Rayle Lines
Member Newsletter



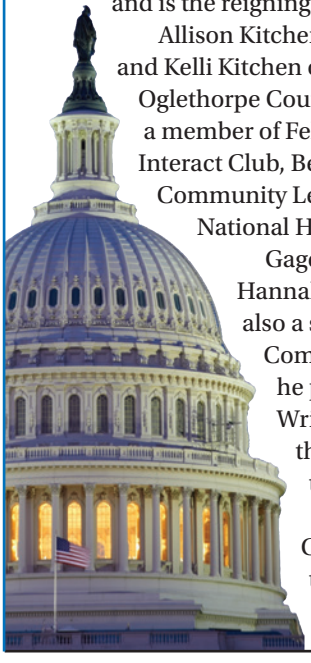
September 2026 The Official Newsletter of Rayle Electric Membership Corporation

Local students represent Rayle EMC on unforgettable leadership experience in Washington, D.C.

Outstanding students from across Georgia, including Emerson Carter of Washington, Allison Kitchen of Lexington, and Gage Wright of Washington recently returned from the 2026 Washington Youth Tour, a transformative, weeklong leadership experience and tour of Washington, D.C., sponsored by Georgia's electric membership corporations, including Rayle EMC.

Carter, Kitchen and Wright were chosen as winners of an essay contest to participate in this year's tour.

Emerson Carter is the daughter of Casey and Stacey Carter of Washington. She is a student at Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, where she participates in cross-country, softball, soccer, track, FFA, 4-H and is the reigning Miss Wilkes County.



Allison Kitchen is the daughter of Andrew and Kelli Kitchen of Lexington. She is a student at Oglethorpe County High School, where she is a member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Interact Club, Beta Club, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and National Honor Society.

Gage Wright is the son of Paul and Hannah Wright of Washington. He is also a student at Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, where he participates in FFA and 4-H. Wright has served as President of the Wilkes County 4-H club for the past four years.

From June 12-19, Kitchen, Carter and Wright joined more than 1,700 high school students from across the country in Washington, D.C., where they explored American history firsthand and gained a deeper understanding of civic engagement and public service.



From left: Gage Wright, Allison Kitchen and Emerson Carter.

"At Rayle EMC, our commitment goes beyond delivering reliable electric service. It also includes investing in the people and communities we serve," says Richard Heard, Director of Member Services at Rayle EMC. "Sending students on the Washington Youth Tour is one meaningful way we support education, encourage civic engagement and help develop the next generation

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Aim for a great dove season while keeping Georgia connected



As dove hunting season kicks off across Georgia, electric membership corporations (EMCs) across the state, including Rayle EMC, are reaching out to hunters to help keep communities powered and connected, and fellow hunters safe, as they enjoy the hunt.

Doves love to perch on utility lines, and while they may seem like easy targets, taking a shot near electrical equipment can unintentionally cause safety risks for hunters and costly equipment damage for EMCs.

Fire risks and electrocution hazards can occur if power lines are shot and damaged, putting hunters in harm's way. To prevent inadvertently striking utility lines, hunters are encouraged to scout their hunting spots ahead of time and take note of any power lines or electrical equipment nearby, especially in wooded areas where visibility might be limited.

In addition to safety concerns, damage to power lines and fiber-optic cables can also result in service disruptions. Fiber-optic cables, which deliver high-speed broadband internet across Georgia, are especially delicate. A single errant shot can shatter the tiny glass fibers inside, requiring repair crews to spend eight hours or more carefully splicing hundreds of fibers to restore service. Similarly, damage to power lines can leave homes and businesses without electricity.

"It's not just a pricey problem; it's a safety issue for hunters and a frustration for the EMC members that experience service disruptions" said John Moon, Safety Coordinator at Rayle EMC.

It's worth noting that Georgia law* prohibits damaging electrical equipment, with potential criminal charges and financial liability for repairs. A little extra caution can go a long way in avoiding these issues.

By aiming responsibly away from utility lines this dove season, hunters can safely enjoy their favorite pastime while helping keep communities powered and connected.

** Code O.C.G.A. § 16–7 22(b)(2)*

Georgia law states that anyone who "knowingly and without authority and by force or violence interferes with the operation of any system of public communication, public transportation, sewerage, drainage, water supply, gas, power or other public utility service or with any constituent property thereof" could face criminal charges and/or be held liable for repair costs.

Washington Youth Tour, *Continued from page 18A*

of leaders. The connections these students make and the experiences they share have the power to shape their future, as well as our communities, for years to come."

