

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Experiencing History First Hand

By Katelynn Sutton

I enjoyed learning about the history of our country through my high school history classes, but while I could repeat the significant dates and happenings, history really came alive for me while visiting Washington, D.C., this June. Visiting the various monuments and really seeing those spots from my history class gave me a new understanding of the reality of the events and people who shaped our country and ideals.



Katelynn Sutton

Arlington National Cemetery the noise of D.C. started to fade away and it was silent. The only noise that broke the silence was the sound of gun shots. There was one volley, next the second

volley, and then the finality of the third volley rang through the air. Once that third shot rang out through the air I felt my chest tighten and a sense of sadness washed over me. I instantly became thankful and sent my silent condolences to the family members of that individual. In the time that we walked through the fields of white grave markers, I heard three more of the 21 gun salutes to honor those that have passed.

That place goes on for miles and miles. Everywhere you look you can see those chained sections of white markers. My group and I kept walking farther and farther in until we saw the eternal flame. Standing on top of that small hill, I gazed out into the hot sun and I saw the people visiting their lost loved ones.

The next solemn place we ventured to was the Tomb of the Unknown. We watched as the three soldiers switched duties. Then one soldier was left to march back and forth in front of the marble tomb. As I stood there, I realized that a crowd was beginning to form. As I watched from

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Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown.

Youth Tour Reflections

By Mariah Mosher

My gut twisted as I walked toward orientation. Inside awaited 25 kids I had never before met, and four chaperones I knew nearly nothing about. I could hardly believe I was about



Mariah Mosher

to spend an entire week with these people all the way across the country in our nation's capital. What was I thinking when I applied for this trip? I must be insane.

When I entered the orientation room with my parents I was immediately ushered to the front of the room and a chair with my name on it — literally. Great, now I didn't even have my parents. I awkwardly looked at the papers in front of me as I waited for them to begin. "Oh man, oh man, oh man," I thought, "What have I gotten myself

into?"

I was about to curl up into a ball and hide beneath the table when a girl tapped me on the shoulder. "Mariah right? Hi, I'm Lindsey. I think we're going to be roommates."

She stuck her hand out at me. Looking a bit daft, I'm sure, I just stared at her before my mind registered she was talking to me. Shaking her hand I managed to stammer out, "Oh cool, yeah," before she went to sit down in her seat and orientation started.

Because of her, I managed to break out of my shell and get to know a couple other kids that night and one of my chaperones, leaving me more at ease the next morning when my parents dropped me off at the Great Falls airport at 4. Outside it was raining cats and dogs as we checked our baggage and slid through security, I had a feeling our 6 o'clock flight to Minneapolis was going to be delayed a bit before our chaperones said anything. What I didn't know was how great of a bonding experience six hours together in an airport can be when you're surrounded with strangers your own age. Card games broke out and breakfast was served as we sat in circles on our gate's floor.

Ten o'clock came and we loaded the plane. I was fortunate enough to get to sit by a lovely older gentleman from Georgia who had

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L to R: Mariah Mosher, Vigilante Electric; Lindsey Riley, Tongue River Electric and Karra Lohr, Marias River Electric.

Looking at Community Solar

If you were asked to name the fastest growing segment of solar energy development in the United States, would you know the answer is community solar? In fact, in the past year, three electric cooperatives in Montana have installed community solar arrays. Now, Vigilante Electric Cooperative's (VEC) Board of Trustees has decided to explore community solar, starting with a survey to gauge the interest of our membership.

Community solar is a simple concept. Sometimes referred to as a solar garden, community solar refers to a type of solar project built to allow people to own a stake or subscribe to its energy output, and see their purchases reflected on their utility bills.

There are many benefits to community solar when compared to home-based solar. A study conducted by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in 2008 found that only 22 percent – 27 percent of the residential rooftops in the United States were suitable for hosting on-site rooftop photovoltaic (solar) systems. The reasons cited were the need to add structural support to existing roofs; shading from adjacent buildings, trees, and/or mountains, and ownership issues.

Community solar projects are designed to increase access to solar energy while reducing the up-front costs for participants. In addition, large tracts of land allow for optimal siting and increase economies of scale.

Community solar projects also can be used to educate the public on solar energy.



Aerial photo of Ravalli County Electric Cooperative's community solar project called Solar Valley. Courtesy of Ravalli County Electric Cooperative

It makes sense for an organization such as ours to be involved in a project of this nature. While almost all of the energy we purchase from the Bonneville Power Administration comes from renewable sources, we understand why people are seeking alternatives to conventional energy sources, and we support the cost-effective expansion of these options. Plus, VEC has the legal, financial and program management infrastructure to handle

organizing and implementing a community solar project.

