

Thank You, West Florida!

Celebrating our Florida Co-ops

By: Kaycie Rich and Eryn Files,
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From the 1950s, high school students from rural communities nationwide are recognized by their local co-ops to receive a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join their peers in Washington, D.C. for an all-expenses-paid week in June. The West Florida Electric Cooperative was proud to sponsor two youth this year. Kaycie Rich and Keshawn Daniels met Congressmen, toured the Pentagon and Mt. Vernon, danced on the Potomac, and much more. In honor of our cooperatives, Florida Youth Tour delegates and our 2023 YLC want to celebrate all those serving through cooperatives!

Kaycie Rich, Malone High School Class of '24

“When I first applied for Youth Tour, I had no idea what this trip would mean to me. Through this experience, I learned that it truly is okay to step out of my comfort zone to allow myself to grow as a person. I was nervous about the trip at first, but now I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to go.

We visited countless museums and memorials during



The Florida YTs and former-Senator and NASA director Bill Nelson at national headquarters (Photo credit: FL YT).



Keshawn Daniels (left) and Kaycie Rich (Right) represent West FL on Capitol Hill with the Florida Youth Tour D.C. delegates helping with a Co-ops Vote initiative (Photo credit: FL YT).

our week-long stay, and I was able to meet and create lasting friendships with many students from across Florida. The river boat cruise and professional baseball game allowed all of us to have fun and grow closer together. Everyone keeps in touch, and I feel that we will continue to encourage each other to do great things.



West FL delegates at the White House in downtown D.C. (Photo credit: FL YT).

My favorite museum from the trip was the Holocaust Museum. Seeing all the stories, artifacts, and pictures made the experience more real. Learning about this time in our history is important, and visiting the museum is truly something I will never forget.

The chaperones and even the electric cooperatives themselves put so much into Youth Tour to make it memorable for

all that attend, and I would like to encourage many more students to apply.”

Eryn Files, Florida YLC, '24

“The first day of the tour, I learned from your director about selfless efforts to manage through the pandemic, and initiatives to meet water and internet needs.

My time in Tallahassee and Washington’s capitol revealed the humanity of our small-town-to-Congress representatives and lobbyists, while highlighting immense possibilities available to me as I prepare for college. We got a government lesson from Lobbyist Mr. Michael, Cuban shuffled at the White House with the “Truth Conductor,” and proudly shouted “Florida Man, that’s my guy!” on Conference Night.

I now represent an amazing organization of selfless members across Florida, leaders in its offices, and linemen who serve come rain or shine. I could not be more grateful.”

Thank you, West Florida!

To linemen, co-op administrators, and Youth Tour team: As the Texas students said, “If you can read this, thank a teacher. If you can read this in the dark, thank your co-op.”