

MEMBER SERVICES

Q&A

Q: I recall reading last year that Bluebonnet gave away a used truck after the Annual Meeting. Do you plan to do that again this year?

A: Yes, this is the fifth year we are retiring one of our fleet trucks and giving it away to a lucky co-op member. This year, we are giving away a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 extended cab with about 131,000 miles on it. To qualify to win, you must



register at Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting on May 9 or send in a proxy voting form that was mailed to you in March.

Bluebonnet encourages all members to attend the Annual Meeting. It's a great opportunity to meet co-op leadership, hear a State-of-the-Cooperative report and learn of milestones that

Bluebonnet reached in 2016. But if you can't make it, be sure to vote by proxy. It's one way to make sure your voice is heard, and you will automatically be entered in the truck drawing. The drawing will be held the day after the Annual Meeting.

To vote by proxy, complete the proxy form that was mailed to you in March and return it by mail in the postage-paid envelope or drop it off at any of Bluebonnet's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor by 5:30 p.m. May 2. If you misplaced the proxy form, you can pick one up at a member service center or call 800-842-7708 and ask a representative to mail one to you.

Members who attend the Annual Meeting also will be eligible to win one of dozens of door prizes ranging from gift cards to an iPad to a riding lawn mower. These prizes will be given away in a drawing during the meeting. Vendors who do business with Bluebonnet donated money to purchase the door prizes.

Find out more about the Annual Meeting at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting, or contact a member service representative by emailing memberservices@bluebonnet.coop or calling 800-842-7708 during business hours.

— Nikki Ahlbrandt, member service representative



After this year's Annual Meeting, Bluebonnet will give away a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 extended cab to one lucky member.

Bluebonnet sending teens to D.C.

Young leaders will represent Bluebonnet at Government-in-Action Youth Tour

By Lisa Ogle

A Future Farmers of America chapter officer who plans to become a veterinarian and an aspiring engineer with a passion for history are the recipients of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's 2017 Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which includes a paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Daylon Drews, a senior at Round Top-Carmine High School, and Caleb Smith, a junior at Brenham Christian Academy, will represent Bluebonnet on the annual youth tour. Logan Perry, a sophomore at Giddings High School, is the alternate and will join the tour if Drews or Smith is unable to attend.

The two participants will visit historical sites in our nation's capital, as well as tour the Texas Capitol and the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin, from June 7-16. They also each receive a \$500 scholarship upon high school graduation.

The two recipients and alternate were among 10 finalists who gave oral presentations and were interviewed by community leaders at Bluebonnet's headquarters in February. Recipients were selected based on oral presentations, personal interviews and essays about electric cooperatives, politics and community issues.

Drews, 17, of Carmine, shows pigs and has served as an officer in her school's FFA for four years. She will study animal science in the fall at Texas A&M University and wants to become a food animal veterinarian, a doctor who cares for animals raised for food production and human consumption.

During her oral presentation, Drews said that if she met her congressman, Rep. Michael McCaul, in Washington, she "would ask him how he has worked to strengthen national security and why it is an important matter to him." She also said getting to meet McCaul would broaden her knowledge of government and allow her to grow as an American.

Smith, 17, of Brenham said one of his history teachers has been his mentor since he was young and inspired his love of history and learning. Smith is also on the leadership team



Sarah Beal photos

Daylon Drews, left, a senior at Round Top-Carmine High School, and Caleb Smith, right, a junior at Brenham Christian Academy, were selected to represent Bluebonnet during the Government-in-Action Youth Tour. Logan Perry, center, a sophomore at Giddings High School, will be the alternate.

of the youth group at Brenham's First Baptist Church and a member of Student Council and Interact, a Rotary Club-sponsored leadership group.

In his essays, he said he was concerned that the younger generation isn't willing to get involved. "It is imperative that young leaders begin to step up and make an impact in their communities," Smith said.

Perry, 15, of Paige, is a leader in 4-H and served as a delegate to the national 4-H Congress in Atlanta. He's involved in the Leo Club, Student Council and St. Paul Lutheran Church and plays varsity tennis. He volunteers for a number of community service projects and proposed and implemented a water bottle refill station at his school that reduced the use and waste of more than 10,000 plastic water bottles as of February.

Drews and Smith will join 145 young people representing other Texas electric co-ops and more than 1,700 teens from around the country in the nation's capital, where they will visit historical sites and the U.S. Capitol, meet members of Congress and attend events hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, an organization that represents more than 900 electric cooperatives.

