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This organization is an equal-opportunity provider.



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## The geothermal advantage

**THE INDIVIDUALS** employed in Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative's Energy Services Department have established

themselves as experts. Their expertise extends to any number of disciplines that focus on the provision of electric service to our members. Whether it's standby generators, residential or commercial solar-generating systems, battery storage facilities, EV charging stations, or smart thermostats, these folks know their stuff.

Now that we're experiencing the hottest part of the year, I suspect their knowledge of geothermal or ground-source heat pumps might be of particular interest to some of our members. A geothermal heat pump operates more efficiently than ordinary heating and air conditioning systems. Remarkably, these ground-source heat pumps can deliver five units of energy for every single unit of electrical energy used. That kind of performance can reduce a homeowner's heating and cooling costs by as much as 70 percent!

### Unlocking free energy

A geothermal appliance can keep a home comfortable in any climate. It does so by unlocking the free, renewable solar energy that's stored in the ground. Just a few feet below the earth's surface, the ground remains at a relatively constant temperature. That constant temperature is used as the heat pump's exchange medium, instead of the outside air temperature.

The geothermal heat pump takes advantage of these more favorable soil temperatures to become highly efficient by exchanging heat with the earth. Compared to air-source heat pumps, geothermal units are quieter, last longer, need little maintenance and don't depend on the outside air temperature. In addition, the life of a geothermal system is estimated to be 24 years for the inside components, while the ground loop should last for 50 years or longer.

### A full return on investment

A ground-source heat pump is more expensive to install than a conventional air-to-air unit. However, the energy savings generated by the geothermal system should produce a full return on the investment within the first five to 10 years of its operation. It's also true that government tax credits, certain available rebates and an attractive Blue Ridge financing program can all contribute to making the expenditure fit the member's budget.

In my view, geothermal represents the "greenest" technology on the market today. I encourage any interested members to contact the co-op's Energy Services Department for complete details.

**JIM LOVINGGOOD**  
 President and CEO

# Local students get unique Washington experience

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Once Logan Addis entered the Capitol Building, he knew he wanted to come back.

“It was amazing to see everything up close and it made everything so real about our government,” says Addis, a rising senior at Walhalla High School. “One of my favorite parts was being in the gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives because that is the room where they make laws. It just felt really powerful.”

Addis, Seneca High’s Elli Berry and Aubrey Richardson of Pickens High were the student delegates sponsored by Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative on Washington Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation’s capital. Savannah Pace of Pickens

High was sponsored by Central Electric Power Cooperative. They joined 55 other South Carolina students on visits to historical and educational sites, including George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, the National Mall and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

In addition to the museums, memorials and monuments, the students spent a day at the U.S. Capitol Building where they toured the complex, visited Congressional offices and met with staff members. Addis, Berry and Richardson went to Rep. Jeff Duncan’s office in the Rayburn House Office Building. U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman and members of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham’s staff spent time answering the students’ question on the Capitol steps.

“I really enjoyed hearing the intern’s stories and the specific journey they took,” says Addis. “After this trip, I’m considering becoming an intern in D.C.”

During their visit to Mount Vernon, Berry and fellow youth tourists Lily Baggott of Fairfield Electric Cooperative, Ella Adair of Laurens Electric Cooperative and Jessica Christia of Horry Electric Cooperative participated in a wreath laying ceremony at Mount Vernon’s Slave Memorial and Cemetery, which commemorates the community of enslaved people who lived and worked at Mount Vernon.

“It was a special ceremony, solemn and reverent,” says Berry. “It felt good to be able to recognize the people who worked here, and they often don’t get the recognition they deserve.”



Logan Addis etches the name from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Each youth tourist was provided a name from their hometown.



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

Blue Ridge Electric student delegates for Washington Youth Tour were Elli Berry, Aubrey Richardson, Logan Addis and Savannah Pace (from left).



Aubrey Richardson takes in a view of Washington, D.C. from the observation deck of the Old Post Office Tower.

Throughout the trip, the students participated in the Soda Pop Co-op. The co-op sold snacks and beverages to the students. Richardson was one of the students named to the cooperative’s board, which determined the co-op’s manager for the week. As member-consumers, the students each received \$7 in capital credits, their share of the co-op’s end-of-trip margins. The exercise allowed the students to learn first-hand how the not-for-profit co-op business model works.

South Carolina’s youth tourists were not the only student delegates in Washington. They were among more than 1,500 representing electric cooperatives across the nation. The students traded their state pins with one another and went on a riverboat dinner cruise along the Potomac River. Students from across the country also gathered for National Youth Day where they learned about the rich history of electric cooperatives and the important role of being an active participant in our democracy.