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Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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TO ALL WHOM HAVE SERVED

THANK YOU

IN 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11th as Veterans Day. Since then, Veterans Day has come to acknowledge veterans of all wars, and all who once served in the U.S. military. Vigilante Electric Cooperative would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to all those who have served.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars website brings great context to the significance of Veterans Day:

For the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), as well as the millions of others who have worn the cloth of our military, all veterans share a common bond. At one time in their lives, they raised their right hand and solemnly swore an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States." No matter if they served for two years or 42 years, all veterans sacrificed something to serve their country, and if called upon, to lay down their lives in defense of it. Every one of them has a story to tell. However, those who



Chase White

have served only make up roughly one percent of our nation's population, and with the end of our nation's longest war and the veteran population dwindling, it's important to remember why we have Veterans Day in the

first place. Veterans Day is an opportunity to publicly commemorate the contributions of living veterans, and to show appreciation toward them.

Over the years, several individuals associated with Vigilante Electric have served in our country's armed forces. We have had trustees, staff members and linemen who have served, including current Townsend lineman Chase White. On November 11th, please join us in honoring the legacy and memory of all those who have served our nation, including those who have also served this organization. RM

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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Parents, this tour is special, GET YOUR STUDENTS INVOLVED

FOR more than twenty years, Vigilante Electric Cooperative has been sending area students to the NRECA (National Rural Electric Cooperative Association) Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. The word “tour” does not appropriately capture the essence of this event, because it is far more than a trip to the nation’s capital to sightsee. It is a prestigious event in which thousands of high school juniors and seniors from across the nation join in Washington, D.C., to understand our nation’s history and the freedoms we enjoy.

The tour is designed to better understand the value of rural electrification. It familiarizes you with the historic and political environment of our nation’s capital. It gives you a better understanding of the federal government, the political process and democracy in general. But most significantly, the tour gives us an opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of outstanding young people from rural communities.

We believe by investing in today’s youth, we are investing in our – and their – future. We know some of the brightest students reside within the boundaries of our service territory, and we want to give them an opportunity to experience the past, present and a glimpse of the future of our country. For some, this will inspire a future in government service or a career with cooperatives.

Today, people often seek reasons not to do something. We understand that participation in the Youth Tour is a huge step for some students. Being a long way from home, on a trip to a big city with a group of absolute strangers, can be a scary thought. Even for parents, there can be a fair amount of apprehension.

The most important concern of parents regards their child’s safety. The



safety and well-being of the students who take part in the Youth Tour is our number-one priority. Your daughter or son will be supervised by several adult chaperones in his/her group. There are times when the group will be given some latitude when touring and eating, but even then, they are required to go with other students or a chaperone.


In addition to the chaperones traveling with the Montana delegation, NRECA staff is on-site, at the hotel, for the entire week of the Youth Tour. Curfew is 11 p.m. each evening, and is strictly enforced. Chaperones traveling with your son/daughter’s state will ensure that all students are in their assigned rooms. Further, professional security guards are on duty, on every hotel floor from 10:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. Additionally, there are medical professionals at the hotel for the entire week.

Another question we often get is about the cost. Vigilante Electric pays for the flight, hotel accommodations, charter bus, tours and food (including most snacks). The only money you need is for souvenirs and extra snacks. T-shirts are provided for each day of the trip and are yours to keep after-

ward. All you have to pack is pants/shorts, shoes and personal items.

Another question that gets asked a lot is about travel, not only to and from, but while in Washington, D.C. The journey begins on Friday afternoon with a “meet and greet” with the tour director, chaperones, participants and parents. The following morning, all participants board the plane at Great Falls International Airport.

Upon arrival in Washington, D.C., participants will board a nice, air-conditioned bus with a professional driver who will safely transport the Montana delegation around D.C. throughout the entire tour. As a side note, we have had the same driver for many years. He requests the Montana group, and is a wonderful man and a former Marine.

If your student qualifies for the Youth Tour, but you have some reservations, I would like to talk to you. This is the best program we support, and I have been a chaperone on the Youth Tour twice. You can contact me at (406) 683-2327 or (800) 221-8271. You can also send your questions to me at rod.siring@vec.coop. 

On the Clock: James Reyes

VIGILANTE Electric Cooperative would like to take this opportunity to introduce our newest employee, James Reyes. James is an electrical engineer and will be working out of our Dillon office.

James has a bachelor's degree in engineering from Washington State University (WSU) and did graduate work at Gonzaga University School of Transmission and Distribution Engineering.

He is a native of Washington, where he was raised in Shelton, a small logging

community in southwestern Washington. Prior to coming to work for us, he worked for Mason County PUD #1 in Shelton.

James is passionate about hunting, fishing, music and doing a good job. He is engaged to Claire Jacobson. Claire is currently working on her doctorate in veterinary medicine at WSU.