If VEC were to sponsor such a project, members could participate by purchasing solar panels. Purchases would be made upfront. In return, members would receive a credit on their monthly electric bill for the portion of electricity generated by their panels. The number of panels each member could purchase would be determined later. Our goal is to have all panels in the array

sold to members prior to construction — no part of this project will be subsidized by non-participating members.

An average residential account uses 1,320 kilowatt-hours (kWh) a month. A typical panel would generate approximately 31 kWh a month in our service territory. An estimated cost per panel would be between \$1,000 and \$1,200, with each panel having a life expectancy of 25 years. Currently, we are working on grants that will allow us to lower the per-panel cost.

In the coming days, VEC members will receive a survey designed not only to gauge interest in community solar, but to help us identify those members who want to be part of such a project. Please take the time to complete the member survey and return it in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please contact us at (800) 221-8271 or 683-2327.

Policy Update

Policies are set by the board and management to define the operations of our organization. We continually review them to ensure that they are relevant for the times, and are in the best interest of our cooperative. At the July board meeting our trustees approved a change to Policy 412 – Disconnects/Reconnects and Associated Fees.

When you receive your bill, it is due by the last day of the month in which it is billed. This has not changed. However, starting with the

September billing, any account that has a past-due balance will be subject to disconnect. The disconnect notification (see example below) will appear below the

account summary box on the bill and will indicate the amount due and the date it is due to avoid having the service disconnected.

Disconnect Notice

Past Due Balance of \$150 is due by 05/26/2016 to avoid disconnection of service. Additional fees and charges will apply if disconnected.

History

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under the magnolia tree I observed the exchange of wreaths. They took the old wreath and laid it in front of the tomb, facing away from the crowd. With great reverence the new wreath was placed.

The multitude of people soon dispersed back into the rows of white markers. As I stood there I watched as a group of blue-shirted people in wheelchairs rolled up on the far side of the tomb. By the way these individuals handled themselves I could clearly see that they were

veterans. As we watched the changing of the Guard for the final time, I watched amazed at those veterans in blue shirts. They were so proud to have served the United States. When the ceremony had reached its end, I watched a single tear fall down the weathered face of one veteran. As we left Arlington, I kept thinking about how thankful I was for the people who have served our nation and with a renewed sense of pride for our country.

I would like to thank the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association for giving me the opportunity to



Arlington National Cemetery

understand in person the great country we live in and the people who sacrificed their lives so we could continue to live free. Visiting Arlington National Cemetery

will forever leave a lasting impression on me and the amazing group of young adults I had the pleasure of traveling with.

Reflections

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brought his grandson and a couple of his friends for a backpacking trip through Glacier National Park.

During our couple of hours together he gave me one of the best pep talks of my life, imparting years of wisdom on me. I almost didn't want to leave the plane when we landed, but I did because we had a plane to catch. Unfortunately, due to the delay we missed our previously scheduled flight out of Minneapolis to D.C. The airline was nice enough to schedule a whole new flight just for us, landing us in our own "private jet" in D.C.

Our day was not over yet

though. We were quickly bused to our hotel to drop off our luggage before going to our first memorial. The Pentagon Memorial was amazing! Rows of benches hovered over pools of lit water, each bench representing one of the people who lost their lives on 9/11 protecting the Pentagon. It was a fantastic place to start the journey of a lifetime.

The next day started with pictures in front of the White House, then a trip to the National Museum of News, otherwise known as the Newseum. The Newseum was spectacular, and I could have spent the entire week in that one building but new adventures awaited me at the Smithsonian. My friends and

I chose to visit the National Museum of Natural History, where we saw the Hope Diamond that's as big as a man's fist, and the Museum of American History where we stopped for dinner and ice cream in the food court. Our afternoon brought us to an inspiring walk around the Jefferson, FDR, and Martin Luther King Jr. memorials. Completely in awe we returned to our hotel around 10 p.m.

On Monday we started off listening to some motivational speeches during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association National Youth Day Program. More than 15 other states joined us as we listened to these amazing speakers. After that we drove to Mount Vernon, the place where George Washington lived and died. In small groups we toured around the beautiful estate before walking through his home and taking some more pictures. That night for dinner we went to Old Alexandria and ate at the Fish Market. After dinner, we joined some kids from Georgia for a sunset cruise down the Potomac River, and a fun-filled dance below deck.

I could write a whole novel on this amazing experience, but due to space I'll just mention some of the other

things I did. Tuesday we were off to Baltimore to eat at Hard Rock Café and walk through the National Aquarium. After that I watched my very first Major League Baseball game, Nationals vs. Chicago Cubs. In case you were wondering, the Cubs won by one run. I also visited Arlington National Cemetery and our country's Capitol building, where I witnessed the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia leave out the back way as I was taking a selfie with Senator Steve Daines. Representative Ryan Zinke also met with us and gave us an exclusive view off the Capitol's balcony.

