



48 students from across Illinois stop to pose for a picture outside of the United States Capitol.

Youth Tour opens minds and builds leaders

Local students represent Shelby Electric Cooperative in D.C.

Every June, a select group of high school students from across Illinois leave their rural communities to spend a week taking in the historic sights and bustling energy of the nation's capital.

This year, 48 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives took part in the 2025 Youth Tour to visit Washington, D.C., held June 16 to 23. The students were immersed in a weeklong experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

Shelby Electric Cooperative (SEC) sponsored two students within its service territory, which included Pana High School student Kennedy Bowker and homeschool student Josiah Porter, also from Pana. They joined more than 2,000 students representing 44 states for the annual event.

"This trip is so much more than sightseeing," said Brooke Gross, member services manager and facilitator of youth programs at the Association of

Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC). "It's about building relationships, learning leadership, and showing that they have the power to shape their communities and futures."

Learning by doing

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the AIEC, headquartered in Springfield, where they selected a co-op board. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making, and budgeting — giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate.

"Being part of a co-op helps students understand what makes a co-op different," said Faith Wheeler, who handles youth programs at SEC. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone — not just one person or company."



Youth Tour participants Josiah Porter and Kennedy Bowker, both from Pana, in front of the Washington Monument.

A full week of history

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery and, for the first time in many years, had the opportunity to tour the White House, where the students caught a glimpse of President Donald Trump. They also toured the U.S. Capitol, strolled the National Mall, stood at the steps of the Supreme Court, and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Continued on next page ►

Miller receives Thomas H. Moore Scholarship

The cooperative is proud to announce that Isabella Miller of Shelbyville High School is one of the 16 winners of this year's Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship. She is the child of Lelia and Kenneth Miller of Shelbyville. Miller competed for the scholarship with 293 other students from across the state. The \$2,500 awards are given each year to 16 children of electric co-op members, employees, or directors. A 17th scholarship is reserved for a student interested in lineworker's college and will be announced at a later date. Miller was recognized during the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' annual meeting on July 31, 2025, in Springfield.

Candidates were judged on grade-point average, college entrance exam scores, work and volunteer experience, school and civic activities, and a short essay demonstrating their knowledge of electric cooperatives.

This fall, Miller will attend Eastern Illinois University to major in English with a Pre-Law minor. Shelby Electric Cooperative is honored to have had a Thomas H. Moore scholarship recipient for the fifth straight year.



Shelbyville High School Graduate Isabella Miller, pictured left, receives the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives Memorial Scholarship from Shelby Electric Cooperative's Member Services Specialist Faith Wheeler.

Youth Tour continued from 18A

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they

joined hundreds of other teens from across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.

From sobering visits to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial to moments of laughter at the Museum of Illusions and team-building at Beat the Bomb, the Youth Tour experience was unforgettable.

A trip that lasts a lifetime

An important component to the trip — the students voted for one of their peers to represent Illinois on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to give a speech in front of their peers.

Adams Telephone Co-Operative's Micah Anderson was selected as the 2025-2026 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state meetings and events in the year ahead.

The week concluded with a farewell dinner and dance, and by the

time students returned home on June 23, many said they felt inspired by the experience.

"During Youth Tour, I learned how cooperatives help so many rural areas get electricity and how they give back to their members," Bowker said. "I would like to thank Shelby Electric Cooperative for sending me on this trip. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I made some of the best memories with new friends."

"To the co-op board of directors, cooperative employees, and every member of Shelby Electric, thank you so very much," Porter added. "You have allowed me to see democracy at work; you have equipped me to become a better leader; you enabled me to have the experience of a lifetime. ... I will be forever grateful to you, my community."

High school students who live within the service area of SEC are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to youthtour.coop or facebook.com/ILYouthTour.

SHELBY News

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**Summer Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday
6:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Effective June 9-August 8

 **Shelby Electric
Cooperative**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Cooperative holds annual meeting

Shelby Electric Cooperative's (SEC) consumer-members gathered at the Shelby County 4-H Fairgrounds on Friday, June 6 for the co-op's Annual Meeting of Members. Prior to the meeting, the members were treated to a pork chop dinner served by the Shelby County Pork Producers, with music by the Hood Family Band, a Live Line Safety Demo with Steve Hancock, and activities for both children and adults.

The business meeting began at 1 p.m. following the singing of the national anthem by the Hood Family Band and invocation by Dustin Theiss. Board Chairman Robert Holthaus called the meeting to order, sharing his appreciation for the dedication of Shelby Electric employees and for the leadership of SEC President/CEO Josh Shallenberger. He also complimented Shallenberger on his work to secure grant monies for the cooperative's fiber efforts. Holthaus concluded by introducing this year's recipients of Shelby Electric Cooperative Scholarships, Alivia Kent and Nella Polley, both of Taylorville, and Jack McClain of Shelbyville.



