



The Big Country EC Youth Tour delegation poses on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. From left: Devin Hughes, Mikel-Ann Terry, Jessy Villagomez and Kameryn Mathis

Youth Tour Winners Return From the Trip of a Lifetime

THEY'RE BACK! ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY TEXAS STUDENTS, including Kameryn Mathis from Haskell High School, Mikel-Ann Terry and Jessy Villagomez from Roby High School, and Devin Hughes from Stamford High School, recently returned from a fast-paced, action-packed and unforgettable 10-day trip to Washington, D.C.

The Government-in-Action Youth Tour, sponsored by Big Country Electric Cooperative, is an all-expenses-paid experience that offers young adults the opportunity to learn about their government and electric cooperatives, make friends and visit famous landmarks.

On the June trip, the Texas delegates met with their elected representatives to discuss current issues. They toured Capitol Hill and the Library of Congress. They also explored monuments and museums, including Mount Vernon, the National Cathedral, the Smithsonian Institution, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Lincoln, Jefferson and Vietnam Veterans memorials, among others. They spent time at Arlington

National Cemetery while attending a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The group enjoyed a sightseeing cruise on the Potomac River with students from other states and took in a show at the Kennedy Center.

Other events included Youth Day, coordinated by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, when all of the approximately 1,700 Youth Tour delegates from about 45 states came together for a special event with guest speakers.

Big Country EC has sponsored students on Youth Tour since 1966 as part of its mission to support the communities it serves.

Here's what this year's Youth Tour participants had to say about the experience:

Mikel-Ann Terry: *This summer, I had the opportunity to attend Youth Tour. When I won, I was so excited for the trip but was unsure if I could make it for 10 days with 150 other strangers. By the second day I knew that these strangers were quickly becoming my friends. I traveled across the United States, toured histor-*



Kameryn Mathis



Devin Hughes



Mikel-Ann Terry

ical monuments that have been around for hundreds of years, and learned more about our nation and the people within it at numerous museums. I loved every second of it—but most of all I loved the people who were becoming family. Within this short trip, my life has changed. I made relationships that will last a lifetime, and I owe it all to Youth Tour. I am so thankful for this experience and would do it all again if I had the chance.

Kameryn Mathis: *The 2018 Youth Tour was one of the best experiences I have had in my life. We had the chance to visit historical sites that many people never get the chance to witness. We even had the rare and special opportunity to visit with our congressman, Jodey Arrington. In addition, the best part of the trip to our nation's capital was the friendships that I made. I met over 100 leaders from across Texas who made the trip so memorable. I am extremely thankful for Big Country EC and all the individuals who made this trip possible for me. It was truly the trip of a lifetime.*

Devin Hughes: *The 2018 Youth Tour was an amazing experience that I will cherish forever! One of my favorite parts of the*

trip was going to Mount Vernon and being where George Washington once stood. It was also so much fun meeting people from across the United States and trading pins with everyone. Youth Tour impacted me by allowing me to learn about the history of our country and being able to see our country's government in action! Youth Tour was an incredible adventure that I hope everyone can experience!

Jessy Villagomez: *Youth Tour was definitely the trip of a lifetime, and I just want to thank Big Country Electric for giving me the opportunity to go on this trip. I was able to learn so much about our country and about how important rural towns are to co-ops. The monuments and all the sights were amazing and breathtaking! My favorite part had to be the Air and Space Museum. When we got there, I felt like a little kid jumping up and down and going crazy because I was so excited to be there! I also made some great friends who I still keep in contact with, and they're some of the best people I've ever met. This trip was the trip of a lifetime, and I highly recommend doing the contest.*

Residential Generators

WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU BUY

INSTALLATION TYPE	PRICE	OPERATION ¹	CAPACITY	LENGTH OF OPERATION ³
PERMANENT	expensive	automatic	whole house	can be indefinite
PORTABLE	more affordable	manual	typically partial ²	depends on fuel tank size



¹ Permanent generators start upon loss of grid power. They also exercise themselves automatically.

² Frequently powered: refrigerator, pumps (well, sump, septic), furnace, some lights, stove.

³ Permanent generators use propane or natural gas, portable use gasoline. Permanent models offer significantly longer operating times.

LIGHTNING: PRUDNIKOV | ISTOCK.COM. GENERATOR: SAFELECTRICITY.ORG

A Buyer's Guide to Residential Generators

LET'S FACE IT: ROUGH WEATHER HAPPENS. AT BIG COUNTRY Electric Cooperative, our goal is to restore power as quickly and safely as possible. But when a major storm hits, power may be out for a lengthy period.

Anyone who has experienced an extended power outage has likely mulled over the idea of buying a generator, but before you do—make sure you have all the facts.

