

Youth Tour Provides Road to Self-Discovery



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER/CEO STEVE YOUNG

FOR MANY TEENS, THE GOVERNMENT-IN- Action Youth Tour is full of firsts. It may be the first time they leave the state, fly on a plane, visit the nation's capital or travel away from their families for an extended period of time. They will see and experience the larger world through their own eyes rather than through their

world by visiting museums, monuments, memorials and more.

The program has grown exponentially since its inception; last year's tour saw more than 1,800 high school students participate from co-ops in 46 states. Texas sent a delegation of 147 students.

Youth Tour is one of the most important programs that Hamilton County Electric Cooperative undertakes. I am consistently impressed by the caliber of students that our co-op sponsors.

The week is interspersed with visits to important D.C. sites, including Capitol Hill. Activities with Youth Tour delegations from across the country enable teens to meet a broad spectrum of co-op kids. The program creates a safe space for teens to discover the adults they are striving to be. Teens leave behind their hometown identities and venture forward with a fresh slate. Students are encouraged to stretch themselves by talking to people they ordinarily wouldn't.

A highlight of Youth Tour is a meeting with congressional delegates. Teens learn firsthand that their elected officials work for their hometown communities. Students often have the opportunity to discuss issues with legislators, and our chaperones always are impressed with the interactions and questions asked by our students.

Youth Tour culminates in a farewell evening that centers on challenging and inspiring teens to go forward from the tour and make an impact in their communities. As conversations evolve, so do the teens' worldviews. Their definition of "community" often changes from their hometown to a broader meaning.

I can say that nearly all teens who have participated in our Youth Tour program look back with fond memories of an educational, interesting and eventful week. Many make lifelong friends. For a few, Youth Tour is a transformational experience. Parents often remark how their children return noticeably different—more mature, more confident, with bigger goals and aspirations; they have a sense of purpose.

Our teens are our future, and it's looking brighter every day. I hope you will consider urging your teen to "take the leap" by applying for our next Youth Tour delegation.

For more information about Youth Tour, contact Keela Payne by phone at (254) 386-9428 or by email at keela.payne@hamiltonelectric.coop.



ANNIE MCGINNIS | TEC

parents' perspectives—that's the most important first, as it's truly a leap to their next phase, where their journey to adulthood begins.

In preparation for Youth Tour, teens learn about cooperatives, our history and grassroots advocacy. Youth Tour sprang from a suggestion of then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson to a national gathering of co-ops. Johnson believed youths from rural areas would benefit from visiting Washington, D.C., to see firsthand how government works and gain a wider perspective through the experience.

From this idea, Youth Tour formed. Every year, high school students from around the country are selected by their respective electric co-ops to participate in a weeklong trip to the nation's capital, where they learn about the country and the



TAYLOR MONTGOMERY / TEC

ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS AND SENIORS:

Win a Trip to Washington, DC!

June 6–15, 2018

YOU'RE A TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR OR SENIOR. YOU'RE SMART; YOU HAVE BIG dreams. Maybe you've never been out of the state, and maybe you've never flown on a plane, but you want to travel—to experience a big city, visit historic landmarks and meet people, and not just fellow high schoolers but influential public figures, like your U.S. representative.

If that describes you, then you're a candidate to apply for a slot on the Government-In-Action Youth Tour, an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 6–15, 2018, sponsored by Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association and organized by Texas Electric Cooperatives.

Youth Tour is an action-packed trip to the U.S. capital with about 150 of your peers and chaperones from across Texas. You'll visit the Washington National Cathedral, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Smithsonian Institution, memorials and more.

You could be a part of this legacy shared by the more than 3,800 past Texas Youth Tour students who have participated since 1965.

Eligibility: Students who have completed their sophomore year of high school and whose parent or legal guardian is a member of Hamilton County EC are eligible.

Contest Rules: Students must complete a 2018 Youth Tour application and submit an essay not to exceed 500 words on this theme: "If you had the opportunity to change one thing about your school or community, what would it be and why?" The winners will be chosen according to originality and content of their essays. Essays must be attached to the completed application and submitted no later than February 23.

For more information, visit texasyouthtour.com. Contact Keela Payne by phone at (254) 386-9428 or by email at keela.payne@hamiltonelectric.coop for an application.

Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association

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Hamilton, TX 76531

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Steve Young

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Contact Us

For general information
or to report an outage

CALL US

(254) 386-3123 local or
1-800-595-3401 toll-free

PAYMENT LOCATIONS

Hamilton County EC Office

420 N. Rice St., Hamilton

Brown & Wesson Insurance

915 Third St., Goldthwaite

Fort Gates Water Corporation

103 Gateway Circle, Gatesville

Kempner Water Supply

11986 E. Hwy. 190, Kempner

Lometa City Hall

109 W. San Saba St., Lometa

Online

hamiltonelectric.coop

Telephone

Call 1-877-833-4031 to pay using our automated phone system (credit/debit card or check).

