Electric News

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EMC Empowers Tomorrow's Leaders

Responsibility, reverence and sacrifice were words that surfaced repeatedly during the Washington Youth Tour (WYT) in June. The nation's capital served as a temporary home for West Laurens High School student Sarah Thomas and a fitting reminder of the courage and character of the patriots who founded and fought for our country.

Earlier this year, Thomas was chosen by Little Ocmulgee EMC to participate in the youth leadership trip. She joined 108 other high school students from Georgia on the WYT, where they learned leadership skills and the need for civic involvement, and immersed themselves in the culture and history of the United States.

'It left a lasting impression on me in a way I did not expect. The sheer enormity of the lives given for our freedom was overwhelming, and it made me really appreciate servicemen as well as our nation.'

2014 WYT delegate's impression of Arlington National Cemetery

Georgia EMC Youth Tour Director Gale Cutler says the WYT helps EMCs promote stronger communities and a stronger nation by giving young people the ability and desire to make meaningful, lifelong contributions. The tour also teaches students to appreciate diverse points of view and accept different social, racial and cultural backgrounds.

Various aspects of the trip, combined with visits to museums, monuments and other historic sites, provided a unique lesson not duplicated in any classroom. Delegates noted with reverence the sacrifice of men and women who served the country. Others pointed to historical documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, which left them awed and inspired. Still others remarked that pictures, textbooks and in-class discussions could not adequately convey key periods in history, such as the Holocaust, and how the tragedy became real for them after time spent at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Sarah Thomas, a rising senior at West Laurens High School and daughter of Roland and Rebecca Thomas, represented Little Ocmulgee EMC on the 2014 Washington Youth Tour. Sarah will be featured in the LOEMC newsletter in the January 2015 issue of *GEORGIA Magazine*.

Cutler says it is common for the trip to change students' ideas and opinions. Some even reassess their future plans and consider pursuing internships at the U.S. Capitol or careers in public service. Georgia's 2014 WYT delegates plan to pursue degrees in diverse fields such as pastoral studies, medicine, business management, sports broadcasting, political science, computer engineering, biology, chemistry and criminal justice, among others.

The Georgia delegation joined approximately 1,600 of their talented and ambitious peers and 300 chaperones from 43 states. "We think it's important to emphasize to the next generation, particularly at this critical time in their lives, that standing up for what you believe in is a real test of courage and conviction," says Lewis Sheffield, General Manager of Little Ocmulgee EMC.

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Attend Your 76th Annual Meeting of Members

Not every company invites its customers to an annual meeting to elect the Board of Directors and help set policy, but Little Ocmulgee EMC does just that. When you signed up to receive power from the electric cooperative, you automatically became a member and a part owner.

Cooperatives use a business model that's different from other companies. They don't sell stock on Wall Street, so there are no out-of-town investors. Control of a cooperative utility is local. Each member of LOEMC is an equal partner in the utility. Members may run for a seat on the Board of Directors. Members may vote for the candidates who do run—and know that every candidate is a member of the cooperative.

It's important to attend LOEMC's annual meeting. It's where you can meet the manager and staff who run the cooperative and get to know the member/directors who advise the staff and decide on important policy matters. It's also where you can vote for the Board of Directors and learn what kinds of business issues your cooperative is facing. Membership in a cooperative comes with these privileges. It also comes with the responsibility to keep on top of cooperative matters and cast your vote for the directors you think will do the best job.

The 76th Annual Meeting of Members of Little Ocmulgee EMC will be held Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014, at the Wheeler County High School gymnasium in Alamo. Doors will open promptly at 12:30 p.m. for member registration. Prior to the 2 p.m. business session, there will be a health fair, vendor booths and gospel entertainment. Door prizes will be awarded at the conclusion of the meeting.

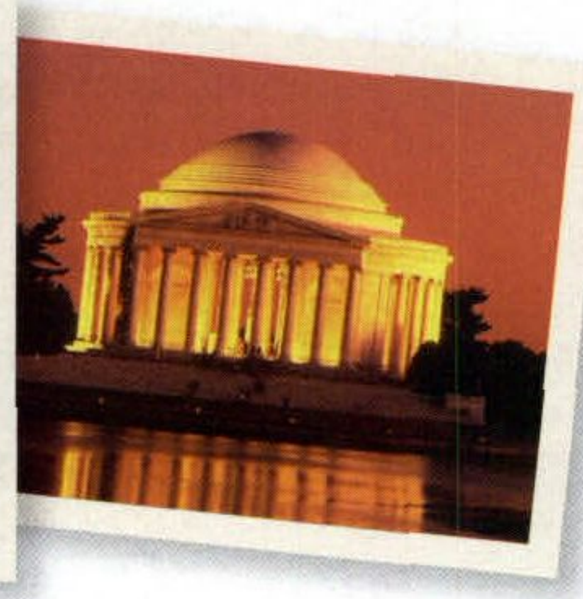
Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders, *Continued from page 34A*

