



Riley Fite



Marissa Green



Lindy Lunt



Heather Udall



Weston Wiltbank

## Students Headed to Youth Tour

Five local juniors have been awarded the opportunity to learn about electric cooperatives and gain a greater understanding of American prosperity and heritage. Selected to represent Graham County Electric Cooperative for a weeklong trip to Washington D.C., are Riley Fite, Safford; Marissa Green, Thatcher; Lindy Lunt, Pima; Heather Udall, Thatcher; and Weston Wiltbank, Safford.

The Washington Youth Tour requires students to take a written test and complete a 350-word essay on an assigned topic. Finalists are interviewed by a panel of judges. The topic for this year's essay was, "How have electrical cooperatives helped bring prosperity to rural America?"

The five students will join an Arizona delegation of 50 students and chaperones at the 2014 Washington Youth Tour. The national delegation includes 1,500 high school juniors and provides them with the opportunity to see Congress in action. Students are taught the importance of our nation's history and the democratic process.

### Riley Fite

For Riley Fite, interest in American prosperity and leadership comes naturally. Riley, the son of Lance and Jayme Fite, attends Safford High School. He has a passion for the agriculture industry in rural America and is a big supporter of FFA. He has earned awards locally and statewide in dairy evaluation and livestock evaluation, including the 2013 National Dairy Silver Team award. He has served in FFA leadership as greenhand president, chapter treasurer and most recently serves as Safford chapter vice president.

Riley prides himself as a responsible, trustworthy young man who works hard and accomplishes goals. He considers himself to be a fast learner and strives for success. He plans to attend Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, and earn a degree in agricultural business management.

Riley's reference letter notes he is an excellent student and citizen. He brings energy, enthusiasm and a willingness to work hard into all of his pursuits.

Riley stated in his entry essay, "Being able to walk into the kitchen and turn on a light late at night is a blessing and being able to have electricity in the rural part of America has definitely increased the quality of life and made certain everyday tasks much easier to complete."

### Marissa Green

Marissa Green's essay describes life in modern America as being much different than it was in 1933, with the electrification of farms in rural areas serving as the catalyst to progress. She writes that thanks to electric cooperatives providing the lowest possible price of electricity to even the poorest farmers, it is no longer a hassle for farmers to work after dark, thereby boosting production and prosperity in rural America.

The Thatcher High School student is the daughter of Dan and Marcie Green. She is friendly, dependable, conscientious, hard working and studious.

Marissa was the THS Student of the Year in 2012-13 and participates in a number of school activities, such as spirit club, athletic club, green club, Spanish club, Students Against Destructive Decisions club

and THS Leadership Class.

Her recommendation letter says she has a talent for looking at a situation and immediately going to work to accomplish the task at hand.

Marissa enjoys activities including cross country running, show choir, performing on the piano and violin, and teaching piano and violin. Her interests are crafts, music, nutrition, exercise and learning.

### **Lindy Lunt**

Lindy Lunt is the daughter of Melissa and Lonni Lunt, and attends Pima High School. Lindy is interested in politics and seeing how our government works. She is involved with her community through organizations and events such as Turkey Trot and Relay For Life, and participates in service projects with her church by knitting hats for infants at the hospital.

Lindy says her great-grandmother told her she remembers finishing her schoolwork by candlelight at her kitchen table when she was a girl, but that changed when the co-op came to town.

Having placed first in state Future Business Leaders of America Principles and Parliamentary Procedures, Lindy is excited to see government at work in Washington. Among her other achievements, Lindy completed a swim from Alcatraz Island to San Francisco and a half marathon for which she donated the proceeds to the Ryan House Foundation. Exceeding the AIM's in science, reading and math, she also stays involved in FBLA, TOP, SADD, HOSA Future Health Professionals, and holds leadership positions in her church.

### **Heather Udall**

Heather Udall, daughter of Kristie and David Udall attends Thatcher High School. In her essay, she says she wonders how many people have flipped on the light switch or watched TV without a thought to how electricity came to be. The formation of electric co-ops has resulted in accessibility of electricity in rural communities across the U.S.

Heather's letter of recommendation states, "She is an excellent example of the kind of future leaders this community needs. The attributes she magnifies because of her loyalty, her willingness to work hard and her service-oriented attitude will serve her well as she continues through life. She is not afraid to ask

for help or give it when the need arises."

Heather loves running, spending time outdoors and camping with her family. She loves creating things, whether through baking, writing, music, reading or styling hair.

She placed first in a Spanish skit at Eastern Arizona College for skills day.

Heather says she wants to get to know other students on the tour. She is passionate about learning more about the founding fathers and how cooperation can make the U.S. a better place.

### **Weston Wiltbank**

According to Weston Wiltbank, cooperatives in rural America have had a large impact on farming and ranching but, more importantly, have changed the way we live our lives. Living in rural America, Weston has seen the blessings and prosperity electricity has brought into his own life and how it has shaped rural America.

Weston, the son of Sasha and Brent Wiltbank, and a Safford High School student, demonstrates hard work and dedication in all aspects of his life. He serves as FFA chapter sentinel and has served on many local, state and national FFA competition teams.

He enjoys participating in football and basketball and serving in the Boy Scouts of America, through which he received the athlete of the year award, along with Life Scout.

He believes in respecting, not only others, but ourselves. He seeks out attributes featured in the Boy Scout Law, such as kindness, loyalty and bravery.

Weston's reference letter states, "Weston never leaves a rock unturned and strives to be the best at everything he does. He demonstrates great leadership qualities and will be a true ambassador for Safford and the agricultural industry."

Weston plans to serve a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and then attend Arizona State University and Texas A&M to study dentistry.

As they learn the importance of being active participants in our democracy and how to contribute to rural America, these students will be great ambassadors for GCEC and our community. ■