.

Another key group of the cooperative who receives extensive education is your Board of Trustees. These



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Educating our elected officials on the role cooperatives play and how decisions they make impact our members is a crucial part of principle number five.

members, elected by the membership at large to serve as representatives, receive continual certification and training in order to best perform the duties of setting the strategic direction and policy for the cooperative. Programs from NRECA, such as the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and the Board Leadership Certificate, are vital to helping them acquire the knowledge required of electric cooperative directors.

Keeping you informed about energy issues, legislative matters and cooperative programs and news in general is one of our most important responsibilities. That's the cooperative difference. **A**

CAEC offices will be closed Sept. 7 for Labor Day



Blower Doors Lower Pressure, Find Leaks

For the past three years, CAEC has offered an enhanced Home Energy Audit program, allowing our members to make their homes more energy efficient with guidance from one of our Energy Service Representatives (ESRs) and Certified Residential Energy Auditors. Our ESRs use many tools to help pinpoint areas where your home could be wasting energy, such as infrared cameras. You may be surprised, however, by the big red screen they set up in the open frame of your home's front door. But don't be alarmed—it's just a blower door.

As part of our Advanced Energy Audit, a blower door test uncovers how much air leaks from your home and aids in locating the exact sites of the leaks. The "door" comes with a built-in fan and multiple gauges that measure air pressure. The fan sucks air out of your house, lowering the pressure inside. In turn, higher-pressure outdoor air will work its way through cracks and unsealed openings.

While it's important for your residence to remain well-ventilated, too much air exchange can be unhealthy, uncomfortable, and expensive in the form of higher electric

bills. By identifying air leaks, we can pinpoint ways for you and other members to save energy and money.

Sometimes, a blower door test is used in conjunction with an infrared (IR) camera, which allows an auditor to find where insulation may be needed and where air leaks are in the home. These special cameras produce images that, in varying shades from white to black, show where air or heat is leaking out. For example, cool air flowing around a leaky outlet would show up very dark, whereas a tightly sealed window in the winter would be closer to white.

If you decide to have a blower door test conducted in your home, which is included in CAEC's Advanced Audit, our ESRs will close windows and exterior doors, open interior doors, turn off thermostats on your HVAC unit, extinguish the pilot light to gas appliances (such as stoves or water heaters) and shut fireplace dampers.

In the Basic Audit, however, the ESR only utilizes an IR camera to inspect attic insulation for proper installation, examine ductwork for leaks and check for phantom loads (power consumed by electronics while they are switched off but still plugged into an outlet, such as a cell phone charger).

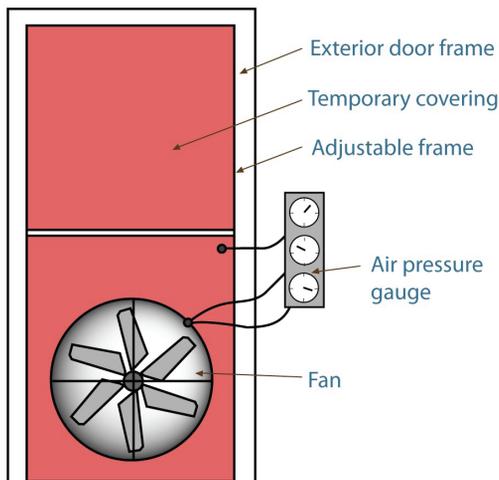
The Advanced Audit is \$100 and the Basic Audit, which includes everything except the blower door test, is \$75. Either audit is refundable after the member makes the suggested corrections identified by the ESR and presents receipts. Members have up to one year to complete the recommendations to be eligible for the refund.

If you'd like to arrange an energy audit for your home, or learn more about the program, call us today at 1-800-545-5735, ext. 2178, or visit us at caec.coop. ■



Testing efficiency with a **blower door**

Many home energy audits involve use of a special diagnostic tool called a blower door. The device confirms the air tightness of a home by drawing out air with a massive fan mounted on an exterior door. The drop in interior pressure causes outside air to rush in through areas like inefficient window seals, for example.



Source: U.S. Department of Energy



...Imagine the Possibilities!

How could \$16,000 help children in the classroom? The Bright Ideas Grant program from Central Alabama Electric Cooperative gives teachers the chance to explore the possibilities.

CAEC has given \$16,000 in grants each year to support innovative, creative and effective initiatives that cannot be covered by traditional funding. Designed for K-12 teachers in public, private and home schools within CAEC's territory, the program has given approximately \$256,000 benefitting nearly 100,000 students since its inception in 1998.

Teams of teachers and individual teachers are eligible to apply for the grant monies. Individuals are eligible to apply for grants from \$250 to \$750, while teams are able to apply for up to \$1,500.

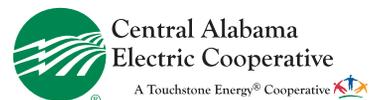
Don't miss this opportunity for your child's classroom. Mention CAEC's Bright Ideas grant program to your child's teacher or cut off the information below and have your child present it to his or her teacher.

Receive up to \$750 for your classroom. Please contact CAEC about their Bright Ideas Grant Program.

CAEC offers teachers up to \$750 for classroom projects. Teams of teachers can receive up to \$1,500. For more information, call (334) 351-2125/(800) 545-5735 ext. 2125 or e-mail communications@coop.caec.com.

Applications available at www.caec.coop

Deadline is Nov. 20, 2015

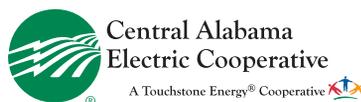


No matter the time of day...



...there's an easy way to pay

No matter if it's noon or midnight, you can quickly and securely pay your CAEC bill without ever leaving your home with our online bill-payment system. And when you combine the ease of our online billpay with our E-Bill option, delivering your monthly statement by email, you can manage your account when it's convenient for you. Enroll for E-Bill through your online account access at www.caec.coop.



View. Pay. Be on your Way.