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2016 Youth Tour

In her own words: Lara Hicks

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The week of June 11 I had an awesome experience representing Beltrami Electric for the 2016 Rural Electric Youth Tour. During the trip I got to meet tons of intelligent students from many rural Minnesota cooperatives and see many monuments, museums, memorials and government buildings. I'm so thankful that Beltrami Electric gave me the opportunity to learn more about our nation's history and emphasize the role of cooperative relationships in the past, present and future.

The day after we landed and had a night's rest we visited most of the different memorials and monuments, they were absolutely stunning! I really enjoyed being able to view them in person and getting a bit of insight to the symbolism behind each one from our tour guide. We also

got to see Arlington Cemetery and half of the Smithsonian Museums on the south side of the National Mall. Adam Schwartz gave an excellent presentation and afterwards I found myself having a much more avid understanding of cooperative business principles and how they affect rural communities.

On Monday we got to explore Mount Vernon, George Washington's home. Afterwards, we went to the National Museum of the Marine Corps. We walked through exhibits for every major U.S. war and learned about the integral role Marines played in serving our country. I enjoyed the environmental simulations in the Korean War and Vietnam War exhibits; it felt as if you really were experiencing the terrains that these wars took place on. That evening we had the NRECA Youth Night, which was a blast! I met other youth tour delegates from all over the U.S. and listened to some amazing speeches. Mike Schlapp's speech really spoke to me and helped me change my perspective on how to deal with challenges, enough so that I ordered his book and began delving into his life story.

The following day we were allowed to roam around the north side of the National Mall. I went to the Newseum, the National Archives and the other half of the Smithsonian Museums. I loved seeing all of the historic documents and examining the different exhibits in the National Museum of



Natural History. We went to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and I got to follow the story of Faiga Grynbaum, the daughter of a Jewish tailor in Poland. I was very moved by the museum and Faiga's determination to stand for her beliefs. Afterwards, we watched the Broadway Musical "Kinky Boots." It was very fun to watch!

On Wednesday we went to the Capitol building. We had breakfast with Al Franken and met Amy Klobuchar. The District 7 group got to meet with Collin Peterson's legislative assistant Zach Martin. He answered a lot of our questions and gave us a brief summary of his job on Capitol Hill. I also had the opportunity to meet Rick Nolan and Tim Walz.

Throughout the Youth Tour I met some truly wonderful friends, gained great insight into our country's history and learned that the principles that formed our nation really tie into how cooperatives like Beltrami Electric conduct their business. Thank you to the NRECA, the MREA and Beltrami Electric for investing in youth and giving me this unforgettable experience!

