



DANIEL PECK

Delegates met with U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson at the United States Capitol.



BYRON McCOMBS

JoAnna Winborn, right, a 2017 Washington Youth Tour delegate from Ocmulgee EMC in Eastman, poses with a Marine at the Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima statue). She is now a cadet at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C.

## In packing for trip, delegates leave comfort zone at home

A few months before the Washington Youth Tour (WYT) each year, delegates from Georgia's electric cooperatives receive a suggested packing list for the weeklong trip. Among other items, the list includes six casual touring outfits, two dressy outfits, comfortable shoes, rain gear and sunscreen.



One thing not on the recommended list, though, is each delegate's comfort zone. It's definitely excess baggage for this trip.

Stepping boldly outside the familiar and being flexible and open to new people and activities are part of the leadership experience designed to help delegates grow in many ways so the trip can have a lasting—often lifelong—impact.

Forgoing the comfort zone is a common theme in the surveys that former WYT delegates complete after the trip ends. The 2017 group, which numbered 113, is no exception.

"A lot of times, your comfort zone is holding you back from achieving something, whether it is meeting new people or trying new things," says Dalton Crowe, who represented Amicalola EMC in Jasper on the 2017 tour.

"Sit with someone new every day, go out and dance on the dance floor, ask as many questions as possible, thank your bus driver at every stop and don't let the exhaustion get to you," advises Jennifer Thorpe, a delegate from Coastal Electric Cooperative in Midway.

"Each person had their own backstory, ideas, beliefs and personalities," says Tillman Kinley, who represented Hartwell-based Hart EMC. "Despite our differences, I now have a family of 112 new people who will be great friends, no matter how different we are."

At the end of the tour, the delegates' parents notice the dramatic impact that just one short week can have. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you for giving my daughter the experience of a lifetime," writes one mother to Senior Tour Director Gale Cutler of Georgia EMC in Tucker. "Her world is larger, her vision longer and her aspirations greater."