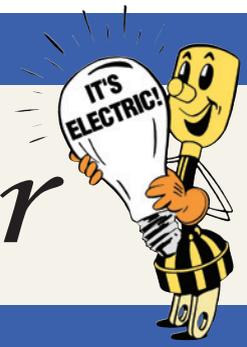




# The Cooperator



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## 2015 Washington Youth Tour Delegates

BY BYRON McCOMBS

**B**lue Ridge Mountain EMC (BRMEMC) is pleased to sponsor three local high school students each year as delegates on the Washington Youth Tour. In June, electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) in Georgia will commemorate 50 years of supporting students and teaching life lessons during the weeklong adventure that transforms young people's lives.

Shea Underwood, of Towns County, Ga.; Madeline Walker, of Union County, Ga.; and Collin Worley, of Clay County, N.C., were selected to represent BRMEMC on the Youth Tour this year. We appreciate the high school counselors who administer the selection process and work diligently to provide us with wonderful students.

Our delegates will be part of Georgia's largest contingent to date—111 students representing 155 counties in Georgia. Scheduled this year from June 11-18, the Youth Tour stands as Georgia's oldest leadership program for teens and offers students personal lessons in

U.S. history, activities encouraging leadership and teamwork, conversations with elected leaders on important subjects and current events, and a greater appreciation for community and public service.

Paying tribute to those whose vision and sacrifice secured a free and open society is another key component of the tour. To that end, the participants will visit historic landmarks in and around the nation's capital, including Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Institution museums, Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mount Vernon, Supreme Court, U.S. Capitol, Washington Monument and the MLK, FDR, Jefferson, World War II and Lincoln memorials.

BRMEMC is thrilled to have our students participate in the Washington Youth Tour, inspired by former President Lyndon Johnson who, as a U.S. senator in 1957, encouraged electric cooperatives "to send youngsters to the nation's capital, where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."



Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's Washington Youth Tour delegates are, from left, Shea Underwood, Madeline Walker and Collin Worley.

# Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's 2015

## Collin Worley

Collin, a junior at Hayesville High School in North Carolina, is the son of Tony and Wendy Worley. He enjoys running and participating on his Ambassadors mission team at church, where Collin serves both his local community and communities abroad.

At school, he is an active member of many clubs, including the National Honor Society, National Technical Society, National Beta Club, Health Occupations Students of America and the Foreign Language Club. He has also served on the Student Council.

After high school, Collin plans to major in biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, then attend dental school and become a dentist.

Collin looks forward to creating new friendships on the Youth Tour and immersing himself in all our nation's capital has to offer. "I hope to increase my knowledge of the political and democratic system which makes up our government,"



As a member of his church's mission team, Collin Worley spent time with children at a Bible Camp in Brunswick, Ga.



Collin Worley, right, with Hayesville High School counselor Karen Nicholson

he says. "In addition, I look forward to experiencing firsthand the monuments, historic buildings and notable sites that represent the United States and characterize our country."



## Madeline Walker

Madeline, a junior at Union County High School in Blairsville, Ga., is the daughter of Russell and Sherry Walker. She enjoys traveling and seeing new things, watching college football and fueling her passion for exotic cars. Madeline enjoys taking photographs at car shows, talking to the owners and reading and learning all she can about the cars.

A Georgia 4-H member, Madeline is a Master 4-H'er in Food Safety and Preservation and a 2014 National 4-H



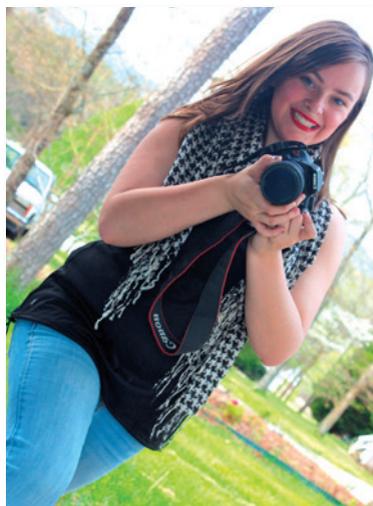
Madeline Walker, center, with Union County High School counselors Patricia Slagle and Rick Silver.

# Washington Youth Tour Delegates

Congress delegate. She is also a Hugh O'Brian Youth State Ambassador and a member of the Union County High School Chorus.

After graduating from high school, Madeline plans to attend Florida International University in Miami, obtain her bachelor's degree in biology and attend medical school.