Bill payments can be set up to be bank drafted or charged to a debit or credit card monthly.

Sources of the Dreaded ‘Vampire Loads’



TANYA-STOCK | ISTOCK.COM

PERHAPS YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH AN UNDESIRABLE ASPECT OF the electronic and internet-of-things revolution: vampire loads. Vampire loads come from devices that use electricity even when they appear to be off. The primary culprits are chargers, cable and satellite TV boxes, instant-on TVs and gaming systems. There are others, but these four represent the major offenders.

Let’s look at how vampire loads occur and why they are approaching 10 percent of average household electricity use, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Chargers take 120 volts of power at the outlet and reduce it to the voltage required by the connected device, usually 5–12 volts. Obviously, when your device is charging, the charger is using electricity—but you might be surprised to learn that chargers still use small amounts of energy even when they’re not connected to anything.

Cable and satellite TV boxes also consume energy when they appear to be inactive. Anytime the box’s lights are on, it is using power. Like chargers, they use more when the television is on, but they are always working—even when the TV is off.

This is especially true for those devices with a DVR function that records your favorite TV shows.

The instant-on television is another culprit. The intention of the instant-on feature is instant gratification for the viewer, meaning there’s no waiting for the TV to turn on and warm up. Unfortunately, for that convenience, the TV must remain on standby at nearly full power, which can be a real energy drain.

A typical gaming console can use as much energy as a refrigerator, even when it’s not being used. Make sure to check the console settings and disable automatic updates, which are where the main energy drain comes from. Games on the console are frequently updated, and each update requires a lot of electricity.

So how does the average family combat these dreaded vampire loads? Garlands of garlic? Silver bullets?

Fortunately, none of the remedies of fable are necessary. You just need to change how you handle energy-sucking electronics. **Here are a few suggestions:**

- ▶ Unplug chargers when not in use.
- ▶ Invest in smart power strips. These look like normal power strips but have a twist: One of the outlets is the “master”

that receives power all the time. The others are off. When the device connected to the master outlet turns on, the rest of the outlets receive power, too. Ingenious and perfect for entertainment setups. Plug the television into the master outlet, and when you turn it on, the cable or satellite box, speakers, streaming devices, etc., will turn on, too. These are also ideal for PCs and their peripherals.

▶ Disable the instant-on function on your TV. Turn off cable and satellite boxes that do not contain DVR functionality, or use a smart power strip.

▶ Disable automatic updates in gaming consoles and turn the consoles completely off when you finish using them.

▶ When replacing any device or appliance, look for an Energy Star-rated product. These energy-efficient items save you money in operating costs.

Vampire loads are a real problem that will only continue to grow as the digital age advances. But you can fight the vampires with vigilance and application of the recommendations above. Check with your co-op for additional suggestions and energy-saving advice.



Hamilton County EC Scholarship Program

WILL YOUR 2018 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE NEED COLLEGE MONEY? HAMILTON COUNTY Electric Cooperative Association will be awarding several scholarships of \$1,000 each for the 2018–2019 school year, divided into \$500 for each the fall and spring semesters.

To be eligible your student must:

- ▶ Be a senior attending a high school within the Hamilton County EC service area and graduating in May 2018.
- ▶ Be a dependent of an active Hamilton County EC member.
- ▶ Reside full time in the home of a parent or guardian who is a full-time resident in Hamilton County EC's service area.
- ▶ Have applied for admission as a full-time student at a state university, junior college or technical school.

Each winner must use the scholarship awarded within one year of issuance. Scholarship applications are now available and will be accepted until March 30. Scholarship winners will be chosen by a committee independent of Hamilton County Electric Cooperative Association. For more information and an application, please contact Keela Payne by phone at (254) 386-9428 or by email at keela.payne@hamiltonelectric.coop.

WHAT IS



SMARTHUB IS HAMILTON COUNTY

EC's innovative tool for account management. SmartHub can help you take control of your electricity and your account like never before!

- ▶ Register with SmartHub, and you will be able to view your current bill, the previous month's bills or even previous year's bills to compare costs. You can also view your daily or monthly electricity usage. You can see how your use is trending over time and take steps to reduce your consumption.
- ▶ Making payments through SmartHub is fast and easy. You can store your payment information for future payments or set up automatic payments. SmartHub provides a safe and secure environment for transactions between HCEC and your financial institution.
- ▶ Go paperless and manage your account via SmartHub! By registering with SmartHub, you can receive bill notifications by email or text.

