2027 Montana's Electric Cooperative Youth Tour Resource Guide

Youth Tour is more than a trip to the nation's capital to sightsee. It is a prestigious event in which thousands of high school juniors and seniors from across the nation join in Washington, D.C., to gain an understanding of our nation's history and the freedoms we enjoy.

The tour is designed to provide an opportunity for outstanding rural young people (like you) to better understand the value of rural electrification. It familiarizes you with the historic and political environment of our nation's capital through firsthand looks at monuments, historically significant national sites, and government buildings. You will also visit with elected officials, giving you a better understanding of the federal government, the political process, and democracy in general. But perhaps most significantly, the tour allows us to recognize the accomplishments of outstanding young people from rural communities.

We believe by investing in today's youth, we are investing in our—and your— future. We know some of the brightest students reside right here in Montana, and we want to allow you to experience the past, present and future of our country. For many, it will inspire a future in government service or perhaps a career with cooperatives.

Each June, Washington, D.C., is invaded by the youth of America for the annual Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. With much to be seen, no time can be wasted. On June 17th, you and your parents will attend orientation in Great Falls, along with all the other delegates and their parents. The following morning, you'll board the plane at Great Falls International Airport and fly to Washington, D.C. The next five days will be spent growing and learning as the group tours museums, views monuments and memorials, attends advocacy courses, and meets with our Congressional delegation and more!

Possibly the best reason to compete for a spot on the Youth Tour is that it's 100 percent paid for by your local rural electric cooperative! The co-op pays for the flight, hotel accommodations, charter bus, tours, and food. The only money you need is for souvenirs and extra snacks. T-shirts are provided for each day of the trip and are yours to keep afterward. All you have to pack is pants/shorts, shoes, personal items, and excitement!

Mission

- Reward students for academic achievement and community leadership
- Educate students about the role of electric cooperatives in the national economy
- Foster students' appreciation for the democratic form of government
- Expose students to the sights and sounds of our nation's heritage
- Build students' leadership skills so that they may make a difference in their communities

History of Youth Tour

Since the late 1950s, more than 50,000 high school students have walked away from the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour experience as better leaders equipped with the confidence to make a difference and inspire and better their communities. Montana's electric cooperatives have been sending delegates to Washington, D.C., for more than 20 years.

Glenn English Leadership Scholarship

As an alumnus of the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, you will also be eligible for the Glenn English Leadership Scholarship. Each year, one $10,000 and four $1,000 scholarships will be awarded to students working on their first undergraduate degree program. These are only available to those who have been on the Youth Tour to D.C.

To learn more about this scholarship, go to: https://www.electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs/scholarships/

What is a Cooperative?

A cooperative is a private, nonprofit corporation owned by its consumer-members. Each consumer of the cooperative is a member with one vote in the affairs of the cooperative. Bylaws adopted by members set forth their rights and responsibilities, and the guidelines which assure the democratic organization.

Members elect the directors of the cooperative, and an annual meeting is held to conduct the business of the co-op. The directors employ a professional manager for the electric cooperative, and who oversees highly skilled, trained and professional employees.

Electric rates are established by the local cooperative board of directors, based upon what it actually costs to provide safe, dependable service and to meet payment schedules on loans. Rates are designed so that revenues exceed expenses. This “margin” is allocated back to the members of the cooperative in the form of capital credits. Members receive money back based on the amount of electricity they have used during the allocation period. This return of capital maintains the nonprofit status of the cooperative.

How are Cooperatives Different?

For each individual need there is an interlocking service of many conducting the business. The end result, quality and price of goods and services in communities is the measure of success. Each end product or service is in competition with other similar products and services. The business that best satisfies customers or members’ needs is the one that will prosper.

Cooperative Principles

Perhaps the biggest difference between cooperatives and other types of businesses is the adherence to the seven Rochdale Principles. The idea of a user-owned business originated in England in the mid-1800s. Charles Howarth, a member of a group of weavers in the town of Rochdale in northern England, drew up the first set of core principles that now guide and direct the cooperative way of business.

Although stated in many ways, the Rochdale Principles require that a cooperative must be open for anyone to join. Every member retains one voice, one vote. Electric cooperatives hold member business meetings annually, allowing members to elect fellow consumers to guide the cooperative and have a say in how their utility is run. They also state members must receive direct benefits, like capital credits, when the co-op is in good financial shape.

Education remains another big focus. Electric cooperatives provide safety information in schools, share ideas on how to make your home more energy efficient to keep electric bills affordable, and make sure elected officials and opinion leaders know about the cooperative business model. Perhaps most important of

all, cooperatives are independent and community-focused, not tied to the purse strings of far-flung investors. Cooperatives help drive local economic development, fund scholarships, support local charities and work to make life better in the areas they serve.

"Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility."

-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, speaking on the International Year of the Cooperatives, 2012

7 Cooperative Principles

Voluntary and Open Membership
Cooperatives are open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

Democratic Member Control
Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

Members' Economic Participation
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved
by the membership.

Autonomy and Independence
Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

Education, Training and Information
Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives
Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

Concern for Community
While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

History of Electric Cooperatives

As early as 1923, efforts were made to find out how electricity could be used to make rural areas more productive. Many agencies studied the problem, but most gave up on the idea, claiming, "there are very few farm operations that are not now served." This statement would come back to haunt the commercial electric industry when Rural Electrification Act (REA) and rural electric cooperatives proved that power *could* come to rural America!

As late as the mid-1930s, nine out of 10 rural homes were without electric service. The farmer milked his cows by hand in the dim light of a kerosene lantern. His wife was forced to use a wood range and washboard. The lack of electricity in rural areas kept their economies entirely and exclusively dependent on agriculture. Factories and businesses, of course, preferred to locate in cities where electric power was easily acquired. For many years, power companies ignored the rural areas of the nation.

The first official action of the federal government pointing the way to the present rural electrification program came with the passage of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act in May 1933. This act authorized the TVA Board to construct transmission lines to serve farms and small villages that were not otherwise supplied with electricity at reasonable rates.

The idea of providing federal assistance to accomplish rural electrification gained ground rapidly when President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933. On May 11, 1935, Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 7037 establishing the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). A year later, the Rural Electrification Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Roosevelt – implementing the REA lending program. President Roosevelt was a catalyst in the rural electric movement. Within four years following the end of World War II, the number of electric systems in America doubled. The number of consumers connected more than tripled and the miles of energized line grew more than five-fold.

By 1953, more than 90 percent of U.S. farms had electricity. Today, about 99 percent of the nation's farms have electric service. Most rural electrification is the product of locally owned rural electric cooperatives that got their start by borrowing funds from the REA to build lines and provide service on a not-for-profit basis.

Digital Resources

Facebook: Montana Youth Tour to DC

Instagram: mtyouthtour

Websites: https://www.mtco-ops.com/our-services/youth-tour/

and

https://www.electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs