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# Rachel Goven: A Youth Tour leader

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Rachel Goven considered herself a shy, quiet person while growing up in rural North Dakota. But things changed for the Turtle Lake-Mercer student, now a high school junior.

The daughter of Gerard and Jill Goven, Rachel was the winning essayist selected to represent McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) at the 2018 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour.

Held annually in Washington, D.C., the event brings students entering their junior and senior year of high school together in the nation's capital to meet with their Congressional delegation, tour historic sites, and learn about rural electric cooperatives.

It's a whirlwind week of meeting new people, seeing history in action, learning, and having fun.

For Rachel, that trip led to what she strongly feels is a life-changing experience.

It also brought her back to Washington, D.C., a month later, it will take her to the stage at a state convention, and even farther when she goes to Orlando, Fla., in March.

In addition to representing McLean Electric on the Youth Tour, Rachel was also chosen to serve as North Dakota's Youth Leadership Council (YLC) representative.

Youth Leadership Council members returned to Washington, D.C., in July to attend another conference where they expand even more on developing leadership skills and their knowledge of the energy industry and rural electric cooperative business model.

The second trip provided an opportunity to go back home to promote cooperatives, Rachel described. "You learn more about co-ops, to be honest," she added

As much as anything, "it made me realize I need to be a leader," she continued. "It really was life-changing. Now as an upperclassman, I need to be involved and encourage kids to get involved with things like yearbook and other things." Being in a small school, it takes everyone to participate in projects, organizations, and activities in order to be successful, she added.

Not that Rachel wasn't already involved. Her litany of school activities included Turtle Lake-Mercer School Pep Club, Yearbook Committee, band, choir, basketball, and Book Club.

In addition, she's active in her Turtle Lake Baptist Church youth group, its youth band and Lakeside 4-H Club.

Oh, and she had been selected earlier to participate in Turtle Lake-Mercer School's "Source of Strength" youth mentorship program in addition to being chosen to attend a leadership seminar at the University of Jamestown.

One might consider Rachel as one who was already blossoming as a leader prior to her Youth Tour trip, yet she credits that experience and now her Youth Leadership Council participation as key to her inspiration.

"I used to be shy. ... It (Youth Tour and YLC) helped my self-confidence." After returning from the Youth Tour, she realized how much more flexible she had become.

How much more she wanted to do to reach out to other students and spread the word about what it means to be a leader, listening to others and helping.

In her efforts to encourage other students to seize the opportunity by entering the Youth Tour essay

## How to apply for Youth Tour

High school students currently in their sophomore and junior year still have time to enter the McLean Electric Cooperative's 2019 Youth Tour essay contest.

With a Jan. 31, 2019 entry deadline, students are asked to write an essay on the topic "Electric cooperatives are member-owned and controlled. As a future member-owner of your cooperative, describe ways that smart technologies and social media might be used to communicate with young adults. How might they be used to increase

awareness and interest in the many career opportunities with electric cooperatives?"

Additional essay contest rules:

- Student and their parents or guardians must be McLean Electric Cooperative members.
- Essay can't exceed two typewritten, double-spaced standard 8.5- by 11-inch sheets of paper in length.

The 2019 NRECA Youth Tour takes place June 15 - 21. Essay contest information is also available on McLean Electric's website, [www.mcleanelectric.com](http://www.mcleanelectric.com). Applicants can also call McLean Electric Cooperative Member Services Representative Sonja Moe at 701-463-6700 or 800-263-4922 for more information.

writing contest, Rachel worked with the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives (NDAREC) communications staff to develop a video featuring her talking about her experiences and encouraging students to enter the 2019 contest.

Helping write, edit and participate in the video, which was done in the Goven home, was yet another new experience she can add to her growing list of accomplishments. She would quickly read and memorize the lines and then they would do the videography, she described.

The process of becoming a Youth Leadership Council member included submitting an application, including a list of her activities, goals and community and school involvement, followed by a 15-minute interview.

“I’m really good at listening. ... Maybe they (selection committee) saw that,” she contemplated.

Once selected as North Dakota’s YLC representative, she had to do another interview and speech as part of the competition that would choose the national representative to speak at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting, which will be held in March.

