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# Vigilante Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



In 2024, there were 32 students from around Montana that went on the week-long Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. for free. | **COURTESY PHOTO**

## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

Youth Tour: Win a free trip to Washington D.C.

**T**he Youth Tour is more than a sight-seeing trip to the nation's capital. It is a prestigious event in which thousands of high school students from across the nation join in Washington, D.C., to understand our nation's history and the freedoms we enjoy.

The tour allows participants to better understand rural electrification's value. It familiarizes them with our nation's capital's historical and political environment. They will visit with elected officials, giving them a better understanding of the federal government, the political process, and democracy. Perhaps most significantly, the tour allows them



to recognize the accomplishments of outstanding young people from rural communities.

We believe in investing in today's youth. We know some of the brightest students reside within our service territory, and we want to give them an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. The Youth Tour can inspire a future in government service or a career with cooperatives, and it's a chance to experience our country's past, present, and future.

The dates for the 2025 Youth Tour to

**See YOUTH TOUR, next page**

**SEPTEMBER 2024**

VIGILANTE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE

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# Above and beyond

## Martinell completes elements for director certification

**T**HE trustees of Vigilante Electric Cooperative invest a tremendous amount of time in our cooperative. They meet monthly to review cooperative business and travel to meetings regularly as representatives of our organization. Participation in these meetings is important because our trustees have to stay informed so that they have the knowledge required to make good decisions that affect the cooperative.

Some trustees take their commitment to the cooperative and the membership further. Those trustees wanting to go above and beyond what is required enroll in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's three-part Director Education program.

The Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program focuses on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Upon completion, the director is awarded the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate by NRECA and is eligible to advance to the next program.

The Board Leadership Program (BLC) focuses more on specific industry and governance issues. These include risk management, power supply, parliamentary procedure, technology, and policy development.

Finally, the Director Gold credential recognizes directors committed to continuing their education beyond the CCD and BLC and who desire a tangible credential demonstrating their ongoing commitment to advancing their knowledge and performing their fiduciary duty to the best of their ability.

Today, we would like to recognize and thank Allen Marti-



Vigilante Electric Trustee Allen Martinell, left, receives his Director Gold credential certificate from Manager Trevor Parke. | VEC PHOTO

nell, trustee for the Dell/Lima area, for his efforts in completing the requirements for the Director Gold credential.

Allen, a dedicated member of our cooperative since 1981, has shown exceptional commitment and leadership. He has served in various roles, including President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer, and represents VEC on the MECA's Board of Trustees and the Safety and Loss Control Standing Committee. He is also a valuable member of the Vigilante Electric Safety Committee.

We are deeply grateful for Allen's years of service and his continued leadership. His dedication and commitment have been instrumental in the success of our organization. **RM**

## YOUTH TOUR

*Continued from previous page*

Washington D.C. will be June 14 to 21. It starts with the opportunity for students and parents to meet the director and chaperones, where any questions or concerns are answered, followed by a "Get Acquainted Dinner."

The following morning, participants will board the plane at Great Falls International Airport. Upon arrival in

Washington, D.C., and after checking into the hotel, they will have dinner and tour some memorials and monuments. Then, for the next five days, they will be chauffeured around the nation's capital, touring and visiting historical landmarks while making new friends and having a blast!

One of the best reasons to apply for the Youth Tour is that it's free! Vigilante Electric covers everything from flights and hotel stays to tours and meals. All you need to bring is excite-

ment and a little extra cash for souvenirs and snacks.

Interested students must complete an application, provide one letter of recommendation, and an essay. The 2025 essay topic is: What was the most important event to have occurred in our nation during your lifetime? How did it affect you? The application and contest rules can be found on our website ([vec.coop/youth-tour](http://vec.coop/youth-tour)) and through the guidance counselors at area high schools. **RM**

# LOCATION IS EVERYTHING

## (especially when it comes to powerlines)

**O**NE of the goals of safety articles is to get people to think before engaging in a practice that increases the danger to them, has the possibility to damage property, or puts our line crews in inconvenient or dangerous situations. Finding examples of these practices is quite easy if you know what to look for.

One of the worst practices we see is putting irrigation lines and haystacks under powerlines. Irrigation lines are highly conductive, and if a piece were tipped on end or a wire came down on the pile, you would have an extremely dangerous situation. When haystacks are placed under powerlines, each layer gets closer to the lines. Additionally, you are placing a dry fuel source under an object that could ignite it.