- ▶ Register now at hamiltonelectric.coop! Click the Pay Online button to begin registration. You may also download the app, SmartHub, for free with your smartphone or tablet.

WHAT IS SMARTHUB?



Be in the Know Secure Customer Support Pay Bill Check Usage

Community Calendar



Comanche

Comanche County Livestock Show, January 7-9, Livestock Show Barn, sponsored by the Comanche County Livestock Association.

For more information about Comanche County events, contact the Comanche Chamber of Commerce at (325) 356-3233 or email comanchetxchamber@gmail.com.

Evant

Book Signing, January 20, 10 a.m.-Noon, Evant Chamber of Commerce. Featuring: Linda Ray's *Pearl History* and Steve Bush's *I Just Thought I Would Ask: Power of Asking and Breaking the Chain*.

Create Your Special Valentine, February 3, 8-10 a.m., and February 10, 1-4 p.m., Evant Chamber of Commerce. Accomplished calligrapher Karen Wheelless will be available for you to bring, buy or make your special valentine.

For information, contact Mary Ann Davison at evantchamber@gmail.com or (254) 404-5487.

Gatesville

Coryell County Livestock Show and Youth Fair, January 10-13, Civic Center, 301 Veterans Memorial Drive

Chamber Market Days, second Saturday of every month in the parking lot of the Historic Cotton Belt Depot, 2307 S. Hwy. 36. Market vendors display unique merchandise and farm-fresh foods.

Gatesville Country Music Hall of Fame Show/Jamboree, third Friday of each month, 7-8 p.m., City Auditorium, 110 N. Eighth St. A family-friendly event. There is no admission fee, but donations are accepted for the performers. For more information, visit gatesvillecountrymusichalloffame.com or call Roger Vierende at (254) 547-6834.

For more information about Gatesville events, visit gatesvilletx.info, call the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce at (254) 865-2617 or Cheri Shepherd, Gatesville Convention and Visitors Bureau, at (254) 499-0102.

Goldthwaite

Mills County Livestock Show and Youth Fair, third weekend in January

Hamilton

Hamilton County Stock Show, January 3-6, Fair Park. Wednesday, home economics show and ag mech; Wednesday evening, poultry and rabbit show; Thursday-Saturday, livestock; Saturday evening, sale.

For more information about Hamilton events, visit hamiltontexas.com or contact the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce at (254) 386-3216 or hamiltonchamber.tx@gmail.com.

Lampasas

Free guided tours of the historic Lampasas County Courthouse, Saturdays, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., historic downtown courthouse square. The 30-minute tours visit each floor of the courthouse, including the stately second-floor courtroom as well as the third floor, which houses the tower clockworks. The Lampasas County Courthouse is the third-oldest courthouse in continuous use in Texas. For more information, contact Jim Rutland at (512) 556-5302 during regular business hours.

Lampasas County Museum, Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., 303 S. Western Ave., between Second and Third streets. Learn about the history of Lampasas County through permanent displays and special exhibitions. Free of charge.

Lampasas Trade Days, January 6 and February 3, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., 2646 E. Hwy. 190. For information, contact Barbara Postel at (512) 734-1294.

Casino Night, February 10, Lampasas County Show Barn

For more information about Lampasas County events, contact the Lampasas County Chamber of Commerce at (512) 556-5172 or visit lampasaschamber.org.

Lometa

Carnival, March 22-24, 6-11 p.m., Regional Park

Rodeo, March 23, 7:30 p.m., Arena at Regional Park, Junction US 183 and US 190. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids, and free for children 6 and under and active military with ID. Sponsored by the Lometa Lions Club.

Diamondback Jubilee Rattlesnake Roundup, March 24, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Regional Park. For more information, contact David Smith at (512) 752-3106.

For more information, about Lometa events, contact the City of Lometa at (512) 752-3331.

Pearl

Bluegrass Festival, January 6, February 3 and March 3, 11 a.m. Stage show, jam rooms, home-cooked food and bookstore. For more information, visit pearlbluegrass.com.

Pearl Book Cottage, January 6, February 3 and March 3, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. All kinds of books and resale items. Payment by donation. All donations go to charity. For information, call (254) 865-9282 or (254) 865-5864.

Community Meal, third Thursday monthly,

11:30 a.m., Pearl Baptist Church, Hwy. 183.
Contact Connie at (254) 223-0621.

