

# 2023-2024 RESOURCE BOOK



# CO-OPS CONNECT

YOU WITH OPPORTUNITY



WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR





# INTRODUCING THE TENNESSEE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CREATIVE WRITING AND SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

Before you lies a unique opportunity. Winners of the Electric Cooperative Writing Contest not only earn spots on a once-in-a-lifetime tour of our nation's capital, but they also qualify for additional trips and thousands of dollars in scholarships and have a chance to network with other young leaders from across the nation.

More than 6,000 high school juniors from across Tennessee have participated in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

This booklet will tell you more about the trip, let you hear from previous delegates and outline the requirements and resources to help you write the

Exciting stops on the Washington Youth Tour include the Washington Monument, above, and the Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, right. Seeing the sites they've studied in school is a highlight of the delegates' D.C. experience.

best short story. It will also tell you a little bit more about electric cooperatives and the reasons they have provided this opportunity to students for more than 50 years.



# WHAT YOU GET

Your prize for showing the benefits of cooperative power: an unforgettable trip to Washington, D.C., in **June 2024** with nearly 2,000 other students your age from across the country.

Each day of the Washington Youth Tour brings more impressive sights, opportunities for photos and lots of memories. Among activities filling the agenda are tours of Washington, D.C., and all its landmarks, memorials and museums. Highlights include the Smithsonian Institution, White House, U.S. Capitol, Mount Vernon and Monticello.

Food, travel and lodging expenses are paid by Tennessee's electric cooperatives. But the benefits of the Youth Tour go far beyond an expense-paid trip.

Youth Tour winners can compete to represent Tennessee on the **Youth Leadership Council**. One student from each state is selected to return to Washington, D.C., for a leadership workshop, which focuses on the electric cooperative industry.

And don't forget about the chance to help pay for your college education with **scholarships of \$3,000, \$2,000 or \$1,000** awarded by the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association if your story is judged one of the top three in the state.

You can also choose to participate in our **Cooperative Youth Ambassador** program. Delegates who stay active and engaged with their co-ops in the 12 months following Youth Tour qualify for a drawing for a **\$10,000 scholarship** to the school of the winner's choice.

Other scholarships, including the **Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation Scholarship** and the **Engineers of the Future Scholarship**, are available through the Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation.



TRAVEL



RECOGNITION



SCHOLARSHIPS



CONNECTIONS





## HEALTH AND SAFETY WILL BE A PRIORITY

In addition to scholarships provided by the electric co-ops, **Union University** in Jackson and **Carson-Newman University** in Jefferson City have recognized the leadership potential of Youth Tour delegates. The universities have agreed to provide dozens of scholarships worth up to \$10,000 a year for four years.



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our ability to take students to Washington, D.C., for the past few years. Tennessee's electric co-ops will follow the advice of medical experts and public health officials as we plan for the 2024 Tour. If we are unable to ensure the safety of our winners, the trip will not be possible, and other prizes may be awarded in place of the trip.

### THERE'S MUCH MORE ONLINE

Visit our website for more information about the trip, scholarships and other opportunities:

[youthtour.tnelectric.org](https://youthtour.tnelectric.org)



# HEAR FROM THE WINNERS



"It's been well over a month since the last day of WYT and I haven't stopped thinking about the trip. It was an amazing experience. DC is truly a magical place!"

**Kenyan King, South Pittsburg High School**  
**Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative**



"The entire experience was mind blowing. We had so much fun and got to take a trip of a lifetime and meet people that could possibly be lifetime friends. I miss being in D.C everyday since the day I got back home, and I am so glad that I was able to have this opportunity."

**Sam Upchurch, McEwen High School**  
**Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative**



"The Washington Youth Tour is something I will never forget! It brought me so many new opportunities that I wouldn't have gotten if I had not gone on this trip."

**Isa Elrod, Smith County High School**  
**Upper Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation**



"Be present and willing to learn. Washington Youth Tour taught me more than just history, but about who I am and who I wanna be."