While Rachel wasn’t selected as the national representative, her speaking days weren’t over. Since returning from her first Washington, D.C., Youth Tour experience, she spoke at McLean Electric’s June 2018 annual meeting.

“All of us at MEC are very proud to have Rachel representing us at the Youth Tour and now on the Youth Leadership Council. She is proving to be a very remarkable young lady,” McLean Electric General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl added. “Rachel has a passion for our rural area and will be one of our community leaders in the future. She is helping us to make our business model known among the area youth.”

She speaks at the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives state convention on Jan. 15. There, she plans to talk about her experiences and above all, thank NDAREC for the opportunities she enjoyed because of the Youth Tour and YLC.

“It’s a way to say thanks. I feel like I can’t thank them enough,” she added. “Right now, I’m so grateful for the opportunity. I know most kids wouldn’t be able to do this.”

Rachel will also attend the national convention in Orlando with her fellow YLC members. “Just to help out,” she described.

She also hopes to bring “Co-op Day” to her school. “I believe she is planning a youth tour to the Antelope Valley Station power plant, the mine (Falkirk) and Dakota Gasification Company for area youth. It is

awesome to see our youth engaged in our business. I sincerely believe Rachel could be our board president someday. Our area youth are our future,” Dahl concluded.

It’s difficult for Rachel to decide what has been the most rewarding and exciting part of the entire Youth Tour experience. “You know what? I don’t even know if I can pick just one thing that was the most exciting,” she expressed.

The Youth Tour alone provided an array of visits to things such as museums, national monuments, and even a private tour of FedEx Field where the Washington Redskins play in the National Football League.

## About the Youth Leadership Council:

- One person from each state attending the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour is chosen to represent that state on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC).
- YLC members return to Washington, D.C., in July to attend a leadership workshop focusing on the electric cooperative industry.
- YLC conference strives to build leadership and public speaking skills while enhancing YLC representative’s energy industry and cooperative business model knowledge. While building what can be life-long friendships, YLC representatives have the opportunity to become more poised, confident, and better future leaders in their community and beyond.
- YLC state representatives speak at their local cooperative and state association meetings.
- As part of the process of selecting the Youth Leadership Council National Spokesperson, YLC representatives write and deliver a 5- to 7-minute speech describing what inspired them while attending the Youth Tour, held earlier in June.
- The YLC national spokesperson addresses the NRECA annual meeting, which will be held in March 9-13 in Orlando, Fla.
- In addition, all YLC representatives are honored during the NRECA meeting and participate in the meeting process.
- Originally established in 1976, NRECA restructured the current format of the NRECA Youth Leadership Council in 1998.

Both trips provided surprise opportunities, she added, including viewing the Pentagon 911 Memorial at night with its moving lighted tribute.

Another aspect of her experience that stands out for Rachel is the people she met and friendships she established with fellow Youth Tour and YLC participants from North Dakota and across the country. Growing up in rural North Dakota, “it was a shock to be in a group so large,” she described.

More than 1,700 students from 43 states attend the Youth Tour each year.

While many people envision rural electric cooperatives as an electric provider for rural America, many cooperatives serve suburban and industrial areas adjacent to large metropolitan cities. “I met kids who were just outside of Tallahassee (Fla.),” Rachel added.

Admittedly, the initial experience was a bit intimidating, she described, because in addition to being from a rural area, she was one of the younger participants.

However, she credits other participants and speech coaches at the event with helping melt away any of that shyness she felt she might have had.

While her newfound friends and the fun and education experience of the NRECA Youth Tour and Youth Leadership Council helped Rachel step forward as a young leader, it’s a good bet she already was making a step in that direction. ■

**Rachel Goven**, Turtle Lake, is all smiles as she celebrates North Dakota and rural electric cooperatives with wearing a T-shirt commemorating “Willie Wiredhand,” a longstanding symbol of rural electric cooperatives.



## Youth Tour roots

A future president sought to inspire high school students to learn about United States history and government by bringing them directly to Washington, D.C.

Then Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, D-Texas, spoke before the 1957 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) in Chicago, saying, “If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.”

