



VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

An Adventure Awaits — 2020 Youth Tour to D.C.

By Rod Siring, Member Services

At Vigilante Electric Cooperative, we believe that our engagement with youth should provide an educational experience. Giving safety demonstrations, providing educational material to schools, and awarding scholarships to high school seniors are some of the ways we use education to help shape lives. Nowhere is this more evident than in our support of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour to Washington, D.C.

The history of the NRECA Youth Tour is a fascinating story. The youth tour was inspired by then-Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson when he addressed the NRECA annual meeting in Chicago in 1957. The senator and future president declared, “If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital, where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.”

Consequently, some Texas electric cooperatives sent groups of young people to Washington, D.C., to work during the summer in Senator Johnson’s office. In 1958, a rural electric cooperative in Iowa sponsored the first group of 34 young people on a week-long study tour of our nation’s capital. Later that same year, another busload came to Washington, D.C., from Illinois. The idea grew and other states sent busloads of young people throughout the summer. By 1959, the “Youth Tour” had grown to 130 students.

In 1964, NRECA began to coordinate joint activities

among the state delegations, and suggested that co-op representatives from each state arrange to be in Washington, D.C., during Youth Tour week. The first year of the coordinated tour included approximately 400 young people from 12 states. Word of the program has continued to spread, and today more than 1,500 students and over 250 chaperones participate in the Youth Tour every year.

Nearly 50,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this program. Some of the Youth Tour alumni have gone on to design airplanes, lead companies, and serve in the highest ranks of our government, including the U.S. Senate.

Vigilante Electric’s history with the Youth Tour is also a great story. As of 2002, Vigilante Electric did not participate in the Youth Tour. An enterprising student from our service territory took it upon herself to submit an essay directly to our statewide association, the Montana Electric Cooperatives’ Association (MECA). Her essay took second place, and she received an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the Montana delegation.

After returning from Washington, D.C., we invited her to do a presentation for our board of trustees. Her presentation was wonderful, and our board was so impressed that we have been sponsoring participants ever since.

I have been fortunate to have gone as a chaperone on this tour twice, including this last summer. This adventure opens the door to a world of opportunities. During this week-long

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Youth Tour to D.C.

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event, participants get to experience the history enshrined in and around Washington, D.C. They visit with their state's congressional delegation, and participate in youth rallies and socials.

This past summer, we were represented by two outstanding young women, Sarah Welborn and Cassidy Broere. As part of their participation in the Youth Tour, they were required to submit stories about their experiences, which were featured in the August edition of this publication. Their impressions of the Youth Tour echo those of the majority of past participants. Below are some excerpts from their stories:

"I not only enjoyed the Washington, D.C., experience, but I learned so much about our country's history, how cooperatives work, and how important they are in our lives. I encourage kids from rural communities to participate in this program. This trip allows you the opportunity to meet new people, see our history first hand, and create life-long memories and friends." — Sarah Welborn

"Visiting our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is a once-in-a-lifetime experience... My trip to Washington, D.C. gave me an experience that was outstanding." — Cassidy Broere

The Youth Tour dates for 2020 have been set for June 19th - 26th. To be eligible, the student's parent or guardian must be a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative. The student must currently be a sophomore or junior in high school, and cannot have been a prior winner.

Participants are selected based on an application and essay. This year's essay topic is **"How can electricity be used to save and improve lives, especially in developing nations?"** Youth Tour packets are available at area high schools or online at vec.coop. Applications are due to Vigilante Electric by November 29, 2019.



Kassidy Broere and Sarah Welborn

Co-op Connections

Prescription Savings

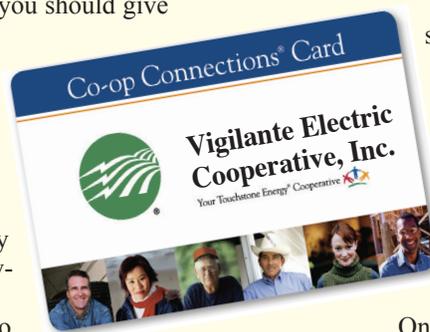
As a member of Vigilante Electric Cooperative, you have access to a broad array of product and service discounts through Touchstone Energy's Co-op Connections program. The flagship of these offerings is the prescription savings program. If you are a member and do not have some form of prescription drug coverage, you should give this serious consideration.

