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IN HER OWN WORDS: ASHLEY PIRKL 2022 Youth Tour | June 14-19



Earlier this year, my mother gave me a pamphlet about this trip to Washington, D.C., that Beltrami Electric was sponsoring. I thought that there was no way I could win, but I gave it a shot. It was one of the best decisions that I have ever made and I am so glad that my parents pushed me to do it. In late March I received an email that I was the selected applicant; I was in utter disbelief! I told myself that I'll believe it when I'm there. Soon enough June 14 rolled around and I was on a plane to Washington, D.C.

The first night we were there, we had a big "welcome party" with the other states that arrived that day (Texas, Florida, Arizona, Nevada and Utah). It was really cool getting to meet kids my age from all over the country (except they said I had a "Minnesota" accent, which I seriously cannot hear). On Wednesday in the morning we had a guided tour of the Vietnam War, Vietnam War Women's, Korean War, World War II, Lincoln, Martin Luther King and FDR memorials. We then went to Arlington National Cemetery, where we had a guided trolley tour, and watched the changing of the guard. Afterwards, we had a picnic lunch near the Iwo Jima Memorial. That afternoon we went to Georgetown where we got ice cream and went on a sightseeing cruise on the Potomac River, and then on to the International Spy Museum. Thursday was the day that we were going to Capitol Hill. We had a few hours to kill beforehand, so we went to the White House and Lafayette Square. Because Congress was in session, we were only able to meet three out of our eight representatives. I was honored to meet Reps. Angie Craig, Dean Phillips and Pete Stauber, and ask them questions. Since we were outside when the session was done, we got to see all of the representatives leave once done voting. I got to meet a few, including the rather famous Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a representative from New York and the youngest person ever

elected to Congress. We then got to go into the basement of the Capitol to meet Sen. Amy Klobuchar, where we discussed our many concerns in modern-day society. We then got to visit the Library of Congress. That night we toured the Jefferson and 911 Pentagon Memorials. On Friday morning, we headed up to Mount Vernon (President George Washington's estate), where we took a detailed tour of our first President's home. We had lunch on the lawn of the National Cathedral, and then received a tour. The Smithsonian Zoo was our next stop and that afternoon the temperature reached 102°. Later we visited the Holocaust Museum, which was a chilling, but educational experience. That night, we went to a Washington Nationals baseball game against the Philadelphia Phillies. Saturday, which was sadly my last day, was also museum



day. My friends and I chose to visit the National Archives, where we saw the original copies of the Constitution, Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. We then decided on the Smithsonian Natural History Museum and the National Gallery of Art and Culture. We then ate dinner in Old Town Alexandria at the fish market. Back at the hotel we had our farewell gathering and dessert, and prepared for our morning flight. Leaving on Sunday was the hardest part. The

whole way back I was dreading the part where we would have to say goodbye and go our separate ways.

This trip was truly an amazing experience that really is once in a lifetime. The memories and friendships made will last forever. I cannot thank Beltrami Electric enough for sending me as their delegate. If you are an (incoming) junior in high school, I highly recommend applying for this opportunity. Many co-ops do not send anybody because they don't receive any applicants. I think it is worth the shot and you might end up like me and surprise yourself. Thank you for having me as your 2022 Beltrami Electric Youth Tour Delegate.