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During the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) Annual Meeting, held July 31-Aug. 1, three elected officials were named recipients of Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award, which recognizes dedicated public service to Illinois citizens and outstanding contributions to the rural electrification program. One of the year's recipients is State Representative Adam Niemerg, who represents member-owners of EnerStar Electric Cooperative.

"Representative Niemerg is a strong advocate and voice on the issues impacting downstate and rural Illinois," said EnerStar's Angela Griffin. "As a member of the House Energy and Environment Committee, he is always eager to hear our thoughts on energy legislation being debated and how it would impact the industry and the electric cooperatives in his district." Griffin added that he never misses a chance to visit and interact with our local students representing the co-ops at the annual Youth Day in Springfield.

Niemerg is a Republican who represents the 102nd House District,



State Rep. Adam Niemerg receives the Illinois Electric Cooperatives' Public Service Award during the AIEC Annual Meeting, held July 31-Aug. 1, for his advocacy on rural energy issues and support of EnerStar Electric Cooperative members. Left to right are EnerStar Board Member Dan Gard (West Union), EnerStar CEO Angela Griffin, EnerStar Board Member Jeff Zimmerman (Oakland), EnerStar Board Member Julie Higginbotham (Martinsville), Niemerg, and EnerStar Board Member Kevin Julian (Metcalfe).

which includes the service territories of EnerStar Electric Cooperative, Coles-Moultrie Electric Cooperative, Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative and Norris Electric Cooperative. Besides serving on the Energy and Environment Committee, he also serves on the Appropriations General Service, Education Policy, Insurance, Gun Violence Prevention, Restorative Justice and Public Safety committees. He is the Republican Spokesperson on the Immigration and Human Rights committee.

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Youth Tour opens minds and builds leaders

Local student represents EnerStar Electric in D.C.

Every June, a select group of high school students from across Illinois leave their rural communities to spend a week taking in the historic sights and bustling energy of the nation's capital.

This year, 48 students sponsored by 25 Illinois electric and telephone cooperatives took part in the 2025 Youth Tour to visit Washington, D.C., June 16 to 23, for an immersive week-long experience designed to educate and inspire the next generation of cooperative and civic leaders.

EnerStar Electric Cooperative sponsors students within its service territory to go on this trip every year. Anna Sullivan represented the co-op and joined more than 2,000 students from 44 states for the annual event.

"This trip is so much more than sightseeing," said Angela Griffin, EnerStar's CEO. "It's about building relationships, learning leadership and showing that they have the power to shape their communities and futures."

Learning by doing

Central to the Youth Tour experience is the formation of a mock student-run cooperative called Chip 'n' Pop Co-op. Students began their journey at the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) headquartered in Springfield, where the students selected a co-op board. The board later interviewed and selected a co-op manager.

Throughout the week, the co-op handled snack sales, decision-making and budgeting – giving participants a hands-on look at how cooperatives operate.

"Being part of a co-op helps students understand what makes a

co-op different," said Griffin. "It's all about working together and making decisions that serve everyone – not just one person or company."

A full week of history

Over the course of the week, students visited historic landmarks including Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery and, for the first time in many years, had the opportunity to tour the White House, where the students caught a glimpse of President Donald Trump. They also toured the U.S. Capitol, strolled the National Mall, stood at the steps of the Supreme Court and explored the Smithsonian museums.

Midweek, students took part in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Day, where they joined hundreds of other teens from across the country to hear from national leaders and learn how to use their voices back home.



From sobering visits to the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the 9/11 Pentagon Memorial to moments of laughter at the Museum of Illusions and team-building at Beat the Bomb, the Youth Tour experience was unforgettable.

"Whether or not these students go into politics or work for their local co-op, one thing is certain – their time on the Youth Tour gave them tools, friendships and insights that will serve them for years to come," Griffin said.

A trip that lasts a lifetime

More information and applications for the 2026 Youth Tour will be available at www.enerstar.com. In the meantime, to learn more about Youth Tour, go to youthtour.coop or facebook.com/ILYouthTour.



BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT ENERGY EFFICIENCY

There is a lot of great advice on how to be more energy efficient – using ENERGY STAR®-rated devices, for example. But then there's the not-so-great advice: misinformation, mistakes and myths that could lead you astray in your efforts to save on your electric bill.

But fear not! Here are a few common myths we encounter – and the truth to bust them.

MYTH: SWITCHING APPLIANCES, COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONICS OFF WHEN YOU'RE NOT USING THEM WILL WEAR THEM OUT FASTER.

TRUTH: Nope! Modern electronics and appliances are built to perform just as well with frequent shutoffs. In fact, most computers are actually built with this in mind, and use the on-off cycle as an opportunity to install updates and perform other necessary self-maintenance. So go ahead – shut off and save power.