The 2026 Georgia delegation included 115 student delegates, 14 chaperones, two tour directors and one photographer. The experience began with a banquet in Atlanta honoring the delegates and their families before the group traveled to Washington, D.C.

While in the nation's capital, delegates visited sites including several memorials, the U.S. Capitol, Smithsonian museums, the U.S. Holocaust Museum, George Washington's Mount Vernon, National Archives, the U.S. Supreme Court and Arlington National Cemetery.

Beyond the sites, students engaged in thoughtful discussions on current events and civic responsibility by visiting with legislative staff from their congressional district. Delegates also participated in National Youth Day, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, where keynote speaker Mike Schlappi, an Olympic gold medalist and author, shared his inspiring story of resilience and determination.

As they learned about U.S. government and history, students also got to know themselves better through leadership activities and team-building exercises that boosted their confidence, improved their communication and helped them see their own leadership potential.

Since its inception, the Washington Youth Tour has inspired nearly 100,000 students nationwide. Many alumni have gone on to lead in the fields of science, business and government, while also continuing to make a difference in their communities.



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Rayle EMC adds new employee

Rayle EMC General Manager Tony Griffin announces the addition of a new employee: Josh Gentry, who will be working in the Greensboro District.

Gentry of Union Point began his career with Rayle EMC on June 15, 2026, as an Apprentice Lineman. He is the son of Jason and Stacie Gentry of Crawfordville and has two brothers, Logan Gentry of Union Point and Bailey Gentry of Crawfordville.

Gentry graduated from Nathanael Greene Academy in 2025, then completed a course at the Commercial Driving Academy in Macon. Before joining Rayle EMC, Gentry worked at Southern Trace Outdoors Sales in Greensboro.

During his spare time, Gentry enjoys hunting, fishing and farming.



Josh Gentry

2026 Youth Leadership Conference shapes future leaders



During July 6-10, Rayle EMC, along with other electric membership corporations (EMCs) and other cooperative businesses from across the state, proudly supported the 2026 Georgia Cooperative Council Youth Leadership Conference held at the Georgia FFA-FCCLA Center in Covington.

Van Bufford, a student at Washington-Wilkes Comprehensive High School, was selected to join 30 of Georgia's young leaders at this year's conference. Bufford is the son of Van Allen and Beth Bufford of Tignall.

Over five days, attendees participated in activities designed to cultivate leadership abilities, foster teamwork and deepen their understanding of how cooperatives contribute to their communities and beyond.

"Investing in programs like this is an investment in the future of our communities," says Tony Griffin, General Manager of Rayle EMC. "These students are tomorrow's leaders, and it's inspiring to see how they embrace the cooperative spirit of collaboration and service."

The conference agenda was packed with interactive workshops, team-building exercises and leadership development sessions. Students also learned about the cooperative business model, which offers a unique approach to business that emphasizes member ownership, community focus and democratic governance.

Key highlights of the week included visits to Walton EMC in Monroe and the Godfrey Dairy in Madison, where students saw firsthand how cooperatives operate in the electric and agricultural sectors. Outdoor activities like a high ropes course, mud course and a slip-and-slide challenge helped students build trust, communication and teamwork skills.

Inside the classroom, students completed personality assessments, practiced public speaking and worked together to form and operate their own mock cooperatives. On the final day, each team presented its cooperative concept to the entire group, showcasing the leadership, creativity and collaboration they developed throughout the week.

"The Youth Leadership Conference is one of those life-changing experiences that students carry with them for years to come," says Andy Paul, Public Relations Representative for Georgia EMC. "It's not just about learning how cooperatives work. It's about discovering how leadership, teamwork and service can create meaningful, lasting change in their communities."

To qualify for the conference, students must have completed their freshman year of high school, demonstrate strong leadership potential and be selected by their local cooperative.

The Georgia Cooperative Council organized the 2026 Georgia Cooperative Youth Leadership Conference. Participating EMCs this year included Altamaha EMC, Central Georgia EMC, Flint Energies, Georgia Transmission Corp., Grady EMC, Irwin EMC, Jackson EMC, Middle Georgia EMC, Ocmulgee EMC, Oglethorpe Power Corp., Okefenoke REMC, Rayle EMC, Southern Rivers EMC, Sumter EMC and Walton EMC.

The Georgia Cooperative Council is a statewide, nonprofit association representing approximately 50 cooperatives, including those in the farm supply, finance, electric, telecommunications, cotton and dairy sectors. The council promotes cooperative education, leadership development and collaboration across Georgia's cooperative community. For more information about the conference, visit *www.georgiaco-op.com.*