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From Youth Tour rep to White House intern

*By Bethanny Lawson
Youth Tour Participant*

In June 2018, my electric cooperative, EnerStar, sent me to Washington, D.C. on a week-long trip called Youth to Washington. The following summer, my brother Jerad was selected as one of EnerStar's Youth Tour reps. When I picked Jerad up on the last day of his tour, we spent the day comparing stories from our separate trips. There were both tears and laughter. The only bummer was that we didn't get to experience the city that had captured pieces of both of our hearts together.

For those of you who may not know what Youth to Washington is, it's an annual summer trip for high school students sponsored by the nation's rural electric cooperatives. Otherwise known as Youth Tour, the trip is designed to grow up-and-coming leaders and educate them on what co-ops are all about, all while getting them to every must-see spot in Washington, D.C.

Youth Tour effectively gave me the D.C. bug, and if you ask past participants about it, they will all tell you it was life changing. Many Youth Tour

participants end up back in D.C. pursuing careers, higher education or a combination of the two. I was determined not to be an exception.

Ever since my Youth Tour, I have



been digging through opportunities in D.C. The problem at the time was that Youth Tour is for high school students, but most entry-level jobs or internships in D.C. required participants to have at least two years of college under their belts. After getting turned down from every place I could think of, I started poking around on the White House's website and found out they have internship opportunities as well, and their minimum age requirement was 18.

"Wouldn't it be funny," I thought to myself, "if I got an internship at the White House after getting told no by so many other places?" So, I

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Monday through Friday
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downloaded the application forms, filled them out and turned them in.

Funny indeed.

After turning in my application, I forgot about it entirely because I had no expectation of being considered for the program. Several months later my phone rang with a D.C. number. The voice on the other end told me they were from the White House, and was now a good time for an interview?

Later, certain I had bombed the interview, I was simply elated I would now get to say I had been interviewed by the White House. My mom shook her head and said, "They'll call you again."

And they did call again, for a second interview. Then they sent me an email that said I had been accepted to the program.

The fall 2019 semester passed in a blur that felt like I always had one foot inside a dream. In some ways, D.C. was the same city I had visited on Youth Tour, and in other ways it felt like a totally different place. A few truths rang the same both times I was there, and I gained new clarity on other things.

What I saw most clearly while I was in the intern program was that people are most alive when they are living in service. That's the only way anyone in government and politics could last as long as they do. People don't work and live in D.C. because it's restful or easy, they do it because it's fulfilling. Hearts are big in D.C. It is a mistake to believe it is a city of nothing but strife and madness. I continue to hold to the belief that since we are all only human, we all have the ability to find things we agree on and love each other in spite of things we disagree on.



Since we tend to find life most fulfilling when we are living in service, I also think it's important to emphasize that everyone has the capacity to serve. There are countless opportunities to invest in this nation, and it's worth making an effort to get involved. Don't let your lack of knowledge, experience or education hold you back from throwing yourself into the things you believe in.

The fact that we live in a small, rural area does not mean we have no impact. I met more than one person from Paris while in D.C. and met countless other people who either came from similar parts of the U.S. or have close connections within areas like ours. I didn't expect to get chosen for Youth Tour and I didn't expect to get chosen for the White House internship, but I was accepted to both. I think the lesson here is to be humble but shoot your shot anyway. The worst you'll get is a dozen "no's" and those may end up pushing you to something better. I never would have ended up

at the White House if everyone else (including Olive Garden) hadn't rejected me. Don't throw in the towel too early. The best is yet to come.

It's also important to find people who believe in you, and then to never take their belief for granted. Most of us are only in the places we are today because someone chose to have faith in our abilities and worthiness, and we should represent them in gratitude. Looking back on my life, I see a long line of people who have invested in me before I deserved it, and each of their investments contributed to getting me to the White House. EnerStar was certainly a key player.

One of the highlights of my D.C. internship was when Jerad picked me up at the end and we got to tour the West Wing together. We both got our pictures taken outside the White House on our separate Youth Tours, so it felt like things were really coming full circle when we got to pose for one together inside the press briefing room. We may be just a couple kids from rural Illinois, but thanks to the investment our electric co-op made in our lives, I think it's safe to say our stories are still just getting started. Here's to a future where youth tour reps continue to cross paths in the nation's capital.

Look for your board of directors election ballot

As a member-owner, you are an important part of the decision-making and policy-setting at EnerStar Electric Cooperative. And that means you have the right to vote annually for your board of directors. Directors are co-op members willing to give of their time to decide on the direction of co-op.

Your EnerStar board of directors' election ballot will arrive in your mailbox soon. We are returning to an envelope ballot and will no longer be using the booklet used the last couple of years.

While the format will be similar to the one used previously, EnerStar Electric Cooperative has partnered with Survey & Ballot Systems (SBS) to administer the 2020 election.

You have two ways to vote your ballot:

- You can mail in the ballot in the return envelope to the address provided. Ballots must be returned by March 26, 2020. Please allow sufficient time for delivery.
- You can vote the day of the annual meeting.

Rate increase in April, first in seven years

Effective with the April billing statements, EnerStar Electric Cooperative will implement a small increase in its electric rates. The average EnerStar residential member uses about 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity per month, and these members will see a 3 percent increase in their bill.