This year marked Georgia's biggest group ever—109 students and 16 chaperones sent by 38 of Georgia's EMCs. The event kicked off with a banquet in Atlanta, emceed by Fox 5 Atlanta's Beth Galvin, the station's medical team reporter and a WYT alumna. The group toured Franklin D. Roosevelt's Little White House in Warm Springs before flying to Washington, D.C.

Other highlights included stops at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as the Jefferson, Lincoln, FDR, Martin Luther King Jr., World War II, Vietnam and Korean War memorials. The group also toured the U.S. Capitol, viewed the Declaration of Independence and visited the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian museums.

The students gained perspective on some of today's important issues and their role as involved citizens during discussions with staff and/or members of Georgia's congressional delegation, including U.S. Sens. Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson and U.S. Reps. Lynn Westmoreland, Rob Woodall, Austin Scott, Doug Collins, Paul Broun, Phil Gingrey and John Barrow.

Finally, all the state groups convened for National Youth Day, sponsored by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, to learn from public figures and other inspirational speakers, including Jo Ann Emerson, NRECA's Chief Executive Officer.



For nearly 50 years, more than 50,000 young citizens have traveled to Washington with the help of their electric cooperative. Photos from this year's tour are posted on the national Youth Tour website at *photos.youthtour.org/2014-Youth-Tour/Georgia*.

Lumber City Entrepreneur Grows 'Fruit of the Gods'

BY DEBBIE BULLARD

While traveling through the side roads of Telfair County, you would not expect to drive up on a persimmon farm. However, the only persimmon farm in Telfair County—and one of the few in the state—happens to be down a less-traveled dirt road and further hidden by overhanging trees down the lane.

At the end of the lane to the acreage, the view changes to an old home place and the remnants of an old barn. The home has long since disappeared. What remains are old live oak trees that provide a wonderful shade from their canopy, with a rope swing hanging from an outstretched limb. Beyond the live oak trees lies an open field of approximately 18 acres with 10 of them planted in neat rows of persimmon trees.

Jeff Brewer proudly displays one of the 650 persimmon trees planted on 10 acres of farmland in southern Telfair County, near Lumber City.

Telfair County can now boast of being the home to this rare Georgia Grown product. While this sweet, edible variety of persimmon may not be native to Georgia, Jeff Brewer has undertaken the task of realizing his dream—a persimmon farm close to Lumber City.

On a trip to California, Brewer tasted a persimmon and found the delicious taste unlike any other fruit. That first taste planted a seed and a dream, which have grown to the beginnings of establishing a persimmon farm.

Brewer is a forester by trade. His background and much research gave him a basis for planting the trees and how to best cultivate them. After compiling his research, he planted 10 acres of several varieties, with approximately 650 trees, to determine which will best adapt to Telfair County's environment. The varieties he's experimenting with are of the non-astringent type, which are edible both before and after fully ripening.

Persimmons, known as being the "fruit of the gods," are both delicious and highly nutritious. They are high in glucose and a rich source of antioxidants, numerous vitamins and fiber. The fruit looks like a mini-pumpkin and can range from a half inch to four inches in diameter.

In terms of marketing his persimmons, Brewer is looking at a pick-your-own orchard initially and plans to ship the fruit to target markets when the trees reach maximum production. The projections are that each tree should produce 50 pounds of fruit each year and should reach full production in four years.

Through the Georgia Grown Initiative, international demand is rising for Georgia's agricultural products. Georgia Grown products are the result of entrepreneurs like Brewer. Farmers such as Brewer have dedicated their lives to the good stewardship of Georgia's resources and have implemented sustainable farming practices to ensure the growth in their products for the future.

Brewer lives in neighboring Dodge County with his wife, Donna. They have three children and one grandchild—thus the rope swing in the oak tree.

Readers of this newsletter are encouraged to submit their favorite persimmon recipe to the Telfair County Chamber of Commerce, Attention: Recipe Contest, 9 E. Oak St., McRae, GA 31055, or the entry may be emailed to the chamber at *rogers@telfairco.org* (in subject line, please use: Recipe Contest, plus include a mailing address or contact information with your submission. Deadline to receive recipes: Sept. 5, 2014). A drawing for a $25 prize will be held on Sept. 6, 2014, at Lumber City Farm Days.