Using the Co-op Connections Card, members have access to prescription drug discounts at more than 60,000 participating pharmacies nationwide, and potential discounts ranging from 10 percent to 85 percent. To date, Vigilante Electric members have saved approximately \$25,000 on prescriptions, with average savings of 43 percent.

To locate a participating pharmacy, go to Connections.coop. After creating an account, go to the "Healthy Savings" screen, then click on "Locate Provider". In the drop-down window under benefit type select "pharmacy," then input your zip code. This should provide a list of pharmacies within your search radius. If

you don't see one, increase the search distance.

If you are not Internet savvy you can call 800-800-7616, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. MST, and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. Representatives from the program administrator, New Benefits, are available to help. At some point you may need to provide your member number; it is on the back of the Co-op Connections Card. If you do not have a card you can print one from the website, or you can contact our office.



You can also get price quotes on this site. On the "Healthy Savings" page go to the link "Rx Price Comparison." Type in the name of a drug you are taking, input your zip code, indicate your search radius and answer a few questions regarding the prescription. This should provide a list of the pharmacies within your search radius and an estimated prescription cost.

One thing to remember is this is NOT insurance and is not intended to be used as a substitute or in conjunction with insurance. Prescription savings benefits are negotiated discounts. If you have questions regarding this or any of the Co-op Connections program offerings, call us or check it out online at www.connections.coop.

Paying Your Winter Heating Bill

Are you ready for winter? The prospect of a long, cold winter is something few, if any, people look forward to. It impacts not only our comfort levels but can seriously impact our budgets. For low-income families, winter utilities can be an overwhelming burden. For this reason, there are organizations that can help.

Since 1998, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has helped qualified members receive credit on their accounts to aid in winter heating. Applications are available October 1st by contacting our Dillon office, and must be returned by November 22.

It should be noted that the funding levels for our program are very limited. We strongly recommend that families in need apply for the programs offered by the state of Montana through the Department of Public Health and Human Services. They offer two programs aimed at helping low-income individuals reduce their heating costs.

The **Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)** pays part of winter energy bills for eligible people. Plus, the **Weatherization Program** helps participants improve the heating efficiency of their homes, thus reducing long-term energy consumption and costs.

The LIEAP guidelines and contact information is presented below. The application period is October 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020. Eligibility is based on family size and total household income. If you think you qualify, call for an application. Each office serves specific counties, so contact the office nearest you. Please note that if you qualify for LIEAP, you qualify for the Weatherization Program.

Family Size	Income Limits	Family Size	Income Limits
1	\$25,248	7	\$65,548
2	\$33,017	8	\$67,005
3	\$40,785	9	\$71,775
4	\$48,554	10	\$78,405
5	\$56,323	11	\$85,035
6	\$64,091	12	\$91,665

Action Inc.
Butte
(800) 382-1325
(406) 496-4975

Rocky Mountain Development Council
LIEAP Office - Helena
(800) 356-6544
(406) 447-1625

District IX HRDC
Bozeman
(800) 332-2796
(406) 587-4486

Another source of help is Energy Share of Montana — a private nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to help Montanans faced with energy emergencies meet their needs and move toward self-reliance. Requests for this assistance can also be made through the state offices above.

In addition to what is listed here, there are charitable organizations that provide assistance. While many ask for help, we know there are people who desperately need help that do not ask. To borrow a quote “The hardest thing isn’t needing help. The hardest thing is being brave enough to ask for it.” Don’t be afraid to ask.

Programs and Services

Cooperatives are different than most organizations. We are not motivated by profit, nor do we operate to benefit shareholders. Because of this, customer service takes on a different meaning. While maintaining the lowest possible electrical rates, Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC) has programs available to educate, help reduce energy consumption and keep you safe. Below is a summary of our programs:

HOME ENERGY AUDITS AND ENERGY ADVICE — As a special service to our members, we offer free home energy audits. Upon request, a trained employee will audit your home and offer advice on ways to improve the efficiency of your energy usage.

