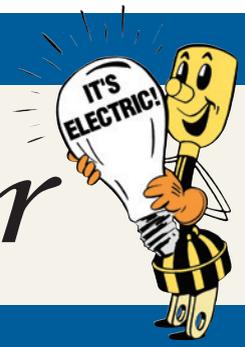




# The Cooperator



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## BRMEMC's 2017 Washington Youth Tour Delegates

BY BYRON McCOMBS

Four outstanding local students have been selected to participate in the 52nd annual Washington Youth Tour (WYT). The once-in-a-lifetime leadership experience, set for June 8-15, is sponsored by electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) in Georgia. Our delegates will see the sights of D.C. while surrounded by other ambitious high school students from across the state during the weeklong adventure.

Abby Carder of Cherokee County, N.C.; Jacquelyn Stewart, of Clay County, N.C.; Emmi Schakat, of Union County, Ga.; and Chase Williams, of Towns County, Ga., were chosen to represent Blue Ridge Mountain EMC (BRMEMC) on the 2017 Youth Tour. We appreciate the support of our local high school counselors, who administer the selection process.

The WYT was established to inspire the next generation of leaders. Each year, the teen delegates are

challenged to consider the role they play in their local community, as well as the world.

Delegates will explore government on a local and national level, beginning at the kickoff banquet in Atlanta before departing for Washington, D.C., the next day. Once in the nation's capital, delegates visit historic landmarks including Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Institution museums, Holocaust Memorial Museum, Mount Vernon, Supreme Court, U.S. Capitol, National Archives and the MLK, FDR, Jefferson, World War II and Lincoln memorials. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to meet with their elected officials and discuss current political issues.

BRMEMC is pleased to provide deserving local students this unique experience that will remain with them the rest of their lives.



Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's Youth Tour delegates are, from left, Emmi Schakat, Jacquelyn Stewart, Abby Carder and Chase Williams.

# Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's Wa

## Emmi Schakat

Emmi, a junior at Union County High School in Blairsville, Ga., is the daughter of Bill and Beth Schakat. She enjoys reading, running and playing soccer.

A Beta Club member and FCA leader, Emmi is also captain of her school's cross country team and goalie on the varsity soccer team.

After graduating from high school, she hopes to attend the United States Military Academy or the University of North Georgia and participate in ROTC. Her plan is to graduate commissioned and to serve as an officer in the U.S. Army.

On the Youth Tour, Emmi is looking forward to visiting the monuments and war memorials throughout the nation's capital, which she describes as the epicen-



Emmi Schakat is an avid cross country runner. After embracing the mud at the state championship in Carrollton, Ga., she and her team from Union County High School finished 10th in the AA division.

ter of patriotism. She says, "Those fallen soldiers, as well as the troops who continue to fight for the common cause, inspire, motivate and remind me of the sacrifices many people have made for the freedom we all enjoy."

Emmi adds, "I am honored to be a participant in the Washington Youth Tour and thrilled to be sharing this opportunity with like-minded students. I believe the experience will teach me valuable leadership skills, as well as helping me grow as a person."

## Abby Carder

Abby, a junior at Murphy High School in North Carolina, is the daughter of Dana Anderson and Danny Carder. She enjoys reading, hiking, spending time at the lake, exploring new things and visiting new places.

Abby is a member of her school's Beta Club, Spanish Club, FCA, Student Government Association, Student Technology Advisory Committee, yearbook staff and National Honor Society. She also plays volleyball and runs cross country and indoor and outdoor track. Along with her high school classes, Abby takes online college courses through Tri-County Early College.

Following high school, she plans to attend college in North Carolina, study abroad and earn a degree in foreign affairs or journalism.

Abby says she's honored to have the opportunity to participate in the Youth Tour. "I believe this unique experience will present challenges that will not only make me into a better student, but also help as I prepare for college and my future," she says.

"Meeting new people while gaining a better knowledge of our government will help me grow as a leader and responsible citizen," says Abby, who is excited to learn more about our nation's heritage while in D.C.



Abby Carder traveled to Florence, Italy, with her high school global studies class last spring.