**Addyson Gebelt, Franklin County High School**  
**Duck River Electric Membership Corporation**



## JOIN A NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Each day of the Washington Youth Tour brings more impressive sights, opportunities for photos and lots of memories. Among activities filling the agenda are tours of Washington, D.C., and all its landmarks and memorials.

Politicians, authors, athletes and business leaders, including Apple CEO Tim Cook, are proud Youth Tour alumni.



## 2023 ROBERT MCCARTY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



**Livia Benefield,**  
Grundy County High School,  
Sequachee Valley Electric  
Cooperative,  
\$3,000 Scholarship



**Cole Coffman,**  
**South Side High School,**  
Southwest Tennessee  
Electric Membership  
Corporation,  
\$2,000 Scholarship



**Claire Townley,**  
Hardin County High School,  
Tennessee Valley Electric  
Cooperative,  
\$1,000 Scholarship

## 2023 CO-OP YOUTH AMBASSADOR



**Ernee Webb,**  
Cumberland Electric Mem-  
bership Corporation  
\$10,000 Scholarship

Delegates who stay engaged and active with their local co-ops in the year following the Youth Tour have a chance to win a \$10,000 scholarship to the college or trade school of their choice.

# RULES AND RESOURCES

The energy provided by electric co-ops has far-reaching impacts on Tennessee. Write a short story explaining how “Co-ops Connect” Tennessee communities with energy, education, broadband, economic development and more.

There are a few rules you need to follow:

1. Only juniors in high school are eligible to participate.
2. Every short story must be titled “Electric Cooperatives Connect.”
3. Submissions must not exceed 900 words, including articles (“a,” “an” and “the”). The exact word count must be included on your cover page. Entries must be typewritten and double-spaced.

Remember, you’re writing a short story, which gives you more creative freedom than the rigid guidelines of an essay. Your story should be an entertaining, informative description of electric cooperatives.

Visit [youthtour.tnelectric.org](http://youthtour.tnelectric.org) to learn more about electric co-ops. Resources there will provide you with lots of information and material to write your story.

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CO-OP CONTACT PERSON

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EMAIL ADDRESS

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DUE DATE





## CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS:

The tips below can help you get one step closer to D.C. Use these suggestions to make your story stand out.

### Characters, time and place

Spend some time to develop the characters, location and time frame of your story.

### Get specific

Include at least three specific examples of the many ways electric co-ops strengthen their communities. The expansion of broadband, availability of reliable energy, efforts to recruit new businesses and jobs, and leadership development for young people are just a few examples.

### Include one (or more) co-op principles

The seven principles of electric co-ops are listed on pages 14 and 15. Include these in your story to demonstrate your understanding of the many things that make electric co-ops unique.

## THERE'S MUCH MORE ONLINE

Find additional resources on our website to help you write your story:

[youthtour.tnelectric.org](https://youthtour.tnelectric.org)

## JUDGING CRITERIA

Be creative in your writing, utilizing the information in this booklet and your own distinctive voice. Your writing will be judged on three factors:

### 50% Appropriate treatment of theme and knowledge of subject

To gain full credit in this category, you'll have to effectively weave the information relating to the theme throughout the short story. Judges will see indications of additional research, a grasp of what information is vital to making your story believable and credible and creative ways of presenting that information.

### 35% Originality and Creativity

Use a different, entertaining, effective way of presenting information that will educate a reader and get your points across. The use of AI is not allowed.

### 15% Grammar and Composition

If you need an explanation here, check your English textbook.



# LAST YEAR'S WINNING STORY

Mr. Willy Wonka had been considering expanding Wonka Industries for a while now, but he had just one problem, Where? With Charlie now running the original factory he could branch off and build another factory in a different location.

He was sitting in his office contemplating his problem when Charlie burst through the door. Charlie quickly noticed the lines of distress painted on Mr. Wonka's face. Charlie then asked, "Mr. Wonka, what's wrong?"

"Charlie my boy, I don't know where to build our new chocolate factory," Mr. Wonka boldly replied.

"Well, have you thought about Tennessee," Charlie asked.

"Why in the world would we build it there? There's nothing out there besides Nashville and Elvis."