We would like to welcome James to our organization, and we look forward to a long, productive relationship. RM



Vigilante Electric welcomes Electrical Engineer James Reyes to the team.

DISTRACTED DRIVING:

Keep your eyes on the road and off your phone

If you regularly read this publication, you have read many articles chronicling the dangers our operations crews face while on the job. One of the biggest safety issues our crews now face does not come from working around high-voltage power lines; it comes from distracted drivers. The following article appears on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) website, written by senior writer Derrill Holly, and fully captures the scope of this issue and the ripple effect from an accident:

"Our local roadways are becoming more dangerous," said Curtis Wynn, CEO of SECO Energy in Sumterville, Florida. The co-op is seeing an increase in vehicle collisions with poles and other electric utility infrastructure, and law enforcement investigators suggest inattentive drivers are contributing to the problem.

He said there has been an increase in passenger vehicle traffic and more heavy construction vehicles working in the co-op's territory. In July, a dump truck, possibly with its box slightly elevated, hit guy wires connected to one of the co-op's poles. The speed and force of impact were substantial enough to take down

three poles, knocking out electricity to 85 homes and businesses served by SECO Energy.

While redundant connections and automation built into the co-op's systems resumed service to 64 of the affected meters, 21 others were out of service for nearly eight hours. Crews repairing the damage braved rain and lightning before service was fully restored.

The initial collision was only partially responsible for the resulting damage. According to traffic incident investigators, a second vehicle struck wires that had dropped to near roadway level when the poles collapsed. Neither driver remained at the scene nor reported the hazard, so it's possible that the second impact occurred because the motorist failed to recognize the risk or take action to avoid it.

According to the National Transportation Highway Safety Administration, distracted driving played a role in more than 3,500 fatal traffic collisions nationwide in 2021. The federal agency says at least 1,000 people each day are injured as a result of activities that divert drivers' attention.

The "most alarming distraction,"

according to the agency, is reading or responding to text messages. Drivers who take their eyes off the road for five seconds can travel at least 100 yards if they are moving at 55 mph.

All 50 states now enforce Slow Down-Move Over traffic laws, which require drivers to reduce their speed and switch lanes to protect service technicians, tow truck operators and emergency vehicle operators. (Montana has added utility work to our law.)

Following SECO Energy's July incident, Wynn noted that the outage forced a major industrial account served by the co-op to lose a day's production, and another commercial account was out of service until crews were able to install temporary switches to reroute electricity to its facilities. During much of that work, crews faced the added hazards posed by traffic.

Incidents like this are on the rise, even within our service territory. We implore our membership to stay attentive while driving. Slow down and move over when approaching highway work and stay off your phone while driving. The consequences of one lapse in judgement can be devastating. RM

SCHOLARSHIPS

2024 OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

RONALD Reagan once said that “Education is like a diamond with many facets: It includes the basic mastery of numbers and letters that give us access to the treasury of human knowledge, accumulated and refined through the ages; it includes technical and vocational training as well as instruction in science, higher mathematics, and humane letters.” At Vigilante Electric Cooperative (VEC), we could not agree more, because this is who we are as an organization.

If you were to look at the individuals that make up our team, each of us has a unique background, work experience and education. In fact, we have the elements in the above quote covered. This uniqueness and diversity are why we are such an effective team.

As part of our ongoing commitment to our membership and our communities, VEC provides educational opportunities for students who are the dependents of members. For the 2023-24

school year, we will again be offering our Leadership Award, and be the portal for the MECA Memorial Scholarship.

The VEC Leadership Award is a scholarship opportunity for students who not only excel in the classroom, but in their communities. This year, we will provide selected applicants with a scholarship in an amount to be determined by the selection committee. In recent history the amount has been \$500.


To qualify, applicants must receive their power from VEC, be a high school senior or college undergraduate, complete an application, and submit a brief narrative on what they plan to study and why. Past recipients of the VEC Leadership Award are not eligible.

We would like to emphasize one crucial point: our scholarship is good for a variety of post-secondary educational opportunities, especially in trade schools. Many trades are compensated very well, and skilled trade workers are

in great demand.

Montana Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) is VEC’s statewide association. MECA’s Memorial Scholarship is an opportunity to win one of four \$500 scholarships. This opportunity is available statewide, with one scholarship available for each of the four designated regions in the state.

One application from VEC’s service territory will be selected for consideration for the MECA Memorial Scholarship. Applicants must receive their power from VEC and be planning to continue their education. The specific requirements are outlined in the application.

The guidelines for both scholarships are available at area high schools and online at vec.coop, under the Programs and Services section. Please note that all elements of the application must be completed for consideration. The deadline for both applications is January 26, 2024. 



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Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker

Participating members: 824
Total Contributions: \$22,717.79

To apply, contact our office at
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327
An online application is available at www.vec.coop.