San Saba

Christmas Light Extravaganza, nightly through January 5, Mill Pond Park, Thomas Stewart Drive. Dusk-10 p.m., Sunday-Thursday; dusk-midnight, Friday-Saturday.

San Saba County Youth Livestock Show and Youth Fair, January 11-13. For information, contact Texas AgriLife Extension at (325) 372-5416.

Pecan Capital Trade Day, March 3, Courthouse Square. For information, contact Joann at (325) 372-4029.

A Night at the Museum—Texas Independence Day Celebration, March 3, 6-8 p.m., Mill Pond Park. Evening program includes food, music, storytellers and fireworks. For information, contact Lynn at (325) 372-8807.

For more information about San Saba County events, contact the San Saba County Chamber of Commerce at (325) 372-5141 or visit sansabachamber.com, and the city at (325) 372-5144 or visit sansabatexas.com/calendar.

WE WELCOME YOUR EVENT SUBMISSIONS

Hamilton County EC welcomes your local event submissions. If you have any events that you would like listed in the Community Calendar, please contact Donna Harris. Information must be submitted two months in advance for the magazine. The calendar will be published monthly and will contain events scheduled in the month of publication and the following two months. HCEC reserves the right to edit and exclude events based on space available and other considerations. We do not certify the accuracy or reliability of any information posted in any listing in this Community Calendar. Please contact the event source directly to confirm event details. Email donna.harris@hamiltonelectric.coop, write to HCEC at P.O. Box 753, Hamilton, TX 76531, or call 1-800-595-3401.

Livestock Shows

January 7-9, Comanche
January 3-6, Hamilton
January 10-13, Gatesville
January 11-13, San Saba
January 18-20, Goldthwaite



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Did You Know?

Persistent dirt lines on floors likely can be blamed on air leaks. Dirt travels in moisture, which travels in heat, which seeks cold. Where lines exist around the joints between walls and floors, check for drafts, then seal the leaks.

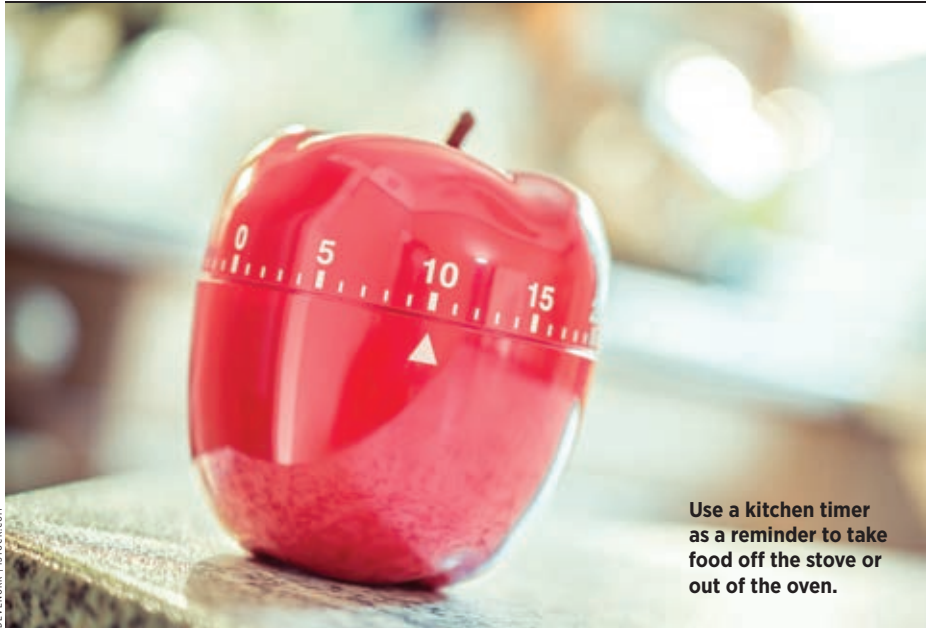


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Happy New Year!

from Hamilton County EC

Our offices will be closed Monday, January 1, to allow employees to ring in the new year with their families.



Use a kitchen timer as a reminder to take food off the stove or out of the oven.

DEVENORR | ISTOCK.COM

The Time Is Right

DID YOU KNOW THAT DEMAND FOR electricity fluctuates according to season and even time of day?

Seasonal factors such as extreme heat in the summer and frigid temperatures in the winter can increase consumer demands for electricity to power heaters, fans and air-conditioning units.

Also, a home's greatest daily demand for electric power happens during the morning hours while its inhabitants prepare to leave for work or school, and for several hours in the afternoon and evening after they return home. From the use of video games to washing machines, this is a home's peak demand time—when most of our power gets used.

