

# BEACON



Amicalola Electric  
Membership Corporation

“Owned By Those We Serve”

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## Comments from the CEO

### New Year’s resolutions with energy savings in mind



Charles Gibson  
President/CEO  
Amicalola EMC

**H**appy New Year! As you make your resolutions this year, consider making a few toward saving energy and money in 2015.

Another colder-than-normal winter is predicted for much of the country this year, so keep in mind that the weather makes a big impact on electric bills. Instead of waiting until after a high bill is in your mailbox, be proactive to manage your energy use.

The ENERGY STAR® Home Advisor at [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov) can help you improve your home’s energy efficiency while adding comfort and value. In three simple steps, you can create your home’s energy profile, get recommendations customized for your home and improve efficiency. Keep in mind HVAC systems account for nearly half of your bill. Even the most efficient HVAC systems will see more use in extreme weather, resulting in a higher electric bill.

Consider your home’s lighting needs. Compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) and light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs are an easy way to increase effi-

ciency in your home. Water-saving showerheads are also an effective option, reducing energy use and water consumption.

Flip a switch, change the air filter and unplug electronics. Making small changes and using energy wisely can save you energy and money, and the interactive home tour at [togetherwesave.com](http://togetherwesave.com) will show you how.

The HomeEnergy Suite on [amicalolaemc.com](http://amicalolaemc.com) is another interactive, online tool that’s simple to use. The HomeEnergy calculator will provide you with estimates of energy use based on your inputs and allow you to explore

energy-saving scenarios to identify opportunities for savings.

Don’t forget, Amicalola EMC also offers free energy audits to our members. Call us to schedule an audit and our energy advisor will make an appointment to give your home a free energy checkup.

With so many tools at your fingertips, saving energy and money on your electric bill is one resolution you can easily keep.



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# Washington Youth Tour builds bonds that last

**W**ashington Youth Tour (WYT) delegates get so much out of the weeklong experience—visits to many historic locations, lessons in leadership and team-building opportunities, not to mention an all-expenses-paid trip to the nation's capital. Although they cherish the memories, one thing that often stays with the delegates longer is the close bonds they develop.

“When you don't know anybody, you make friends fast,” says Courtney Bearrentine, a 2012 delegate from Grady EMC in Cairo. “Fast friends are not always forever friends, but with WYT, somehow they are. It's the common experience that creates those strong bonds.”

Ashley Thompson (2008 Snapping Shoals EMC, Covington) recalls fearing she'd be lost in the shuffle when she moved into her dorm to begin her



From left, Amicalola EMC delegates Andrew Haygood, Laiken Owens, Carley Stamps and Mary Jo Brooks in front of the Potomac River at Mount Vernon.

freshman year at the University of Georgia in Athens. “I was incredibly blessed that Lindsay (Peavy) Drew (Ocmulgee EMC, Eastman) was randomly assigned to the dorm room next to me. What started out as friendship on the tour turned into a lifelong bond. I'm grateful that Youth Tour gave me that connection to spark a friendship in a place where I knew very few people.”

Two other 2012 delegates devel-

oped more than a friendship. Tyler Day (Rayle EMC, Washington) and Sarah Kate Miles (Satilla REMC, Alma), who met on the tour, are engaged. Day attends UGA while Miles is a student at South Georgia State College in Waycross, so the odds of them ever meeting otherwise are remote. Their wedding is planned for spring 2017.

## ★ Washington Youth Tour 2015 tentative itinerary

- June 11:** Kickoff banquet, Atlanta Airport Marriott, Atlanta
- June 12:** Team-building activities; flight to Washington, D.C.
- June 13:** Tour and lunch at Mount Vernon; dinner at Union Station; evening guided tour of FDR, Jefferson, Martin Luther King Jr., World War II memorials; photo op of White House
- June 14:** Guided tour of Lincoln, Korean War and Vietnam Veterans memorials; Arlington National Cemetery guided tour; dinner performance of “1776” at Toby's Dinner Theatre in Columbia, Md.
- June 15:** All States assembly; tour Smithsonian museums; cruise on Potomac River
- June 16:** Tour Supreme Court, U.S. Capitol and Washington National Cathedral; Sunset Parade at U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima statue)
- June 17:** Meet with Georgia's congressional delegation; tour Newseum and Madame Tussauds Wax Museum; All States farewell event
- June 18:** Return flight to Atlanta

*Note: Itinerary subject to change*



Delegate Carley Stamps stands with two U.S. Marines at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima statue)



Andrew Haygood and Laiken Owens in front of U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

## 2015 Youth Tour and scholarship deadlines

Mark your calendar! Jan. 30, 2015, is the deadline to apply for the Washington Youth Tour for high school juniors OR the Amicalola EMC Scholarship Program for high school seniors. Applications are available at your school counselor's office or at [www.amicalolaemc.com](http://www.amicalolaemc.com).