The location of fence line can also

be an issue. Barbed wire fences too close to poles, or worse yet, that use a pole as part of the fence, can be quite hazardous. Powerlines and fences do not mix. If a powerline were to rest on a fence, it could become energized.

There are also concerns for the lineworkers who must climb these poles, often in the worst weather and light conditions. If they were to slip while on the pole, they could be seriously injured or killed landing on a post. Fences can also damage the protective gear lineworkers use to work around high-voltage conductors.

Residential fences can also be an issue. Always have your contractor call 811 for underground locates prior to installation, and do not use the fence to conceal transformer pads and meter pedestals. Both need to be free from

obstruction so that our lineworkers can access them when troubleshooting.

Another situation that we need to bring to the attention of our irrigators: regardless of whether it is parked or moving, no part of a pivot should ever go underneath a powerline. If a line were to come down, it could potentially energize the pivot, putting lives and livestock in danger. If there is work being done on the pivot, it could put the worker dangerously close to the lines.

Much of what has been described is out of habit. The problem is, too often it takes a traumatic event for a change of habit to occur. Electricity is very unforgiving and there may not be a second chance, so it is imperative to do it right the first time and every time. RM

## SmartHub: It's nice to have payment options

**A**S a service to our members, Vigilante Electric provides several payment options. All options are easy to navigate, convenient to use, and most importantly - secure.

Implemented in 2016, SmartHub is our innovative tool that makes managing your account easy. Whether through the web, smartphone, or a tablet (Android or iOS), you will be able to pay your bill, view your electricity use, stay in contact with us, and much more.

You can also download the free SmartHub mobile app from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. Once it is downloaded, search for and select Vigilante Electric Cooperative. If you are currently using SmartHub, use the same login information. If not, you can register through the app.

If you prefer not to register with



SmartHub, but would still like to make your payment online, you can use Pay Now. Unlike the full SmartHub site, you cannot view your usage or update information; it only allows you to pay your bill. Just use your billing account number and your last name, or the name of your business, to pay your bill quickly and easily.

The autopay plan allows you to have payments made automatically from your checking or savings account. You can also use your VISA, Mastercard or Discover card. Payments will be

deducted on the first banking day after the 24th of each month. Authorization forms are available by contacting us, or you can sign up through SmartHub.

For many, the ability to pay your bill by phone, wherever you are, is a convenient way to stay on top of payments each month. With our Pay by Phone system, you can pay your bill, check your balance, and update your account information. The toll-free number for this service has recently been updated to (855) 939-3692. Using your account number, voice commands will guide you in accessing your information.

This is not to say that the old-school ways of paying bills are antiquated. We gladly accept checks or cash, and it is perfectly ok to mail in your payment or drop it by our office. In today's hectic world - isn't it nice to know that you have options? RM



# WINTER IS COMING

It's better if your HVAC system is ready than not

**L**IKE it or not, chilly weather is coming, and there are certain preparations that should not be put off. Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

Unfortunately, most people do not understand the need for annual maintenance and only address their HVAC system when there is a problem. However, your home is a large investment, and the HVAC system is a very crucial element in this investment. By having your heating inspected, it can save you money, improve your comfort and keep you safe.

Regular preventive maintenance ensures that your HVAC system operates at peak efficiency. When system components are inspected and properly maintained, your system does not have to work as hard to maintain the desired temperature. The result? Lower energy consumption and reduced utility bills.

Having your HVAC system inspected annually prolongs equipment life. Regular check-ups catch minor issues before



they escalate into major problems. By addressing these issues promptly, you extend the lifespan of your equipment which translates into fewer costly repairs

For central air systems, regular maintenance lends itself to improved indoor air quality. Clean filters, well-maintained ductwork, and proper system operation help prevent dust buildup and mold growth from circulating through your home or office.

More than anything else, the safety of the occupants of your home should

be priority one. Regular HVAC maintenance helps identify potential hazards. Technicians inspect electrical connections, ensure proper functioning, and keep an eye out for anything that could compromise safety. This is particularly important with HVAC systems that convert a gas to heat.

Remember, more and more HVAC systems work year-round – whether it is keeping you cozy in winter or cool in summer. By showing it some care, it will provide you with years of comfort, efficiency, and peace of mind! RM

**Vigilante Electric Cooperative**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**Vigilante Safety Roundup Tracker**

Participating members: 879

Total Contributions: \$29,307.97

To apply, contact our office at  
(800) 221-8271 or 683-2327

An online application is available at [www.vec.coop](http://www.vec.coop).

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