"Well Mr. Wonka, it would be cheaper to get the land and run the factory than anywhere else."

"How would it be cheaper, Charlie? It's so rural out there that surely it would be more expensive to run the factory!"

"Not necessarily Mr. Wonka, it is rural, but the co-ops connect you with opportunity. The Tennessee Electric Cooperative would be the company to provide our business with electricity and internet if we were to choose to build in Tennessee."

"What more "opportunity" could they offer us that some other company couldn't?" They're all the same and it's just electricity, they can't be that different."

"You see that's where you're wrong Mr. Wonka, co-ops are very different from other electric utilities! They are owned by the people and controlled by the members through an elected Board of Directors. And it's not just electricity,

many also provide broadband and some offer propane. They help their community stay educated and informed, and they support industrial and economic development within their community."

"Why in the world would they do all that, Charlie?"

"Because they are concerned and care about their communities and their members. They even keep them informed with real-time notifications through their social media, website, and app!"

"Well if they do all that, do they do anything for the children," asked Mr. Wonka. "Our main customers are children and we also care about our consumers. I don't want to support a business that doesn't support what we believe in!"

"Then you're in luck," said Charlie. The Tennessee Electric Cooperative supports education and children in the community. They are very active in the school systems and they connect students with plenty of programs like the Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, 4-H Electric Camp, and Youth Leadership Summit."

"But What does this do for the kids, Charlie?"

"It gives the students important information, helps their personal development, fosters leadership skills, and they could even receive scholarships for higher education. The co-op also awards thousands of dollars to teachers for hands-on projects, so even if the students don't participate in their other programs, they can still help them and their pursuit for education."

"Charlie, that's brilliant! But if they care so much about their members and community, how do we know that they would support our business?"

"Well, they are all about promoting the area and recruiting new businesses and industries! They



## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

want to deliver opportunities for their communities to grow and thrive and provide a good quality of life for their members. And when our business opens it will offer job opportunities for people in their area."

"All of that is nice, but will they be able to supply the amount of energy that we need? Will it be reliable and fast? Our business is booming and if something goes wrong and we lose power or if orders come in late because of a slow network we will get days behind and might not be able to recover from that. I don't want our new chocolate factory to fail before we get our feet off the ground," stated Wonka.

"If anyone can meet our electric needs it's them. They have provided their members with safe, reliable, affordable electric services since 1939. Now up to 5 percent of their energy comes from renewable sources such as solar arrays. Plus, their fiber optic network makes high-speed internet services available to all of their eligible members. They currently serve 1 in 3 Tennessee homes and have a 99.96% reliability rate!"

"Wow, you have me sold, but you still haven't told me why they are cheaper than other companies."

"Their rates are kept low because there are no stockholders to pay, and the co-op is responsive to members because they vote on co-op leadership."

"What do you mean they vote?"

"They are an autonomous organization. Do you remember earlier when I told you they are owned by their members and controlled by Board of Directors elected by the members?"

"Yeah, I remember Charlie."

"Well, they are a democratic organization

**Livia Benefield, a student at Grundy County High School in the Sequachee Valley Electric Cooperative service area, was the state winner of the 2023 Washington Youth Tour Writing Contest, earning her a \$3,000 scholarship.**



**This year's theme is "Co-ops Connect." Write your story about the many ways co-ops connect their communities with energy and opportunity.**

controlled by the member-elected board that sets policies and makes decisions. So, their services are cheaper because they are run by the same people who use their service and are not-for-profit. That's also one of the reasons they care so much about their members and community. They want all members to have a brighter future, and that's why they have so many opportunities for them to grow, improve, and build themselves and their communities.

"Then it's settled Charlie, our new factory will be built in Tennessee! Why wouldn't we want to be a part of something greater than ourselves and be able to provide people with greater opportunities!"

# TENNESSEE'S ELECTRIC CO-OPS

Tennessee's electric cooperatives provide power to more than 2.8 million Tennesseans. Unlike other businesses, electric cooperatives are owned by the consumers they serve and operate as not-for-profit businesses. This may not sound important, but it means that consumers are the priority. Rates are kept low because there are no stockholders to pay, and the co-op is responsive to members because they vote on co-op leadership.

