

The CVEA Community Foundation Gives Local Students Life Changing Experiences



**Top Left to Right, Daniel Ribbens, Olivia Dowling, Nicholas Woolf, Sharon Crisp.
Bottom Left to Right, Emmie Van Wyhe, Anna-Grace Jeffries, Hope Steffensen, Forest Masters.**

The Copper Valley Electric Association Community Foundation is committed to enriching the educational experience of our local students and supporting future members of the Cooperative. This year, CVEA awarded two students the opportunity to attend the 2011 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 2011, Anna-Grace Jeffries, from Valdez and Emmie Van Wyhe, from Kenny Lake were awarded Youth Rally Scholarships from CVEA, allowing them to travel, at no cost to them, with a group

of other Alaskans to attend the Youth Rally in Caldwell, Idaho, July 10-16. Forest Masters, of Valdez, who attended in 2010 joined the group as a returning Director.

This year, seven Alaskan students attended the Youth Rally with chaperone Sharon Crisp from CVEA. In addition to CVEA's students, Homer Electric sent Nicholas Woolf and Olivia Dowling and Golden Valley Electric sent Daniel Ribbens and Hope Steffensen.

The Alaska group arrived just in time to meet their roommates then play a little sand volleyball, attend a barbeque, and go bowling. The rest of the week 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 heard from industry leaders on issues that are impor-

tant to Cooperatives. 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 toured the Idaho State Capitol Building and saw a very powerful safety demonstration that reminded them how serious and dangerous electricity can be.

One afternoon was spent learning about teambuilding by completing a cooperative course of activities meant to demonstrate how much more successful teams can be if they work together.

The students listened to a drug awareness panel made up of young men who were incarcerated due to drug/alcohol use/abuse and crimes that were directly related to their abuse and going through a program called Choices. They were very candid about their lives and how their choices have affected their lives and their families. It was very inspirational to hear about the changes they are making and the students came away with a message that it's never too late to get on the right path.

Jake French was a motivational speaker who had a terrible accident that left him a quadriplegic. He told the kids his story and how his accident has changed his life. He talked to them about the dangers of staying out late, drinking, and doing drugs. He also reminded everyone how important it is to stay positive.

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 Roaring Springs Water Park where they enjoyed water roller coasters, lazy rivers and wave pools, car races, mini golf, bumper boats, laser tag, and a huge arcade. They also had two dances and an ice cream social.



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. Alaskans Daniel Ribbens and Hope Steffensen played the piano and Nik Woolf gave an awesome Tae Kwon Do demonstration.

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 and be chosen to sit on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC).

Alaska did very well again this year and CVEA's students came out on top. Emmie Van Wyhe received the top score for Alaska and second highest score overall. For her hard work, she will receive a \$500 scholarship to be used for college and will serve as Alaska's representative on the YLC.

The YLC emphasizes the development of strong leadership, presentation, and advocacy skills in America's most promising young leaders. NRECA coordinates a series of educational workshops for the YLC which cover topics such as the cooperative business model, grass-



roots advocacy, community service, and careers in public service. Emmie will travel with the Idaho YLC representative to Washington, D.C. for the Youth Tour and the Youth Summit in 2012 and will attend the NRECA Annual Meeting the following year.

Anna-Grace was awarded a \$500 scholarship and was chosen to return to the Rally next year as a Student Director. This is a big honor as Directors are chosen by their peers.

In addition, Nicholas was awarded \$500, Olivia \$400, and Hope \$300 in scholarships. Finally, Daniel was given the Energizer Award and a \$100 gift card.

The Youth Rally is a life changing experience for many students. Anna-Grace tells us, "when the trip began, I started to wish I didn't go. Then, shortly after I got there my thoughts about it changed. I began to step out of my shell and have fun. The Youth Rally has changed me as a person. I miss the experience and the friends I made there. In the end, I wished I didn't have to go home." She adds that she can't wait to be a Director next year. "I can't wait to show other kids how much fun they can have. It will be another trip of a lifetime."



Above Left, CVEA delegates Emmie, Forest, and Anna pose for a group shot at the awards ceremony

Top, Emmie and Anna enjoying a quick massage before catching their flight.

Above, Anna and Emmie, joined by other Youth Rally delegates, showing off the mustaches they won at the arcade inside the Roaring Springs Water Park.

Photos by Sharon Crisp

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In addition to being the returning Director at the Youth Rally, Forest Masters represented CVEA and the State of Alaska as the 2011 YLC delegate. She attended the National Youth Tour and Youth Summit in Washington, D.C. this summer.

While at the Youth Tour, Forest, along with other delegates, saw the sights of our nation's capital and learned about the history of the United States and the electric cooperative movement. The students also gained insight into today's most important issues through face-to-face visits with their congressional delegations on Capitol Hill. Walking the hallowed halls of Congress is a memory that will undoubtedly stay with them forever.

Forest visited Mt. Vernon, where George Washington lived, Ford's Theatre, where President Lincoln was assassinated, and the Holocaust Museum, where students and adults alike saw, in graphic detail, how Hitler and his regime rose to power during WWII and the horrors they committed throughout the war.

Students visited the Washington Monument and other presidential and war memorials as well as Arlington Cemetery. They also toured the Bureau of Engraving, the National Archives and the Smithsonian.

The grand finale for the entire group was attending the opening night of *Wicked* at the Kennedy Center. The performance was amazing and a fantastic, memorable way to end the trip.

When asked to comment on her Youth Rally and Youth Tour experiences, Forest commented, "Being a part of these once in a lifetime experiences has helped me to really take into account the affect we have, as individuals, on one another. Knowing that someone else is making a difference by simply doing their best somewhere else motivates me to persevere and do my best where I am in life."



According to Sharon Crisp, CVEA Manager of Members Services, "It is so incredibly rewarding to watch our students develop and grow through these experiences. CVEA is very proud of the youth program offered by our Community Foundation. We are truly enriching the educational experience of our local students and creating future leaders."

For more information on the Youth Rally or the Youth Leadership Council, please contact Sharon Crisp at 822-5506, 835-7005 or email crisp@cvea.org. 2012 information and applications will be available in December 2011. ■

Top, NRECA CEO Glenn English visits with Forest Masters and other members of NRECA's Youth Leadership Council in his Arlington, VA., office during the 2011 Youth Summit.

Photo by Derrill E. Holly/ECT.Coop

Above Left, Forest posing for a picture in front of the White House

Above Right, Forest in front of the Capitol Building during the National Youth Tour

Photos by Sharon Crisp