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Students share thoughts



Bailey Beauchamp prepares to open the set of three speeches by young leaders from the Tri-County Area during the 77th Annual Central Florida Electric Cooperative Inc. Meeting on Saturday (Oct. 1).

**Story and Photos
By Jeff M. Hardison**

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CHIEFLAND --

Three young ladies from the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties shared their thoughts on Saturday morning (Oct. 1) from what they experienced earlier this year as young leaders in a program sponsored by Central Florida Electric Cooperative Inc.

CFEC President Kyle Quincey said after listening to them this year that he was equally impressed by them as he had been from the three students who spoke at the previous year's annual meeting of the rural electric cooperative.

"It gives me hope for our country," Quincey said.



(from left) Bailee Osteen of Dixie County High School, Emily Hallman of Chiefland High School and CFEC Communications Specialist Whitney McQueen stand near the stage as Bailey Beauchamp of Chiefland High School prepares to start her speech.

CFEC Communications Specialist Whitney McQueen introduced Bailey Beauchamp and Emily Hallman, both of Chiefland High School, and Bailee Osteen of Dixie County High School.

Bauchamp, Osteen and Hallman were the honored guest speakers at the 77th Annual Meeting of CFEC on Saturday.

The three students were part of the Youth Corps Program. Participants in this program go to Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. to learn about state and federal government.

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BAILEY BEAUCHAMP

Beauchamp shared with the audience that she was among the 1,800 students from 48 states who went to Washington to learn about what it means to be an American.

Attending the Youth Leadership Conference, she said, was one of the best experiences in her life so far. She let the cooperative members know that she is very grateful to CFEC for giving her this opportunity.

While in Washington, the students toured the many monuments, museums and other attractions there, including The White House and Arlington National Cemetery.

“While at Washington, D.C., I was able to find a sense of ownership,” Beauchamp said. “Our tour guides were constantly reminding us, “This is our cemetery, and our church. That it is not owned by any specific person. As Americans, these are our monuments and our memorials. It’s our Capitol.”

Beauchamp said this recognition of the sovereign ownership of all public lands by all people is the same as being a member of the electric cooperative.

“As co-opians,” she said, “this is our warehouse, our building and our power.”

The Youth Leadership Conference was a very enlightening experience for her, she said. She thanked the members of the co-op, and she noted her appreciation for McQueen’s assisting them as a chaperone and making the most of their visit to Washington, D.C.

BAILEE OSTEEN

Osteen said she was very thankful to have been given the opportunity to go to Tallahassee and Washington as part of the Youth Corps.

Osteen noted that it is thanks to the members of the cooperative’s support for the future of the nation that she was able to be among the students who gained from that learning experience.

“We all have a moment that changes our lives forever,” Osteen said, “a moment that leaves a lasting impact on our future, and guides us in the direction that allows us to create an impact that is far greater than ourselves.”

That moment for this student happened this summer when she boarded the plane in Tallahassee. Youth Tour let her learn that the nation was born from the hard work of its founders who had a vision for the future, which has a resounding impact that affects the whole world today – more than 200 years later.

Youth Tour taught Osteen, she said, that a simple action can change the world, and that she should take action.

“Youth Tour helped me change into a leader that is ready to change the world,” Osteen said. “But most importantly, Youth Tour has brought me a family that has changed my life forever. And forever, I will be grateful for that.

“Again,” she concluded, “I would like to thank you all for allowing me to cultivate my legacy this summer; and for giving me and the youth in the Tri-County Area the opportunity to change the world.”

EMILY HALLMAN

The Florida representative on the Youth Leadership Council was the third speaker in the group Saturday morning.

“In each of us, there is a passion,” Hallman said, “and a purpose that drives us. That drive ignites a fire within us to be the change we want to see in the world. In Washington, I was blessed with an experience of a lifetime.

“I walked through all of the memorials in remembrance of all of those souls who gave their all to this great nation,” she continued. “I walked through the countless white rows of Arlington Cemetery to see where the lives of those who, even in times of darkness, went to the stars because they knew more light would be coming soon.”

During her two-week sojourn in Washington, D.C., Hallman said she was surrounded by people with the same fire burning inside of them. She said President Abraham Lincoln brought

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great hope to the nation.

She was pleased to learn about the history of the nation and of the Rural Electrification Administration, which marked the founding moments of the rural electric cooperatives that exist across America today.

One lesson she learned from the cooperative movement, is that when people join forces there is no task that remains insurmountable.

“Youth Tour taught us,” Hallman said, “that if we all come together, we are an unstoppable force with the power to achieve anything.”

As a member of Youth Tour, Hallman said she was able to join other leaders in her generation of Americans as they all experienced personal growth. They were able to “experience a fraction of the legacy our nation’s leaders left behind,” she said.

With this, she said, those young leaders realized their journey has just begun. Hallman said they knew the nation is depending on them to carry America through the time with battles to come.

They will do this with the sheer flames of determination to move forward, she said.

“When working to build a stronger nation,” Hallman said, “there is no such thing as too busy. We can sit and dream of the success we want to see. But they will be only daydreams unless we get up and work for it.”

She thanked everyone who is a cooperative member for allowing her generation to show the light that is within them.

“You show the true meaning of the phrase ‘Actions speak louder than word,’” she said. “The unity we have in the bonds that we share is what gives us the capacity to insure success. Thank you for allowing us to sharpen the talents within us. We won’t let you down. Thank you!”