



FOUNDATION FOR RURAL  
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

## 2006 Leadership Through Learning Youth Program Sponsored by NECA

For the fifth year in a row, [NECA](#) sponsored the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED) **Leadership Through Learning Youth Program**. From March 18 to March 25, 2006, 15 high school juniors who live in or attend school in an OPASTCO member's service area were in Washington, D.C., on this all-expense-paid trip. The students hailed from all parts of the country— from South Carolina to Oregon and Alabama to Montana!

### 2006 Leadership Through Learning Program Participants and Nominating Telephone Companies

Kyle Lewter, Alabama  
nominated by *Ardmore Telephone Company*

Philip Austin Rizer, South Carolina  
nominated by *Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.*

George Guerette, Ontario  
nominated by *Bruce Telecom*

Brooke Tyler, Kansas  
nominated by *Pioneer Communications*

Joshua Smith, Oklahoma  
nominated by *Canadian Valley Telephone Company*

Skye Pollard, Arkansas  
nominated by *Ritter Communications, Inc.*

Whitney Trumbull, Nebraska  
nominated by *Great Plain Communications, Inc.*

Michael Courville, Montana  
nominated by *Ronan Telephone Company*

Jacob Thibodaux, Louisiana  
nominated by *Lafourche Telephone Company*

Jane Hughes, Vermont  
nominated by *Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom*

Beth Hall, Tennessee  
nominated by *Loretto Telephone Company*

Mark Binning, Iowa  
nominated by *WTC Communications*

Stephen Roy, New York  
nominated by *The Middleburgh Telephone Company*

### Alternates

Sarah Donais, Massachusetts  
nominated by *Granby Telephone & Telegraph Company*

Lidiana Soto, Oregon  
nominated by *Mt. Angel Telephone Company*

Elizabeth Oswald, South Carolina  
nominated by *PBT Telecom, Inc.*

Camille Shirley, Alabama  
nominated by *Otelco Telephone, LLC*

Kalah Mathis, Tennessee  
nominated by *United Telephone Company*



The students arrived in Washington, DC on Saturday, March 18, 2006 and were quickly initiated into the fast paced life that the city has to offer. On Sunday, they had the opportunity to visit the Smithsonian museums as well as view the Washington Monument. Later that night they listened to a presentation given by Charlie Cook, Editor of The Cook Political Report.



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On Monday, students headed to the U.S. Department of State for a seminar on U.S. Foreign Policy given by Jeffrey Krill, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Following the seminar, they headed to the Embassy of Switzerland where they learning about the relationship between the U.S. and Switzerland, plus received several tokens included Swiss Chocolate. In the evening, the students had a second seminar regarding U.S. Political Climate, presented by Ralph Nader, Social Advocate and Former U.S. Presidential Candidate



Tuesday, the students visited the Department of Agriculture for a briefing on Current Issues and the Executive Branch by James Pfiffner, Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University. Following this presentation the students had the opportunity to visit various advocacy organizations throughout Washington, DC as well as tour the Lincoln, Vietnam and Korean Memorials.



On Wednesday, students departed the hotel early to visit the Floor of the House of Representatives, where Rep. Barbara Kennelly, D-Conn., Ret., spoke about issues facing Congress. The students then met with the offices of their Representatives and Senators. To cap off the evening, they enjoyed the comedic entertainment of the Capitol Steps, a group that takes a humorous look at serious issues while providing a nationwide laugh for millions.



On Thursday, the students once again started off their morning with a seminar. Major Robert J. Miceli presented information regarding Principles of Leadership. Students then were taken to Dupont Circle for lunch and visited the OPASTCO offices to learn about NECA, FRED and OPASTCO. They then had the chance to visit the World War II Monument, the FDR Memorial, the Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial. Judge Eugene R. Sullivan, U.S. Court of Appeals, gave a seminar that evening regarding the Role of the Judiciary System.



Friday started off with a Mock Congress, where four bills that they worked on throughout the week that were presented to the entire group for approval. Just like the real Congress, only two of the bills passed. The students then finished up touring through the city by visiting the White House, the Awakening, and Arlington National Cemetery, where representatives participated in the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns. To round out the day, the students attended the closing banquet where they were entertained with speeches and performances by fellow classmates. Students then danced into the night before having to say goodbye to one another and heading home the following morning.