LOW-INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE — In the fall, Vigilante Electric offers assistance to households meeting low-income guidelines. This program is designed to help qualified individuals with their electric needs. Applications are usually available between October 1 and November 15 each year.

PAYMENT OPTIONS — With SmartHub, managing your account has never been easier. Whether you are at home or on the road, SmartHub allows you to access your account(s) online on your mobile device. Through SmartHub, you can pay your bill, view your electrical usage and stay in contact with us. VEC offers a direct payment plan where payment is made automatically from your checking or savings account. You may also

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Programs and Service

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use our pay-by-phone system. Here you can pay your bill, check balances and update your account information over the phone, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

RADIO HELP — Radio Help is a community service program designed to increase public awareness that radio-equipped vehicles can provide an instant link between emergency assistance and the scene of an accident, fire or life-threatening situation.

SAFETY PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOLS AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS — We will provide electrical safety demonstrations for schools, civic organizations and emergency services personnel upon request.

SAFETY ROUNDUP — This voluntary program provides our members with a way to donate to organizations in our communities that keep us safe.

TREE TRIMMING — If you have a tree(s) growing up near or into our power lines, we will work with you to mitigate the problem.

UNDERGROUND LINE LOCATIONS — Vigilante Electric belongs to Utilities Underground Location Center,

UULC. Before starting any project that requires digging, call (800) 424-5555. This is a free service; however, *you need to make your request two full business days before you plan to dig.* Please note that Vigilante Electric only locates the wire between our distribution facilities and the service meter. Locating wire between the service meter and the member's service panel is the responsibility of the owner, and will require an electrician.

YOUTH TRAVEL AND SCHOLARSHIP

OPPORTUNITIES — Each year Vigilante Electric selects a student(s) who is in their sophomore or junior year in high school to represent us on the Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. During this week-long event, participants tour the city and many of its historical treasures, visit with their state's congressional delegation, and participate in youth rallies and socials.

We also recognize the value of a good education and the need for financial assistance. Each year Vigilante Electric offers scholarship opportunities to help qualified students with post-secondary expenses.

As you can see we provide much more to our members and our communities than just electricity. If you have a question regarding any of these programs, please contact our Dillon office at 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271.

By the Community, for the Community

October is National Co-op Month.

By Anne Prince

When you think of October, pumpkins, Halloween and beautiful fall foliage naturally come to mind. But October is notable for another reason — it's National Co-op Month! This is the time of year when cooperatives across the country, including Vigilante Electric Cooperative, celebrate who we are and, more importantly, the members we serve.

Cooperatives are different than other types of businesses. When the market declines to offer a product or service, or does so at a very high price, co-ops intervene to fill the need.

Vigilante Electric was built by members who came together to bring electricity to our communities; cooperatives are conveners for the common good. Your electric co-op exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve.

As a co-op, we are well-suited to meet the needs of the community because we are locally governed. Vigilante Electric's leadership team and employees live right in the communities we serve. Our board of trustees, which helps set long-term priorities for the co-op, live locally on co-op lines. These board members have been elected to the position by neighbors such as you.

We know our members have a valuable perspective. That's why we are continually seeking your input. Whether through community events, our social media channels or the annual meeting, we want to hear from you.

Another feature that sets our co-op apart from a traditional utility is one of our core principles, "Concern for Community." This principle is why we started our Safety



Roundup program and have built our own high voltage safety demonstration trailer. We participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, where we take our community's brightest young people to Washington, D.C., for a week-long immersion to experience democracy in action.

Ultimately, the larger community benefits from these programs because of you and your neighbors. You empower the co-op through your membership and through your participation in and support of these programs.

We hope you will think of Vigilante Electric as more than your energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports our communities and powers economic development and prosperity for the people.

We will continue to learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you — because your electric co-op was built by the community, for the community.