Even co-op Apprentice Lineman Jared "Tank" Phelps found time for a little fun at the cooperative's annual meeting.

In his financial report, Board Treasurer Greg Mackling reported that electric service sales in 2024 amounted to \$36 million, while \$21.4 million was spent purchasing power. "That means for every dollar spent, 63 cents was spent to purchase electricity," said Mackling. He also shared that ShelbyFiber received \$1.9 million in federal grant funds in 2024 to assist in the construction of fiber communications.

Next, Amy Jackson explained the procedure utilized for the uncontested elections of three directors to the board for new 3-year terms, including David Keown (District 3), Scott Ohmes (District 6), and Rob Bullock (At-Large District A). Jackson then welcomed Shallenberger to the podium to give the President/CEO Report.

Shallenberger thanked members for attending and began with a message regarding transparency. "We are accountable to you," he said. "We value your input, so we welcome your comments ... an open dialogue is one we encourage." He then celebrated the staff's dedication to safety, noting that the co-op currently has 777 days of no lost time.

He also remarked on current legislation challenges, encouraging members to get involved through Voices for Cooperative Power, a grassroots network of more than a million advocates who help shape energy policy that keeps the lights on. "Legislation has been proposed with language primarily written by environmental groups," said Shallenberger. "Here at the co-op, we fully understand that we need to be good stewards of our environment and act accordingly. But, we [must also] ensure that we have reliable electricity flowing to our members at all times."

At the conclusion of the meeting, door prizes were drawn, and John Scott of Pana was the grand prize winner of \$250 "Shelby Electric Dollars."



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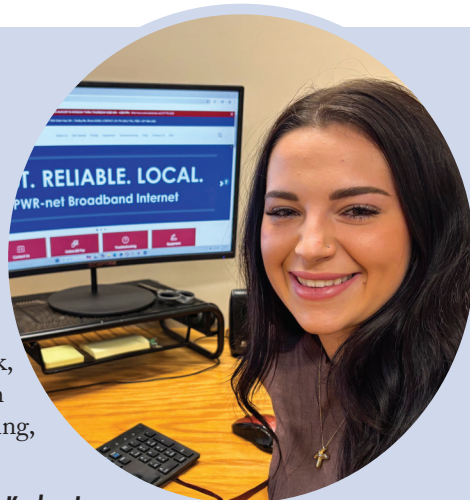
Employee News

The cooperative recently hired Kaelynn Carlock as a Broadband Member/Engagement Specialist. She previously worked as a Customer Service Representative for Ameren and is looking forward to having one-on-one interactions with co-op members and customers of PWR-net. Kaelynn is excited about taking on the new challenges this position brings and the potential growth the cooperative offers.

Originally from Nokomis, she now lives in Pana with her fiancé Reide, their one-year-old daughter, Blayklee, and their golden retriever, Murphy.

Kaelynn is currently taking accounting classes at Lincoln Land Community College and plans on pursuing a 4-year degree after she graduates. In her spare time, besides her schoolwork, she likes spending time with family, being outdoors, boating, and golfing.

Welcome to the cooperative family, Kaelynn!



Farm Progress Show returns to Decatur Aug. 26-28

The Farm Progress Show is back in Illinois this year, and we want to invite you to attend! The nation's largest outdoor farm event will once again be held at Progress City in Decatur August 26, 27, and 28. Look for the Illinois Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative's exhibit located at "Lot 217" on Second Street, between Central Progress and East Progress Avenue, near Gates 7 and 8. There

will be a big American flag hanging between two 60-foot utility poles.

Representatives from Shelby Electric Cooperative and several other Illinois electric cooperatives will be on hand to share information about cooperatives, safety, energy efficiency, and much more. Be sure to catch Southwestern Electric Cooperative's Live Line Safety Demo to learn how electricity travels to your home, farm, or business, and how to stay safe around electrical equipment. There will also be linemen on hand doing pole-climbing demonstrations.

Stop by the booth and register for a chance to win a Lectric electric bike and climb in a bucket for a photo-op. Cooperative members who present their Co-op Connections card or show the Co-op Connections app on their device will receive a special gift. Weather permitting, the Touchstone Energy Hot Air Balloon will be flying the American flag the first two mornings of the show.



Watch linemen climb a 60-foot utility pole!



Win this eBike!

For over 70 years, the Farm Progress Show has celebrated agriculture by bringing tradition and businesses together from all over. It is where people come to gather, meet, observe, and learn. Major manufacturers roll out their newest offerings, and it is the best place to see what is in the future for agriculture. The show rotates annually between Decatur, Illinois, and Boone, Iowa. Hope to see you August 26, 27, and 28.

Summer Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
6:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Closed Fridays

Regular hours to
resume August 11
Monday - Friday
7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.