That was the birth of the NRECA Youth Tour, an annual conference now more than 60 years strong.

The first group of 34 Iowa high school students came to Washington, D.C., in 1958. Another busload came later that year from Illinois.

The program grew and in 1964 NRECA began coordinating joint activities during what became Youth Tour Week. Initially, about 400 students from 12 states attended. Fast-forward to 2019 and the national Youth Tour annually sends more than 1,500 students entering their junior or senior year of high school to the nation’s capital, along with more than 250 chaperones.

Participants meet with their state’s Congressional delegation, tour museums and memorials, and participate in other leadership, educational, and entertaining programs and activities.

Each year, the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives selects a topic for students currently in their sophomore or junior year of high school to write an essay on a particular topic.

North Dakota’s rural electric cooperatives, including McLean Electric, select a winning essay and sponsor that student’s trip to Washington, D.C.



# STAY CLEAR!

**A DOWNED POWER LINE MAY STILL BE ENERGIZED  
AND COULD CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY OR DEATH.**

## Do :

- If you see a downed power line, move away from it and anything touching it. The ground around power lines – up to 35 feet away – may be energized.
- Immediately report the downed line to your local electric cooperative.
- Assume that all downed power lines are energized.

## Don't :

- Never touch a downed power line. Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything else in contact with it by using an object such as a broom or stick.
- Never drive over downed power lines.
- Never touch or step in water near where a downed power line is located.

### **If a person comes into contact with a downed power line:**

- Call 911.
- Do not touch the person. You could become the next victim.
- Warn others to stay away.



### **Downed power lines and vehicles:**

If your car comes into contact with a downed power line while you are inside, stay in the car. Direct others to stay away from the car.

**Call 911.**

**JUNE 15-21, 2019**

**WRITE A WINNING ESSAY AND**

# **WIN A TRIP OF A LIFETIME!**



**AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.**

- To enter the essay-writing contest, you must be a sophomore or junior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by McLean Electric Cooperative.
- If you have a question, contact Sonja Moe, McLean Electric, at the address listed below, or call 701-463-6700 during regular business hours.
- The deadline is Jan. 31, 2019. Emailed entries should be directed to sonjadm@mcleanelectric.com, and hard-copy entries mailed to: Youth Tour Essay Contest, McLean Electric Cooperative, 4031 Hwy. 37 Bypass NW, PO Box 399, Garrison, ND 58540-0399.

## **TOP 3 REASONS**

**TO ENTER THE ESSAY-WRITING CONTEST**

1. All-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., compliments of McLean Electric Cooperative.
2. A whole week to visit unforgettable historic monuments, museums and the U.S. Capitol.
3. A learning experience you'll never forget.



## **ESSAY QUESTION:**

*Electric cooperatives are member-owned and controlled. As a future member-owner of your cooperative, describe ways that smart technologies and social media might be used to communicate with young adults. How might they be used to increase awareness and interest in the many career opportunities with electric cooperatives?*

**CHECK OUT THE ESSAY-CONTEST GUIDELINES AT**  
**[www.ndyouthtour.com](http://www.ndyouthtour.com)**

**HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES & JUNIORS**

North Dakota Electric Cooperative

# **YOUTH TOUR**

# McLean Electric Cooperative pays capital credits

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

**M**cLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) members received a Christmas bonus from the cooperative in December in the form of a check.

The funds represent a portion of each member's MEC capital credits.

The cooperative paid out a total of \$369,680 to its members, described McLean Electric General Manager/CEO Marty Dahl. McLean Electric retired capital credits each member accrued during the years of 2000, 2001 and part of 2002 based on the amount of their monthly electric bills during that time.

McLean Electric's wholesale electric provider, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, also contributed an additional \$127,361 of G & T capital credits for the years 2000 and 2001 as part of this retirement. The combined retirement total distributed to the McLean Electric Membership was \$497,041! This is one of the highest capital credit



retirements in recent years.

McLean Electric Cooperative board of directors approved paying capital credits for those years during its October meeting.

Look for more information about capital credits and how they function in McLean Electric's upcoming February local pages of the *North Dakota Living* magazine. ■

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