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MISSION STATEMENT
 Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative will operate as a competitive provider of energy services and a partner with local communities, with a focus on safety, service and integrity.

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Solar considerations

IF YOU'VE BEEN PAYING

attention to energy trends over the past few years, you know solar power has become very popular. Blue Ridge Electric

Cooperative recognizes the value of solar. That recognition, in part, prompted our creation of a new department: Energy Services. Among other things, our Energy Services team sells and installs solar systems and otherwise assists members who are contemplating the installation of solar panels at their premises. Because our folks are the energy experts, it's our sincere hope these members contact the co-op first before proceeding down this pathway.

Our specialists can provide a "roadmap" that will help members avoid pitfalls that can turn a solar project into an unhappy outcome. We understand that solar has its place. However, rooftop solar isn't for everyone, no matter who's making the sale. For instance, some home sites are just not suitable for generating this renewable power. It's not unusual for the slope of a roof not to align well with the daily trajectory of the sun. That kind of situation would likely ensure that a solar installation might never pay for itself.

In reality, a residential solar system can represent a considerable investment. In some instances, a member might be left with a sizable debt, while seeing only small-to-moderate reductions in his or her electricity bill. Because of solar's intermittent production, the return on their investment may fall short of what was expected.

Fortunately, South Carolina law provides guidelines to assist solar companies so that they can help prospective customers make informed decisions:

- ▶ Consumers aged 70 and older are to be allowed to review contracts for at least three days prior to signing.
- ▶ Any consumer can cancel a contract without fees or penalty within 10 days after signing.

- ▶ Clients are to be provided with an educational brochure that details solar basics, consumer rights, questions to ask the seller, and potential red flags.
- ▶ Before signing a contract, consumers are to be provided with a disclosure statement that clearly enumerates both the specifications and the cost of the solar installation.
- ▶ Should a building permit be denied, or the resident homeowners association doesn't approve the installation, the consumer would have seven days either to cancel or amend the contract.
- ▶ Consumers are to be provided a copy of the contract that contains all fees, installation dates, details on any savings described, warranty information, and additional details required by law.

To get one's solar experience off to a positive start, whether you're planning to do business with Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative or another solar provider, I'd recommend contacting our Blue Ridge office first. You will be connected with one of our solar experts who can supply the best guidance to be found anywhere.

In addition, these energy experts can explore other options with the homeowner that might offer an economical alternative to a solar system. A number of members initially interested in solar have instead installed geothermal heat pumps, which take advantage of the solar energy stored in the earth's surface. Geothermal heat pumps are the greenest, most-efficient heating/cooling systems available. With rebates and tax credits offered, this could be the investment that makes the most sense. For more details, please visit our website at blueridge.coop or call us at (800) 240-3400.

JIM LOVINGGOOD
 President and CEO

Local teens learn leadership on Youth Tour

Lee elected YLC delegate

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

FOR STUDENTS who are drawn to leadership, Washington Youth Tour is the ideal summer experience.

Thanks to Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Olivia Lee of Seneca and Abigail Blankenship of Pendleton joined 47 other South Carolina high school students sent by their electric cooperatives to Washington, D.C. in June. The experience went beyond a traditional school field trip. In addition to visiting the city's monuments and memorials, the students started their own co-op and met with legislators and their staffs. Lee and Blankenship were welcomed into Rep. Jeff Duncan's congressional office and met with Sens. Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham on the Capitol steps.

Lee, a rising senior at Walhalla High School, was elected by her fellow Youth Tourists as South Carolina's representative to the Youth Leadership Council, a national cooperative ambassador program that develops leadership, public speaking skills and enhances the delegates' knowledge of the energy industry and the cooperative form of business. Lee will return to Washington to participate in a leadership workshop that will focus on the electric cooperative industry.

"I'm very thankful that I was elected and I'm glad that I've made a lot of connections (through Youth Tour)," says Lee. "I love to learn, and I think leading provides you the best opportunities to do so."

Blankenship may also return to the nation's capital, especially after the impact the trip made on her.

"It affirms what I want to do as a career," she says. "I want to end up working in the capital. I learned a lot by being able to meet congressmen and senators, asking them questions and getting advice about what it's like

to be in their shoes and how to get in their shoes. I got some great advice from Sen. Tim Scott about not letting failure stop you."

The students also visited the National Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Arlington National Cemetery and the 9/11 Memorial at the Pentagon. When they went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the students used pencil and paper to create an etching of names on the wall representing soldiers from their hometowns.

Throughout the trip, the students participated in the Soda Pop Co-op, which sold snacks and beverages. Some served as cooperative board members,



JOSH P. CROTZER

Capitol Day was one of the many highlights for Olivia Lee (left) and Abigail Blankenship on the Washington Youth Tour.

others were a part of the management team. As member-consumers, the students each received \$9 in capital credits, their share of the co-op's end-of-trip margins.

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