In my hotel I even once rode the elevator with one of the kings of an African country who was staying there for a meeting with Africa's other royalty. How surreal that was. The week ended with a fantastic dance across the street from our hotel, topping off a magical week in the best way possible.

Washington, D.C., was one of the most incredible experiences of my life, and I'm sure I'll never forget my time spent there with all of the amazing students and leaders I was privileged to spend it with. Thank you Vigilante Electric for sponsoring my trip there, it was amazing.



L to R: Karra Lohr, Marias River Electric; Emma Pyette, Glacier Electric; Katery Sutton, Vigilante Electric and Azurdee Aimsback, Glacier Electric.

Cooperative Principle #7 — Concern for Community

Wisdom American Legion Memorial Park

By Jim Keef, Commander
American Legion Post No. 20

Several years ago, due to a dwindling membership, the Wisdom American Legion Post No. 90 officially became part of American Legion Post No. 20 at Dillon. With this unification, the American Legion Memorial Park at Wisdom became the responsibility of Post No. 20. Since assuming this responsibility, many improvements have been implemented to make the park more user friendly for sportsmen, cyclists, travelers and campers looking for a place to relax, have a picnic or spend the night.

These improvements were possible due to the hard work of the civic-minded people at Wisdom, Jackson and Dillon, who joined forces with Legion members to do the hard work required to accomplish these many tasks. Renovations at the park included installing toilets, improving the screened shelter, installing new picnic tables, rebuilding part of the fence and painting. Electricity has been installed that will, among other things, make possible cellphone connectivity.

None of this could have happened without the donations of equipment and materials by the generous people of the Big Hole Valley and Dillon area; especially, L&S Ready Mix Concrete, and Dick and John Jackson. These civic-minded citizens have worked with Legionnaires every step of the way. Their hard work and generosity are deeply appreciated by the American Legion and everyone using Memorial Park.

Just recently, several outside groups stepped forward



Assisting the local American Legion post with setting of new flag pole are Vigilante Electric Cooperative employees Morgan Noel and Brady Birkenbuel.

to assist with the upgrades. On July 1-2, a new flagpole was installed in the Park, made possible by Vigilante Electric Cooperative in Dillon. It provided the use of its pole-setting truck and crew to install a 30-foot steel flagpole under the direction of Dhane Construction of Helena, with the assistance of Legionnaires and the people

of Wisdom.

On July 2, the “Stars and Stripes” was raised and flown from the new flagpole. The flag was donated to the Legion by Darlene and Larry Christiansen. It was the memorial flag from Darlene’s brother, Lt. Ron Moe, U.S. Army, who was killed on November 26, 1968, in South Vietnam. A large group at the

Park participated in the dedication of the flagpole.

When you visit the beautiful Big Hole Valley with verdant fields set against the backdrop of the Pioneers and snowcapped Bitterroot Mountains, stop at the American Legion Memorial Park on the west edge of Wisdom to rest a while, partake in your favorite recreation, and visit with the good people of Wisdom and Jackson. They are patriotic, hospitable, hard-working people, always ready to roll up their sleeves to make good things happen.

When people work together, it’s amazing what can be accomplished. Thank you to the Legionnaires, the good people of Wisdom, Jackson and Dillon, and Vigilante Electric Cooperative for making the valley even more hospitable to our fellow travelers.

Capital Credits

Vigilante Electric Cooperative is currently trying to locate the following individuals for payment of Capital Credits. If you have any information regarding names on this list please contact us.

Dixon, Kelly c/o Ileta Dixon Rexburg, ID	Ferguson, Scott Great Falls, MT	Fluckiger, Chris Townsend, MT
Dundas, Jared / Cathy Toston, MT	Ferrer, Shane Whitehall, MT	Ford, David / Darrell Henderson, NV
Ellis, Tricia Silver Star, MT	Ferrin, Bard / Maryann Salt Lake City, UT	Fornof, Richard Rathdrum, ID
Etapa, Kelly Ringle, WI	Fetty, Tamara Helena, MT	Fortier, Tyler Fort Leavenworth, KS
Eustice, Donald J Dillon, MT	Finley, John Helena, MT	Foss, Ben Columbia Falls, MT
Fabich, Jeremy Helena, MT	Fischer, Jason Dillon, MT	Foster, Daniel / Debbie Missoula, MT
Ferguson, Anna Colorado Springs, CO	Floquet, Georgette Batontown, NJ	

*CAPITAL CREDITS
Continued next month*