# Washington Youth Tour Delegates

## Chase Williams

Chase, a junior at Towns County High School in Hiawassee, Ga., is the son of Tony and Debbie Williams. He enjoys golfing, running, playing basketball and reading books on real estate, businesses, smart investing, the stock market, health and medicine.

A Beta Club member, Chase serves as treasurer for FBLA at his school and is an FBLA region officer at the state level. He is captain of his golf team and holds the school's record for the lowest average golf score. He is also dually enrolled at Young Harris College.

Along with his school activities, Chase operates his own clothing business and landscaping company.

Following his graduation from high school, he hopes to attend the University of Georgia on a golf scholarship. His goals are to earn a degree in pre-med, then go to medical school to become an anesthesiologist. He also would like eventually to earn a business degree, travel the world, marry and raise a family, retire as an anesthesiologist and join the *Web.com* professional golf tour.

Chase, who has family members in the military, will be honored to pay his respects at Arlington National Cemetery to those who served and sacrificed everything.

Excited about how the Youth Tour will enhance his life, Chase says, "I will bring back tools of an effective leader enabling me to develop a better self, family, school, church and community."



Chase Williams tees off in an Athens Area Junior Golf tournament in June 2016.

## Jacquelyn Stewart

Jacquelyn, a junior at Hayesville High School in North Carolina, is the daughter of Jeffery and Jennifer Stewart. She enjoys playing softball, hiking, camping, reading and watercolor painting.

A member of Beta Club, National Honor Society, Teachers of Tomorrow, HOSA Club and the Foreign Language Club, Jacquelyn also pitches and plays short-stop for her school's softball team.

After graduating from high school, she hopes to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and major in biology. From there, she plans to go to medical school and become an anesthesiologist.

In D.C., she looks forward to visiting the Smithsonian museums. "Each museum contains so much interesting information," she says. "I would love to explore every one of them."

Apart from meeting new people, Jacquelyn says, "What excites me most is the opportunity to visit the place that is ground zero for all things that affect the American people. It is an honor and privilege to go there and immerse myself in the culture of the place that has helped shape us into who we are today, as individuals and as a nation."



Jacquelyn Stewart enjoys modeling clothes from the Loft Boutique in Hiawassee, Ga., where she works part time while attending high school.



**Jeremy Nelms**  
General Manager

# Manager's Message

## *Here to Serve*

**L**et me start this column by saying just how blessed I am to live in such a beautiful area and to work with such fine people. From the Board of Directors and throughout every department at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC (BRMEMC), we are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of individuals working tirelessly to make sure the power stays on, the rates stay competitive and the service provided to the membership is of great value.

At BRMEMC, we are committed to providing the absolute best possible service to you, our member. Electricity and broadband service may be the products, but without great service, the products do not add the perceived value that they might otherwise. I have heard directly from several members this past year concerning our service, both the good and the bad. I want our members to know that I appreciate their candid feedback.

In an effort to improve service, we have made personnel adjustments in the Call Center to ensure more members can get through and be assisted in a timely manner when the need arises. Based on the review of our call logs, there appears to be a substantial increase in the number of calls handled immediately instead of being pushed to voicemail or abandoned by the caller. This may seem minor, but I can assure you that the reaction of a member we speak to immediately versus a member waiting on hold for

15 minutes or more is significantly different.

In addition, I am pleased to report that our first Member Satisfaction Survey provided us with valuable information concerning the service we offer. As you might recall from my last Manager's Message in January, we conducted a phone survey of members to better

understand their satisfaction levels. In regard to BRMEMC and the service it offers, members have a current overall satisfaction level of 8.71 on a scale of 1-10, with the highest marks coming in providing reliable service and restoration of power during outages. These results are a testament to the great team working at your EMC.

The industry benchmark for overall satisfaction for rural electric cooperatives is 8.88. Although we landed a bit below that, the information collected will help us improve by providing a clearer target.

In closing, your EMC and its employees are here to serve

and will remain focused on providing the highest level of service to our members. You can rest assured our commitment is not just lip service. This starts at the top, and that is why I always make myself available to you, our members.

Thank you for supporting your EMC as we strive to serve each other for the benefit of all. I hope you and your families have a very fun-filled and safe summer.