The purchase and installation of a generator is an important and serious decision. Properly done, you gain peace of mind knowing your family can ride out any outage with some degree of comfort. But an incorrectly implemented generator can become deadly to you, your family, your neighbors and your electric cooperative's employees.

So, let's look at the decisions you'll need to make when it comes to purchasing a residential generator. First, do you want to back up your entire home or just portions? The biggest drawback to a permanently installed, whole-house generator is the cost. While the advantages are significant, it is a large expense.

The next decision involves sizing the generator to your particular situation. Online tools abound, so if you like to research, just type "generator sizing guide" into your browser and off you go. A nice portable generator provides at least 6,500 watts with a startup capacity of around 8,000

watts. When motors start, they draw more power than they use when running. This rush of power gets them spinning. Afterwards, their demand for electricity decreases.

The third consideration is how to integrate the generator into your home. Permanent models have dedicated switching devices that handle this chore, while portable models require you to set them up, connect them and start them up. Here is where the danger comes into play. Improperly connected generators can easily back-feed into Big Country EC's grid, potentially electrocuting unsuspecting linemen. Be sure to closely follow connection instructions and contact us if you have any questions regarding connecting your generator safely.

Use of the generator can be as simple as plugging appliances directly into it, but that can be cumbersome and limiting. Better yet, have a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrician. This device connects to the circuits you want to power. Connect your generator to the dedicated plug, follow the disconnect procedure, and fire it up. Now you've got power for your home that's safe for all.

A word about quality: With generators, you definitely get what you pay for—cheap models are just that. They may last a couple of years, but after that, parts can be impossible to get. Invest in engines with recognizable brand names. They may cost more, but peace of mind is worth it.

Knowing the Truth Can Save Your Life

ELECTRICITY IS A WONDERFUL PRODUCT THAT MOST OF US COULDN'T DREAM OF DOING without. It is the hardest-working, cleanest and safest form of energy available.

But staying safe around electricity requires knowledge—knowing when electricity is safe and when it isn't. Here's a guide.

FICTION: It is safe to work on a machine or appliance if it is turned off.

FACT: Power to the appliance should be disconnected completely—by unplugging it or turning off the circuit breaker—before any maintenance or repair is done.

FICTION: Low-voltage current, used in homes, cannot hurt me.

FACT: Low voltage can kill you. Normal household current has many times the minimum amperage necessary to halt the function of your heart and lungs.

FICTION: A power line on the ground is dead if it isn't moving, sparking or popping.

FACT: Never be fooled by appearances. Many times, wires may give every indication of being dead when the opposite is true. Do not try to move any wire using rope or wood—or anything else. Stay at least 35 feet away and notify your electric cooperative immediately.

FICTION: All power lines are insulated.

FACT: The majority of power lines are NOT insulated, and those that are insulated may have degraded due to weather and other factors. Assume that no power line is safe to go near.

FICTION: If a fuse continues to blow, maybe I just need a larger one.

FACT: If a fuse is blowing repeatedly (or a circuit breaker keeps tripping), the circuit should be checked by an electrician. Replacing a fuse with one of a higher amperage could result in a fire.

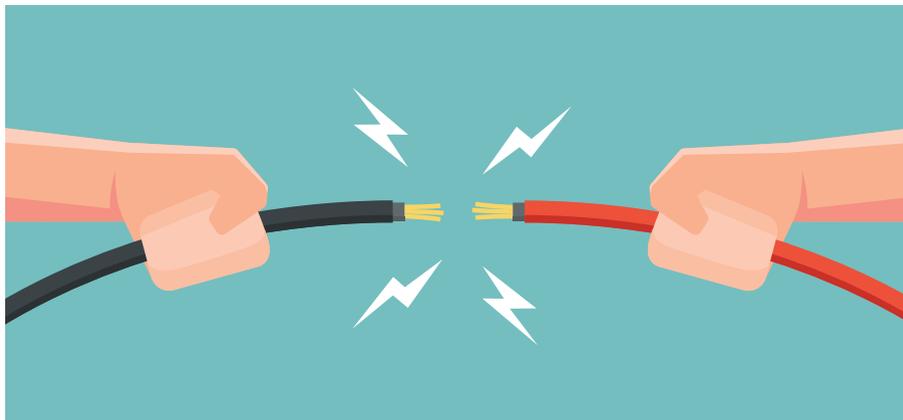
FICTION: I can work around electricity safely if I wear rubber boots.

FACT: Common rubber boots offer almost no protection at all. Most rubber boots contain lampblack, which conducts electricity.

FICTION: Wood is an insulator, and wooden ladders cannot conduct electricity.

FACT: Wood is a poor conductor, but it can conduct electricity, especially when wet or when it has metal attachments. Using a wooden ladder when working with live electrical wiring is not a guarantee of safety.

The folks at your electric cooperative know the facts—and the fiction—about electric safety and want you to know, too.



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*Operating in Borden, Fisher, Garza,
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