Madeline sees the tour affecting her life through the connections made with a wide variety of people, which will make her a better leader. She says, "Being in a city where so much history has occurred is fascinating to me. I'm interested in going to new places, as well as places I have already visited, to gain an even bigger appreciation for our nation's capital."



Madeline specializes in shooting weddings, seniors and lifestyle photography. "The best pictures capture the emotion of the moment," she says.



## Shea Underwood

Shea, a junior at Towns County High School in Hiawassee, Ga., is the son of Brian and Mildred Underwood. He enjoys mountain biking, fishing, hiking and being outdoors.

He is a member of the United Community Bank Junior Board of Directors, and is dually enrolled at Young Harris College. In both his freshman and sophomore year, he received an award for having the top grade-point average in his class.

A football and soccer player, Shea has attended several football exposure and training camps across the country for kickers and punters. He was named all-Region 8-A placekicker and all-state punter.

Upon graduating from high school, Shea plans to attend a top engineering school, possibly Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., to pursue an engineering degree. In addition, he wants to play football at the collegiate level as a punter.

This will be Shea's first trip to the nation's capital, and he is looking forward to the friendships he will



Shea Underwood, left, with Towns County High School counselor Erica Chastain

make along the way. He also says, "I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to visit Arlington National Cemetery on the tour. My father and many of my relatives have been involved in the military, so I have a deep respect for the armed services. I can't wait to witness firsthand the monuments honoring those who made incredible sacrifices to secure our liberties."



Shea Underwood kicks an extra point against Copper Basin High School. He holds the Towns County High School record for longest field goal, at 46 yards.

# Washington Youth Tour: 50 years of enriching Georgia teens

BY GALE CUTLER

When a dozen high school students, sponsored by three electric cooperatives, took a trip from rural Georgia to the White House Rose Garden in 1965, little did they know it would mark the start of a youth leadership program that has spanned 50 years.

Those 12 teens, primarily high school juniors, were awarded an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., after competing in an essay contest. The program was designed to give students a personal understanding of American history and their role as citizens.

The group left Sunday, June 6, 1965, from Savannah and traveled by train. They and nearly 600 teens from 17 states spent four days in our nation's capital. The highlight of the trip? An invitation from President Lyndon Johnson to a Rose Garden reception at the White House.

They also met with U.S. senators and representatives; visited historic places, such as Mount Vernon, the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and the National Archives; explored the Smithsonian Institution museums; cruised with delegates from other states on the Potomac River; and toured the U.S. Capitol, where they watched the Senate in session from the gallery.



President Lyndon Johnson, right, who originated the idea for a Washington Youth Tour when he was a U.S. senator, greets delegates at the White House.



Fast-forward 50 years. Instead of 12, this year 111 teens—sponsored by 38 of Georgia's electric cooperatives—have been chosen to attend

the youth leadership experience. Georgia's delegation will fly from Atlanta to Washington, D.C., where they will join nearly 1,600 teens from 43 states participating in the national event.

This year's tour spans a full week (June 11-18) and includes many of the same stops, as well as new ones like the Martin Luther King Jr., Viet-

nam Veterans, Korean War Veterans and National World War II memorials. This year, for the first time, the group will visit the new American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial.

What about a Rose Garden reception, you say? Well, that opportunity has been offered only a few other times by presidents—including Georgia's Jimmy Carter. But Johnson—who, as a U.S. senator in 1957, encouraged the nation's electric cooperatives to send students to Washington to "see what the flag stands for and represents"—would no doubt be pleased to know that this national leadership experience has enhanced thousands of Georgians' lives.

Gale Cutler is the Washington Youth Tour director for Georgia EMC.

## A July 1965 article in *Rural Georgia* (predecessor to *GEORGIA Magazine*) gave a breakdown of the delegates:

- Two from Walton EMC: Sandra Verner, of Rutledge, and Vernon Smith, of Loganville.
- Eight representing Flint Energies (then Flint EMC): Peggy Childree, of Reynolds; Mike Dixon, of Warner Robins; Pete Griffin, of Kathleen; Wanda Johnson and Julianne Jones, of Buena Vista; Mary Jo Paige, of Byromville; Georgiann Peterson, of Fort Valley; and Mary Jane Retherford, of Perry.
- Two from Planters EMC: Ann Williams, of Millen, and Dennis Folker, of Springfield.

Are you a Washington Youth Tour alumna or alumnus? If so, we would love to hear from you! Go to [goo.gl/forms/eQM7kt6RT7](http://goo.gl/forms/eQM7kt6RT7) to fill out a quick survey.