The rate increase will be in the form of an additional \$5 to the "Grid Access Fee," formerly listed on the billing statement as the "Facility Charge." This charge is common among electric utilities and it helps utilities recover the fixed costs of the substations, equipment, poles, wire, transformers and right-of-way maintenance necessary to get power to members' accounts. Small commercial accounts will also see the increase.

"It's always difficult to announce a rate increase," said EnerStar CEO Mike Clark. "But after a recent cost

of service study, conducted by an outside firm, and careful review of the 10-year financial forecast, a slight increase is necessary for the co-op's long-term financial stability." Clark explained that for the last decade, as the co-op's expenses have increased considerably, prudent business practices have allowed the co-op to hold off on any rate increases, even while significant investments have been made to improve system reliability.

Clark stated the co-op's rates have been very stable over the last fifteen years, with only two rate increases during that time period. The co-op is pursuing a plan to continue this trend.

At last year's annual meeting, Clark explained the challenges that EnerStar faces, not unlike many small, rural electric co-ops. EnerStar is the third most rural electric cooperative in Illinois with just 3.51

members per mile of line, well below the statewide 4.39 average for coops. To give a point of reference, municipal utilities have about 50 consumers per mile of line and investor-owned utilities have about 35.

Clark praised EnerStar's dedicated and capable team of employees that continually focus on improving operations and finding efficiencies to be good stewards of the members' investment in the co-op, and those efforts have been a big reason rates have remained stable for many years.

"As a member-owned, not for profit cooperative, EnerStar puts our members first," Clark said. "In everything we do, our central focus is on our membership. It is one of seven co-op principles that guide us."



Annual Meeting is March 28

Mark your calendar for our Annual Meeting of Members on Saturday, March 28. As is tradition, a complimentary member breakfast will be served from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. The business meeting will begin at 9:30.

Members in attendance at the close of the meeting will receive a token of appreciation and be eligible to win a great variety of prizes!

The meeting will be held at the Crestwood School in Paris. The facility is located at 15601 US Highway 150 in Paris.

Members in attendance will be able to visit with other member-owners, the board of directors and cooperative management. The cooperative leaders will report on co-op business.



POWER MOVES[®]

2020 RESIDENTIAL REBATE PROGRAM

Geothermal Heat Pump (with Electric Backup)

- ▶ Water-to-air closed loop ≥ 17.1 EER / ≥ 3.6 COP
- ▶ Water-to-air open loop ≥ 21.1 EER / ≥ 4.1 COP
- ▶ Water-to-water closed loop ≥ 16.1 EER / ≥ 3.1 COP
- ▶ Water-to-water open loop ≥ 20.1 EER / ≥ 3.5 COP
- ▶ Condenser and coil must be replaced and installed as a matched set

CLOSED LOOP, REPLACING: <i>electric resistance, fossil fuel, or into new construction</i>	\$1,500
OPEN LOOP, REPLACING: <i>electric resistance, fossil fuel, or into new construction</i>	\$1,500

Air Source Heat Pump - Split System (with Electric Backup) (Ducted)

- ▶ ≥ 16 SEER
- ▶ ≥ 9.0 HSPF
- ▶ Electric back up only
- ▶ Condenser and coil must be replaced and installed as a matched set
- ▶ New system must heat and cool entire home

REPLACING ELECTRIC RESISTANCE: <i>electric furnace, ceiling cable, baseboard</i>	\$750
REPLACING FOSSIL FUEL: <i>propane or fuel oil</i>	\$750
REPLACING EXISTING AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP	\$250

Ductless Air Source Heat Pump (with Electric Backup) (Mini Split)

- ▶ ≥ 17 SEER
- ▶ ≥ 9.0 HSPF
- ▶ Electric backup only
- ▶ Condenser and coil must be replaced and installed as a matched set

REPLACING ELECTRIC RESISTANCE: <i>electric furnace, ceiling cable, baseboard</i>	\$300
REPLACING FOSSIL FUEL: <i>propane or fuel oil</i>	\$300
REPLACING EXISTING AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP	\$300

Natural Gas, Propane, and Fuel Oil with Heat Pump - Split System (Ducted)

- ▶ ≥ 16 SEER
- ▶ ≥ 9.0 HSPF
- ▶ ≥ 90 AFUE
- ▶ Condenser and coil must be replaced and installed as a matched set
- ▶ New system must heat and cool entire home

REPLACING ELECTRIC RESISTANCE: <i>electric furnace, ceiling cable, baseboard</i>	\$500
REPLACING FOSSIL FUEL AND CENTRAL AIR CONDITIONING	\$500

Heat Pump Water Heater

- ▶ Minimum UEF of 2.0.

REPLACING ELECTRIC RESISTANCE TANK	\$400
NEW CONSTRUCTION	\$400

Variable Speed Pool Pump

- ▶ ENERGY STAR[®]

REPLACING EXISTING SINGLE STAGE POOL PUMP	\$250
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PURCHASE RECEIPTS REQUIRED FOR ALL REBATE APPLICATIONS.

AHRI Certificates required for all geothermal, air source heat pump, and heat pump water heater rebate applications.

Heat loss/heat gain calculations required for geothermal and air source heat pumps.

Failure to provide requested information may result in forfeiture of rebate.

All installations are subject to verification and/or inspection.

For full requirements, see applications.

REBATE PROGRAM ENDS DEC. 31, 2020 AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

We also offer business rebates for upgrades and new construction. Visit PowerMoves.com or call your local electric cooperative's Energy Advisor for more information.