MYTH: YOUR HVAC SYSTEM USES LESS ENERGY IF YOU CLOSE VENTS IN YOUR UNUSED ROOMS.

TRUTH: This one seems counter-intuitive, but unless those unused rooms are somehow sealed up airtight, the air is still going to circulate. In fact, closing vents can even make your HVAC system work harder than normal by causing a backup in internal pressure. You'd be better served by adjusting your thermostat or switching to a more efficient system. Sealing your ductwork, air-sealing your ceiling and band joists, and adding insulation also will ensure that your home

minimizes energy use and helps keep you comfortable.

MYTH: ADDING INSULATION IN THE ATTIC WILL CAUSE MORE HEAT TO LEAK OUT THE WINDOWS.

TRUTH: Any added insulation will help your home maintain a stable temperature. Adding insulation to your attic (and more importantly, sealing your ceiling) is a great way to help make your home more energy efficient.

MYTH: NEW HOMES ARE REQUIRED TO BE MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT.

TRUTH: Not necessarily! A home's age doesn't always tell you whether or not it's energy efficient. A home's energy efficiency depends much more on the way the house was constructed.

If you'd like to learn more truths about energy efficiency, visit
WWW.POWERMOVES.COM.

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"This is amazing, and I'm so grateful for the recognition," Niemerg said. "I want to thank everybody who is part of a co-op. You do an outstanding job. You keep me informed on the issues, and when there's an issue,

you guys are on top of it. You're here for your communities. You're invested in your communities. So, thank you very much. It is an honor."

Selecting a tree? Know its mature height before deciding where to plant

If you are considering planting a tree, carefully select its location before you begin digging. Also, call 811 before you break ground to get underground utilities marked. If trees are planted in the wrong location, they can be expensive to maintain and even dangerous. EnerStar and Safe Electricity offer tips on how to pick an optimal location.

A mature height of fewer than 15 feet is recommended if planting near lines. Some trees that are generally not tall enough to interfere with lines include crabapple, honeysuckle, juniper, flowering dogwood and hawthorn.

Trees should never be planted directly under power lines, near poles or too close to electrical equipment.

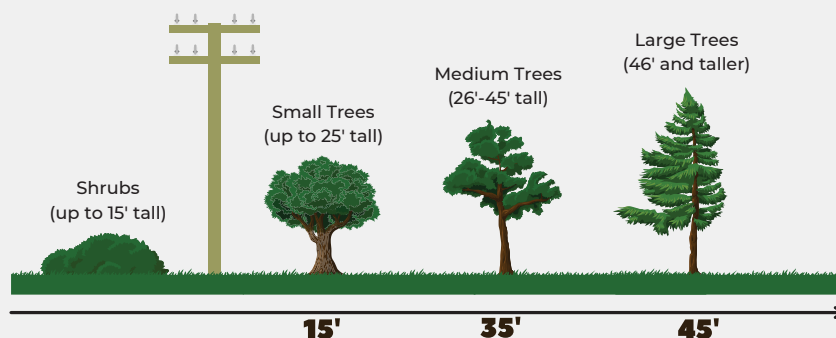
Once you have a tree selected, call 811 before putting a shovel to the ground. The "Call Before You Dig" number is a free service that locates and marks public underground utilities in your yard or on your land. Call several business days before you plan to dig. Locators will mark public underground utilities such as electric, gas, water, cable and fiber. The service does not mark privately owned lines or pipes.

Other tree tips

- If your established trees are growing into power lines, contact us to ask about them.

Plant the RIGHT TREE in the RIGHT PLACE

The larger the tree, the farther it should be from a power line. Avoid planting beneath power lines, near poles or close to electrical equipment.



Remember, know what's below by calling 8-1-1 before you dig.

Learn more at: [Safe Electricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org)

In some cases (depending on the tree's location), we will come out and trim the tree. If it is your responsibility, do not take on the task yourself. Only tree trimmers who are line-clearance-certified should prune and trim trees within 10 feet of power lines.

- It is important to have trees trimmed. Limbs can fall on power lines during bad weather, resulting in power outages or blinking lights. Broken or drooping limbs could also cause a fire.
- Tall-growing trees with a mature height greater than 45 feet should be planted at

least 45 feet away from lines to avoid future pruning. Some of these trees include oak, white and blue spruce, and most pines and maples.

- Be sure no one climbs a tree near power lines. If branches are touching the wires, the tree could be energized. Even branches that do not touch power lines could become energized if a child's weight is added. In addition, a child could climb high into the tree and be able to reach the line.

For more information about electrical safety, visit [safeelectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org).