

CVEA Sends Students on Trip of a Lifetime

Copper Valley Electric Association (CVEA) is committed to enriching the educational experience of our local students and supporting future members of the Cooperative. This year, CVEA awarded two local students the opportunity to attend the 2009 Idaho Youth Rally hosted by the Idaho Consumer-Owned Utility Association (ICUA).

The Youth Rally provides a one-week rural electric-leadership program to high school sophomores and juniors. It is six days filled with fun and learning about consumer-owned electric utilities, developing leadership skills and self-esteem, meeting area students and building lasting relationships with other students from Alaska, Oregon, Idaho and Wyoming.

In 2009, Quinn Verfaillie, from Valdez and Keaton Shepherd, from Kenny Lake were awarded Youth Rally Scholarships from CVEA. This enabled them to travel, at no cost to them, with a group of other Alaskans to attend the Youth Rally in Caldwell, Idaho, July 5-11.

This year, five Alaskan students attended the Youth Rally with chaperone Sharon Crisp from CVEA. In addition to CVEA's students, Homer Electric sent three representatives; Denali Critchett, Ben Gilman, and Jenna Redford who was returning to serve as a camp director.

On their first day at the College of Idaho, our students met the others on the lawn for ice breakers and get acquainted games, had a barbeque and went bowling. The rest of the week the schedule was packed full of activities from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and included educational breakout sessions on various aspects of the electric industry, motivational speakers, and fun.

The students participated in sessions on the basics of electricity and utility career opportunities and sat in on guest speakers from ICUA, the National Rural Electric



Sharon Crisp, Jenna Redford, Quinn Verfaillie, Keaton Shepherd, Denali Critchett, and Ben Gilman at the Anchorage Airport.

Cooperative Association (NRECA), the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, and the Northwest Power Council. They also had a session on grass roots training from NRECA where they simulated all aspects of running for office, including giving campaign speeches. Students also toured the historic Swan Falls Hydro Plant and were given a very powerful safety demonstration that reminded them how serious and dangerous electricity can be.

One afternoon was spent learning about teambuilding and completing a cooperative course of activities meant to demonstrate how much more successful teams can be if they work together. This was also a great opportunity for some students to showcase their leadership skills.

Jeff Yalden was a motivational speaker who spoke to the students about making choices and how bad choices can affect their lives and the lives of those around

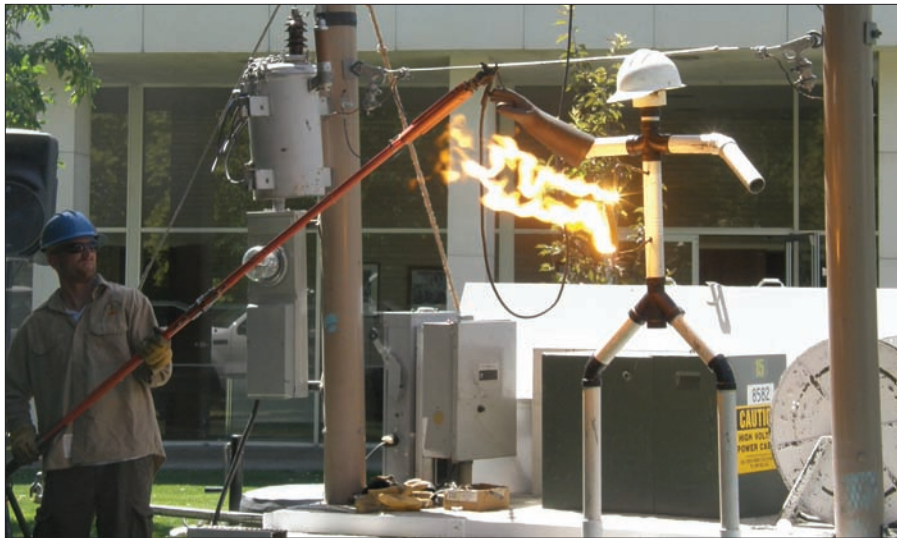
them. He was very down to earth and attracted the students attention by talking about his own personal struggles. He encouraged kids to “take time to think” and to “respond not react” to situations. He was a favorite among many students.