In the 1930s, there was no power in rural Tennessee. Homeowners and farmers came together to

create co-ops that would bring power to their homes.

Today, co-ops are modern businesses that use technology to efficiently operate a large, advanced grid. Despite these changes, the primary goal of co-ops have not changed: provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to our neighbors, the very people who own the co-op.

Because of their local ties, co-ops are committed to improving lives in their communities. Going be-



## MEMBER-OWNED AND -REGULATED

Electric co-ops are owned by the people they serve, not by government. Members elect board members to represent their interests and set policy and procedures for the co-op.



## NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Co-ops exist to serve their communities instead of shareholders. They distribute and sell energy at cost and invest any excess revenue back into the electric system.



## COMMITTED TO IMPROVING COMMUNITIES

Electric co-ops work to improve everyday life in our rural and suburban communities. We do this through reliable energy and efforts in education and community development.



yond simply keeping the lights on, co-ops recruit businesses and investment, help members operate their homes and businesses more efficiently and prepare students to be tomorrow's leaders.



## ELECTRIC CO-OPS SERVE

# 2.8 MILLION

TENNESSEANS



**1 IN 3**  
TENNESSEE  
HOMES

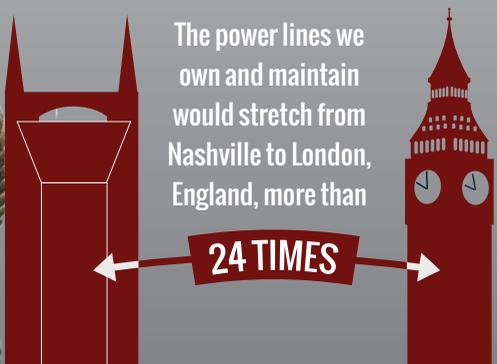


**84/95**  
TENNESSEE  
COUNTIES

## 99.96% RELIABILITY

The power lines we own and maintain would stretch from Nashville to London, England, more than

**24 TIMES**



# CO-OP CAREERS AND PRINCIPLES

## CO-OP CAREERS

Electric co-ops provide career opportunities that are close to home but far from ordinary. If you are looking for an opportunity to provide for your family and serve your community, consider a co-op career.



### ELECTRIC LINEWORKER

These professionals keep the power on. They not only construct, replace and maintain the electric lines – they get the power back on when storms or other disasters strike.



### ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

Engineers are detail-oriented problem solvers. Using state-of-the-art equipment, they design, plan and monitor the transmission, distribution and service lines.



### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT pros ensure that technology functions efficiently. They develop programs, evaluate hardware and software needs, manage cybersecurity and maintain communications systems.

## THE SEVEN COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

### VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Co-ops are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership.

### DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL

Co-ops are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

### MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Members contribute equitably to the capital of their co-op. Members allocate surpluses to further develop the cooperative or support other activities approved by members.



## FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING

Finance professionals ensure co-ops can build and maintain infrastructure to keep the lights on. Duties include risk management, forecasting and overall financial management.



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

The co-op's storytellers, marketing and communications professionals tackle a variety of responsibilities, including reputation management, social media and media relations.



## HUMAN RESOURCES

HR pros help engage with co-op employees and manage multiple responsibilities, including payroll, benefits administration, recruiting, employee training and leadership.



## MEMBER SERVICE

Member service reps are the voice of the co-op and the initial point of contact for our consumers. They answer phones, assist new members, solve problems and collect payments.

## AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

Co-ops are autonomous organizations controlled by their members.

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Co-ops provide education and training for their members, elected officials and employees on the nature and benefits of cooperation.

## COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Co-ops serve their members most effectively by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

## CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.



## WASHINGTON YOUTH TOUR

**PRESENTED BY YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AND**



2964 Sidco Drive, Nashville, TN 37204

615.367.9284 | [tnelectric.org](http://tnelectric.org)