



WHITE RIVER VALLEY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

News Release

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For immediate release:

WRVEC Students Explore Leadership and Public Service Through Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

Branson, Missouri –White River Valley Electric Cooperative (WRVEC) sent three high school juniors on an all-expense-paid trip to the United States capital on June 14 – June 20 as part of Missouri's 63rd annual Missouri Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

Arianna Baker (Nixa), Molly Lehinger (Nixa), and Amaria Wells (Ozark) were chosen from a group of 13 finalists during WRVEC's annual Youth Tour banquet held on March 27 at the College of the Ozarks. The students joined 110 delegates representing electric cooperatives from across Missouri for a week of leadership development, civic engagement, and educational experiences in the nation's capital.



2026 WRVEC Delegates pictured left to right: Amaria Wells (Ozark), Arianna Baker (Nixa), and Molly Lehinger (Nixa).

"I thought the saying 'Youth Tour will change your life' was just an all-encompassing statement to get kids to apply," said Amaria Wells, WRVEC delegate from Ozark High School. "But I found it really did give me valuable experience and allowed me to not only learn about our nation's history, but the stories and lives of those who live in the same state as me, but who I knew nothing about."

The students also participated in Electric Youth Day, a program coordinated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association that united 2,000 Youth Tour delegates from across the United States. Students listened to influential speakers like Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist and two-time world wheelchair basketball champion, and Cooperative leaders.

Baker, Lehinger, and Wells' week included visits to the U.S. Capitol, George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, Arlington National Cemetery, the Smithsonian Institution museums and the International Spy Museum. Through these experiences, they gained a deeper understanding of the nation's history and government while building leadership skills and lasting connections with peers from across Missouri and

beyond. The three delegates also enjoyed a sightseeing and dance cruise on the Potomac River with students representing five neighboring states.

“Programs like Youth Tour are investment in the future,” said Beau Jackson, ceo of White River Valley Electric Cooperative . “By giving local students leadership opportunities through hands-on experiences, we’re helping to develop the next generation of leaders.”

Since 1958, the nation's electric cooperatives have sponsored more than 60,000 high school students on Youth Tour trips to Washington, D.C. The program is designed to inspire young leaders through hands-on experiences in government, history and community service.

WRVEC is proud to invest in the next generation of leaders through programs like Youth Tour. For more information, please go to whiteriver.org/community/youth-programs/youth-tour/.

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[White River Valley Electric Cooperative](#) is a [Touchstone Energy Cooperative](#) dedicated to ensuring our members receive safe and reliable service in their homes and businesses across five southwest Missouri counties including Ozark, Taney, Stone, Christian and Douglas.