The students also listened to a drug awareness panel made up of six young men who were incarcerated due to crimes involving drug/alcohol use/abuse and going through a program called Choices. They were very candid about their lives and what their choices have done to their lives and the lives of their families. The program they are in is changing the way they think and the choices they are now making for themselves. It was inspirational and the students came away with a message that it's never too late to get on the right path.

The final speaker was Monty Stiles from the U.S. Attorney's Office. He was an excellent speaker who talked to the kids about the dangers of doing drugs. He talked to them about all the people that drugs hurt. He showed them pictures of real life offenders who he had prosecuted over the years and real kids, even babies, who belonged to drug dealers and the horrible way they lived and were treated. He traced the path of all the people who get hurt or even killed to get the drugs to the people on the street. This session was a real eye opener for the students.

Along with learning, there was plenty of time for fun. In addition to bowling, students spent an evening at a roller rink and an entire afternoon at a local water park. They had two dances, an ice cream social and a volleyball tournament.

A highlight of the camp was the talent show. Individual students were able to showcase their talents and the district groups performed skits that they'd created themselves. This was a testament to kids truly coming out of their shells,



leaving their comfort zones, and trusting in their new friends. CVEA's Keaton Shepherd played *Inaudible Melodies* by Jack Johnson on his guitar and sang in front of an audience for the first time in his life. Keaton did an outstanding job and the audience went wild.

Throughout the entire week, chaperones evaluated students; watching to see how kids interact, if they were participating, if they took leadership roles, and how they worked together with everyone else. In addition, students were each personally interviewed and scored. The scores, combined with evaluations helped determine who would receive scholarships and awards at the end of the week.

The Alaskan students truly came out on top. It was noted that they were very knowledgeable, determined, and knew what they wanted. Keaton Shepherd received the top score for the entire camp. For his hard work, he will receive a \$600 college scholarship and will serve as Alaska's representative on the Youth Leadership Council. He will be visiting Washington, D.C. in 2010 and the NRECA Annual Meeting in 2011.

Keaton was also chosen, by the other students, to return to the Idaho Youth Rally as Alaska's camp director in 2010. This is a big honor as directors are chosen by their peers.



According to Keaton, "Simply put, the ICUA Youth Rally was the best week of my life! The caliber of the student representatives at the rally was astounding, and we all became great friends. I had a hard time saying goodbye to everyone. I learned so much, grew immensely as a person, and developed friendships that will continue long after high school. I am so thankful to have had this life changing opportunity, and encourage EVERYONE in the Copper Basin to apply next spring, you will be glad you did!"

Quinn Verfaillie scored in the top ten and received a \$500 scholarship to be used for college. Quinn said, "the Youth Rally was one of the best weeks of my life. It was full of amazing speakers, great kids, and a perfect experience. It was a great opportunity for me to learn while representing Alaska and CVEA. I'm very thankful for having the opportunity."



Top Left: KC Ramsey uses a hotdog to demonstrate what contact with electricity can do to the human body. Left: Quinn acts as anchor during a team building exercise. Above: Keaton playing guitar and singing at the talent show.

Photos by Sharon Crisp

The ICUA Idaho Youth Rally taught students about the industry and excited them about the opportunities the electric utility industry holds, taught them how to lead, how to be an effective member of a team, and how leaving your comfort zone can bring big rewards.

According to Sharon Crisp, CVEA Director of Communications, "It was particularly rewarding when our students told me that the week had been the best experience of their life and they knew they'd be able to use things they learned in their future. CVEA is very proud of the students we sent and congratulate them on a job well done!" ■

For more information, please contact Sharon Crisp at 835-7005, 822-5506 or email crisp@cvea.org. 2010 information and applications will be available in December 2009.