Students Attend Youth Leadership Conference

Sponsored by Little Ocmulgee EMC, Kaitlyn Dukes, daughter of Brady and Jennifer Dukes, of Milan; Makenze Marchman, daughter of Sharon and Darren Marchman, of McRae; and Howard Youngblood, son of Phil and Joy Youngblood, of Alamo, joined an elite group of 57 students attending the 30th Annual Georgia Cooperative Council Youth Leadership Conference at the Georgia FFA/FCCLA Center in Covington.

The conference is designed to build and enhance students' leadership skills and teach the role cooperatives play in the communities they serve. The leadership event also promotes teamwork through a series of exercises, training and presentations.

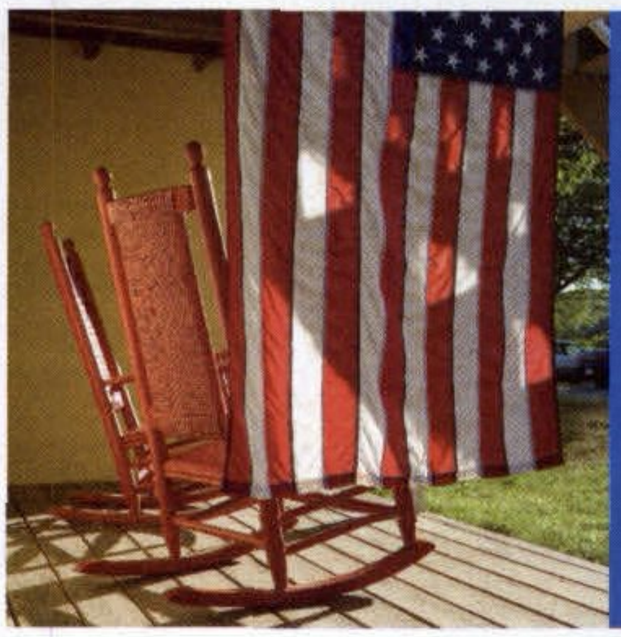
"It is important that students understand the basics of cooperatives and the principles on which they were founded," says Little Ocmulgee EMC General Manager Lewis Sheffield. "These students may become trailblazers in their own right, so we feel a responsibility to teach them about organizations that play a pivotal role in helping their towns and cities grow and prosper, and co-ops are a perfect example."

During the conference, students engaged in activities designed to challenge, teach and entertain, including a field trip to Snapping Shoals EMC in Covington and Godfrey Dairy Farm in Madison. The Congressional Insight Game, a fast-paced workshop presented by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), educates students on the skills needed to be an effective member of Congress and how to handle demands on their time—managing staff, responding to media inquiries, monitoring legislation and attending round-the-clock meetings with constituents, lobbyists and colleagues, among other essentials.

Attendees learn firsthand about cooperatives and their unique characteristics compared to other business structures, says Gale Cutler, Chairman of the Georgia Co-op Council Board of Directors and Public Relations Coordinator at Georgia Electric Membership Corp. "These teens have shown themselves to be peer leaders in their community and were selected by their local co-op to attend this conference," says Cutler. "We help them develop leadership skills by providing a fun-filled week surrounded by other young leaders. The students leave with greater awareness of how co-ops operate and impact their local community and nation."

From left, Kaitlyn Dukes, Makenze Marchman and Howard Youngblood represented Little Ocmulgee EMC at the 30th Annual Georgia Co-Op Council Youth Leadership Conference at the Georgia FFA/FCCLA Center in Covington.

Electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) sending students this year included Altamaha, Canoochee, Diverse Power, Flint Energies, GreyStone Power, Irwin, Jackson, Little Ocmulgee, Middle Georgia, North Georgia, Ocmulgee, Oconee, Planters, Rayle, Southern Rivers, Tri-County, Upson and Walton. Little Ocmulgee EMC is a consumer-owned cooperative providing electricity and related services to more than 7,500 members in Wheeler, Telfair and portions of Laurens, Dodge and Montgomery counties.



Labor Day Closing

Our offices will be closed Monday, Sept. 1, 2014, in observance of Labor Day. In case of an electrical emergency, please call (912) 568-7171 or toll-free in Georgia (800) 342-1290.

For your convenience, night deposit boxes are available at our main office in Alamo and the Dublin branch office. New office location in McRae coming soon. You may also pay your bill online at *www.loemc.com*.