You can help reduce strain to the electric grid and lower your electric co-op's overall costs (and yours) simply by changing when you perform routine tasks.

- ▶ Set your dishwasher to begin late at night, rather than just after dinner.
- ▶ Charge your cellphone and other rechargeable devices overnight.
- ▶ Postpone ironing chores to late evening or early morning hours.
- ▶ Vacuum floors in the morning.
- ▶ Turn off your computer when it's not in use.
- ▶ Use a power strip to turn off peripheral computer components, such as printers and scanners, when they are not in use.



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Cold Weather Safety

IN COLDER WEATHER, A RISE IN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE USE INCREASES THE OCCUR-rence of electrical fires, electrocutions, carbon monoxide poisoning and other winter weather-related injuries. Keep in mind the following tips to stay safe.

Heating the House

Space heaters are a common way to keep warm, but they require caution and close attention for safe use. Read manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully. Inspect the cord for cracked plugs or loose connections. Don't let pets or children play close to the unit, and turn it off when you're leaving the room or going to sleep.

Keep heaters on level, flat surfaces at least 3 feet away from anything flammable, including papers, clothing, bedding and rugs. Place heaters out of high-traffic areas and doorways where they could trip passersby. Plug a heater directly into a wall outlet with no other electrical devices, and always unplug and safely store it after use.

In the Bedroom

Electric blankets and heating pads often are used for supplemental heat. Look for charred or frayed spots on their surfaces, or cracks or frays in the electric cords. Never fold or tuck in an electric blanket and do not allow anything to rest on top of it—including other blankets or pets—when in use.

In the Kitchen

Cooking fires and electric shock also are common during winter months. Never cook if you're sleepy or have been drinking alcohol. Use a timer to remind you to check on food on the stove or in the oven. Double-check that oven burners and appliances are off once you are done cooking. Use outlets protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters for countertop appliances, especially near water.

In Case of Outage

Portable generators are used often after winter storm-related power outages. Be sure to locate your generator outside, away from windows and doors. Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area; test the alarms monthly; and replace batteries at least annually.



STANALY / ISTOCK.COM

Celebrate, Cook and Save

DID YOU KNOW JANUARY IS NATIONAL SLOW COOKING MONTH? YOU CAN CELEBRATE by preparing a heart-healthy meal in a slow cooker and save money in the process.

Ever since slow cookers were introduced in 1971 under the “Crock-Pot” brand name, they have been celebrated as savers of time and electricity. Plus, slow-cooker meals are nutritious because they are cooked at low temperatures for long periods, allowing fresh meats and vegetables to retain their natural juices.

Here are five reasons to dust off your slow cooker this month and use it to make soups, stews and entrées.

1. Although it takes all day for a slow cooker to cook a meal, you don’t have to do anything except toss in the ingredients and turn it on at the appropriate level of heat. Once you prep the pot, you can walk away until the food is done.

2. An electric slow cooker uses less energy than a conventional oven. Use one in the winter to create hot, hearty meals. Later in the year, when it’s warm outside, use it instead of the stove or oven, and keep your kitchen cooler while you cook.

3. A slow cooker meal requires little cleanup. Aside from a cutting board and a knife, all you’ll need to wash is the pot itself.

4. When you’re invited to a potluck supper, prepare your contribution in the slow cooker. Once the food is ready, leave it in the pot, let the outside cool enough to handle, and bring the whole thing to the party.

5. You’ll eat fewer processed foods if you get used to cooking with a slow cooker. That means you’ll eat less salt, fat and calories.

Look for slow-cooker recipes for everything from casseroles to desserts, and remember that you’re saving energy and money with every use.

WHAT TO DO IF ...

Your Car Crashes Into a Utility Pole

ACCIDENTS HAPPEN. WOULD YOU KNOW

what to do if your car crashed into an electric utility pole? Knowing what to do—and what NOT to do—could be the difference between life and death.

Always consider power lines and other electrical equipment to be live and dangerous.

If a power line falls on your vehicle and there is no fire, your safest option is to stay inside your vehicle until help arrives. The vehicle acts as a path for the electrical current to reach the ground. You are safe inside the vehicle, but if you get out, you could be electrocuted.

If a power line falls on your vehicle and there is a fire, to exit safely:

- ▶ Jump out of the vehicle, making sure NO part of your body or clothing touches the ground and vehicle at the same time.
- ▶ Land with both feet together and take small, shuffling steps for at least 40 feet away from the vehicle.
- ▶ The ground could be energized.

Shuffling away with both feet together decreases the risk of electrical shock.

In either situation, call 911 and your electric cooperative for help.



SAFELECTRICITY.ORG