The youth program has more than 51,000 alumni, including CEOs and U.S. senators, since it began in 1964. For more information, go to bluebonnet.coop and click Scholarships under the Community tab. Look for 2018 applications in the fall. ■



Substation upgrade doubles power for 4,800 members

An upgrade to Bluebonnet's Lyle Wolz substation near Deanville in Burleson County has more than doubled the capacity to provide power to more than 4,800 members. The upgrade included a new transformer that increased the substation's capacity to 50 megawatts. One megawatt is enough power to provide electricity to about 200 homes during peak demand, like a hot summer afternoon or cold winter morning.

The Wolz substation is one of 45 on Bluebonnet's electric grid that takes power from high-voltage transmission lines and reduces it to a lower voltage so it can be distributed to Bluebonnet's members. It is located on Texas Highway 21 near Deanville and serves southwest and central Burleson County, northeast Lee County and northwest Washington County. The



substation's two transformers provide electricity to 4,824 meters along 1,028 miles of power lines. The increased activity of the area's oil, gas and water supply industries prompted the Wolz substation upgrade, according to Eric Kocian, Bluebonnet's chief engineer and systems operation officer.

"We continuously monitor our electric distribution system to ensure that we are able to meet the power needs of our members and plan for future growth," Kocian said. "Adding a second transformer and more than doubling the load capacity of the Wolz substation will ensure that we continue to provide reliable power to our current and future members."

Bluebonnet started the Wolz substation upgrade in May 2016 and completed it in December 2016.

Construction has been completed on an upgrade to the Lyle Wolz substation near Caldwell. The changes ensure Bluebonnet's ability to meet current and future energy needs in the area.

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The classroom knowledge can help when crews are out on calls. After learning about a less common type of fuse, Lancaster and an experienced lineman came across one during a cold weekend last winter. Lancaster was able to help trouble-shoot based on what he had learned in class.

One of the most technical and time-consuming tasks an apprentice must learn in the field is the proper way to connect meters when providing new service to a large commercial member, Johnson said.

"This requires connecting as many as 28 different conductors going from our transformer to the member's electrical panel, plus installing the metering devices that require extensive and precise wiring," he said. "All of this has to be done in a very limited space within our transformer."

But the learning curve doesn't stop there. "In this line of work, you learn every day," said Daniel Fritsche, a Bluebonnet crew supervisor in Giddings and coach for the apprentices that the co-op sends to the annual Texas Lineman's Rodeo competition.

Several apprentices said the best part about the job is the camaraderie. When you're working around 7,200 volts of electricity — the amount on a typical Bluebonnet line — it's all about trust and working safely, Fiebrich said. Knowing your life is in your co-workers' hands "makes everybody you work with at least your friend, if not family."

Jeremy Lynch, who started and completed the program alongside Fiebrich, agreed: "All these guys like to act so tough, but they're all looking out for each other. They care about each other."

That's why Bluebonnet emphasizes safety in everything from gear, such as fall restraints, to clear communication. Jobs don't start until workers understand who will do what and how and when. Clear communication is critically important, especially when it comes to live power lines through which electricity is flowing.

"The main goal is to go home at the end of the day the same way you arrived," Fiebrich said.

The final step in becoming a Bluebonnet lineman is demonstrating the capability of being the first and possibly only person sent out on a trouble call. Crew supervisors typically make that decision after watching the apprentices troubleshoot and make repairs during outages. Apprentices must be able to explain, handle and work with various pieces of equipment, Johnson said.

"Because of the program, Bluebonnet has some of the most knowledgeable and skilled linemen in the business," he said. "They have learned that each person on the crew is an important link in the efficiency and safety of day-to-day work. Each may have their different thoughts and ideas about how accomplish the tasks, which provides a crew with options to safely get through the day." ■

CONNECT WITH BLUEBONNET

CONTACT US

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Member services: 800-842-7708, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday

Email: memberservices@bluebonnet.coop

BOARD MEETING

Bluebonnet's Board of Directors will meet at 9 a.m. April 18 at Bluebonnet's Headquarters, 155 Electric Ave. (formerly 650 Texas Hwy. 21 East), Bastrop.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

For information about the magazine, contact Lisa Ogle at 512-332-7968 or email lisa.ogle@bluebonnet.coop.

OUTAGES

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