## From delegate to co-op employee

Participating in the Washington Youth Tour (WYT) often opens delegates' eyes to potential career paths. Sometimes, they find a job with one of Georgia's electric cooperatives, which sponsor the tour. Three former WYT delegates who followed that path answer this question:

**What Washington Youth Tour lessons have stayed with you and now help you in your work with an electric cooperative?**

### Kelly McEwen

**Participated:** 2001, representing Carroll EMC (CEMC), Carrollton  
**Current job:** Administrative assistant in Engineering and Operations, CEMC; also worked at CEMC while attending college



All the delegates became friends so easily, and we were made to feel like we were part of a family. That is also what I recall from my past experience working at Carroll EMC during college and it is true today. Cooperative employees—within their own cooperative or with another from across the state—share a special camaraderie and relationship.

Cooperative employees strive to make their communities the best places to live and work and feel it is our duty to be responsible citizens and give back to our communities. Our world would be a better place if everyone held fast to these values.

## About the 2014 delegates

of the 65 who submitted survey responses ...

**43** are members of the **National Honor Society** and/or **Beta Club**

**31** had **never flown** in a plane **before** the **WYT**

**19** are members of **4-H**

**17** had a family member participate in a previous **WYT**

**14** are members of **FFA**

The **Holocaust Memorial Museum** was the tour stop or activity that left the **most lasting impression**.



### Charlie Durden

**Participated:** 2001, representing Georgia EMC, Tucker, and Washington EMC, Sandersville

**Current job:** Member services representative, Sawnee EMC, Cumming

Before I participated in the WYT, at the age of 17, my life revolved around school, church and sports. By the time I started my senior year of high school after returning from the trip, the WYT had given me a more guided focus on the things I wanted to do with my life. After the events of Sept. 11 (we were the last tour group before 9/11), I felt a stronger sense of responsibility and the need to be a good steward to my community, just as the pioneers of the electric membership cooperatives were to the communities they served at the dawn of the Rural Electrification Administration.

I now get the great opportunity to meet the tour delegates we send to Washington, D.C., each year. I enjoy learning of the experiences each had on the trip.

### Leah Tritt Johnson

**Participated:** 2007, representing Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, Young Harris

**Current job:** Member services representative, Amicalola EMC, Dahlonega office

The Youth Tour helps the younger generation with public speaking, responsibility and time-management skills, and gives small-town students the chance to travel somewhere they may never get to see or go otherwise.

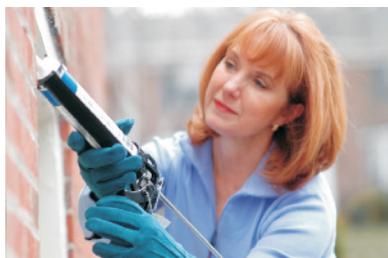
I was extremely shy and attended the smallest school in the state, Woody Gap School in Suches. For me, it was a lot of firsts: first time flying, first time traveling farther than a surrounding state and the first time being alone on a trip without my family. But the Youth Tour gives you a chance to create a new kind of family ... a one-of-a-kind connection with youth across the state and even the country. I created a special bond with the Georgia group and love being able to see where they are now.

As a member of Amicalola EMC's Youth Tour Selection Committee, I interview and evaluate applicants. I hope that one day my husband, John, and I can go back to Washington, D.C., as chaperones.



# Bundle up for winter storms

**A**re you ready for winter? Snow and ice are likely when dealing with winter storms, so being prepared can make a world of difference. Amicalola EMC recommends the following tips to help you prepare for wintry blasts.



## Winterize your home

Winter storms wreak havoc on your home. By winterizing your living space, you'll be prepared for cold and hazardous conditions.

- Maintain and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year to ensure they're working safely and properly.
- Caulk and weather strip doors and windows.
- Insulate pipes to prevent them from bursting when temperatures dip below freezing, and allow faucets to drip during extreme cold.

- Consider installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic (from the inside).
- House fires occur more frequently during winter months. Make sure all family members know where the home's fire extinguisher is and how to use it.

## Prepare a winter survival kit

Severe winter storms often bring accumulations of ice and snow, which can lead to downed power lines and extended outages. Amicalola EMC crews will work hard to restore power, but having a winter survival kit on hand is a smart idea.

- **Food:** Store food that does not require cooking, such as canned goods, crackers, dehydrated meats and dried fruit. Keep a large supply of water on hand. *Ready.gov* recommends five gallons per person.
- **Medication:** Be sure to refill all prescriptions if a major storm is in the forecast.
- **Identification:** Keep all forms of identification handy, such as driver's licenses, photo IDs and Social Security cards. Bank



account information and insurance policies are also good to have on hand.

- **Other items:** First-aid kit, blankets, flashlight, battery-powered radio and extra batteries.

## Stay warm and safe

Plan to have an alternate heating source such as a fireplace, propane space heater or wood-burning stove. Fuel and wood-burning heating sources should always be vented, and make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly. Always practice extreme caution when using alternate heating sources.

If you use a portable generator during an outage, do not connect it directly to household wiring. **Power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including line crew workers.** Contact a licensed electrician to install your generator and make sure a double-pole, double-throw switch is installed.

For more information on preparing for winter storms, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org) or [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

