

Each New Year Offers Many Firsts



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER & CEO DEBRA COLE

FOR MANY TEENS, THE GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR IS full of firsts. It may be the first time they leave the state, fly on a plane, visit the nation's capital or travel away from their families for an extended period of time. They will see and experience the larger world through their own eyes rather than through their parents' perspectives—that's the most important first, as it's truly a leap to their next phase, where their journey to adulthood begins.

In preparation for Youth Tour, teens learn about cooperatives, our history and grassroots advocacy. Youth Tour sprang from a suggestion of then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson to a national gathering of co-ops. Johnson believed youths from rural areas would benefit from visiting Washington, D.C., to see firsthand how government works and gain a wider perspective through the experience.

From this idea, Youth Tour formed. Every year, high school students from around the country are selected by their respective electric co-ops to participate in a week-long trip to the nation's capital, where they learn about the country and the world

by visiting museums, monuments, memorials and more.

The program has grown exponentially since its inception; last year's tour saw more than 1,800 high school students participate from co-ops in 46 states. Texas sent a delegation of 147 students.

Youth Tour is one of the most important programs that HILCO Electric Cooperative undertakes. I am consistently impressed by the caliber of students that our co-op sponsors.

I can say that nearly all teens who have partici-

pated in our Youth Tour program look back with fond memories of an educational, interesting and eventful week. Many make lifelong friends. For a few, Youth Tour is a transformational experience. Parents often remark how their children return noticeably different—more mature, more confident, with bigger goals and aspirations; they have a sense of purpose. 4709453600

Our teens are our future, and it's looking brighter every day. I hope you will consider urging your teen to "take the leap" by applying for our next Youth Tour delegation.

For more information about the Youth Tour, contact Kendra Markwardt at 1-800-338-6425 or visit texasyouthtour.com.



ANNE MCGINNIS | TEC



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GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO

Debra A. Cole

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FIND US ON THE WEB

hilco.coop

Happy New Year!

from HILCO EC

Our offices will be closed Monday, January 1, to allow employees to ring in the new year with their families.



ANDREY007 | ISTOCK.COM

Did You Know?

Persistent dirt lines on floors likely can be blamed on air leaks. Dirt travels in moisture, which travels in heat, which seeks cold. Where lines exist around the joints between walls and floors, check for drafts, then seal the leaks.

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Win a \$50 Bill Credit!

As you're reading your *Texas Co-op Power*, look for the "hidden" account numbers in the local HILCO pages in the center of the magazine. If it's YOUR electric account number, call us before the end of January—you have won a \$50 credit on your HILCO electric bill!



(254) 687-2331
or
1-800-338-6425



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Power Tip

Turn off outdoor lighting during daylight hours when it's not needed. If you can, replace existing outdoor lights with solar-powered options for even greater savings.

BILLING SCHEDULE

Payments are due by close of business at 5 p.m. on the due date.

CYCLE 1

Billing Date January 2
Due Date January 18

CYCLE 2

Billing Date January 9
Due Date January 25

CYCLE 3

Billing Date January 16
Due Date February 1

CYCLE 13

Billing Date January 17
Due Date February 1

CYCLE 4

Billing Date January 23
Due Date February 8



Attention, High School Juniors and Seniors!



**Win an all-expense-paid trip
to explore Washington, D.C.!**

Deadline January 8

**Download your application by clicking
on the community tab at hilco.coop**





Where Are They Now?

Government-In-Action Youth Tour winners walk varied paths

HILCO CONTACTED SOME OF OUR PAST YOUTH TOUR WINNERS and asked, “Where are they now?” All leaders in their current lives, these past Youth Tour winners share the experiences they had in Washington, D.C., and what they accomplished since.



“One of the main skills I learned at YT was about communication; I use those skills daily when meeting people for my current job and when I travel.” Cameron Steele is the marketing and community relations coordinator at an independent school district. “I would absolutely recommend Youth Tour to oth-

ers. It is an opportunity to see some of the most sacred sites, art, artifacts, and hear the stories of America’s history. I met so many fantastic people who have gone on to work in D.C. because of their time on Youth Tour. It has brought so many friendships and connections that you may not know that you would need in the future.” Steele has traveled all over the globe and also worked and studied in London, where she received her master’s degree in international business at Regent’s University.

Cameron Steele, 2010



“While on Youth Tour in D.C., I acquired a network of amazing friends, and I was present in a unique atmosphere which allowed me to get out of my comfort zone and provided me opportunities to better myself and grow.” Bekah Payne is a sales associate at a retail chain who earned an associate degree

at Hill College and will graduate from Texas A&M this May with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology. “I would tell anyone who wants to apply for Youth Tour to do so. There is nothing in the world that can ever compare to my experiences while there. The application is super easy, and even getting selected to have an interview is not only an honor but great practice for other interviews you may come across later in life.”

Bekah Payne, 2015



“Winning a spot on the YT of 1991 was one of the most exciting points in my life at that time, and I absolutely loved every aspect of it. And I still talk about the memories I made on the trip.” Stephanie Salinas is an elementary music teacher and says she uses her leadership skills in her classroom every day teaching over 300

students. “Being involved in the Youth Tour was the start of me coming out of my very shy and reserved shell; I would love for any of my own children or any other students to have the opportunity to go. It truly is an opportunity of a lifetime.”

Stephanie Salinas, 1991



“My favorite memory would have to be the opportunity to meet so many diverse people. Growing up in small rural towns, the whole experience was a cultural eye-opener. I enjoyed the interaction with the many people we met along the way as we toured, and the endless information

and history in all the museums.” Chansé Tekell has a career and is also an aspiring actor. He says the leadership skills he learned on Youth Tour have helped him through the years. “Having firsthand exposure to the hub of our country’s political structure made the concept of American politics feel much more important and tangible, and in that I never miss the opportunity to vote.”

Chansé Tekell, 1998



“During Youth Tour, my favorite memory is the different people that I met. We had such a wonderful time visiting some of our country’s greatest historical venues.” Kristi Sargent uses her public relations and social skills daily as a middle school principal. “Youth Tour helped me learn the lifelong skills that helps me be a bet-

ter leader. I would definitely recommend applying for the wonderful opportunity of being a member of the Youth Tour, and I will always hold that experience dear to my heart.”

Kristi Sargent, 1991



“I will always cherish the opportunity and lifelong friends I made by attending the Youth Tour. The Youth Tour taught me to be more relaxed when placed outside of my comfort zone with new people. It was a great source when I had to go on my

first job interview as it had helped give me the confidence to have the ability to speak about myself and my strengths as a person.” Logan is in her third year as a psychology major and was recently promoted to assistant director at her job. She credits the Youth Tour for her inspiration to help the younger generation grow as leaders. “I would recommend students apply for the Youth Tour. The tour teaches you people skills, gives you the opportunity to experience things you otherwise may never do and it gives you the chance to meet and bond with people outside your normal circle.”

Logan Richters, 2014

Future Home of Annual Member Picnic

HILCO EC proudly announces the opening of the HILCO Civic & Event Center



AFTER MONTHS OF WORKING AND SEVERAL HUNDRED HOURS OF planning, the HILCO Civic & Event Center is ready to host functions. Located in Itasca, the ranch-style center was designed with a rustic touch and cooperative feel.

Having been part of the community for the past 80 years, the HILCO board and staff have long seen the need for a facility to accommodate special occasions in our rural area. With the event center centrally located among the counties we serve, HILCO can host our Member Picnic and hold a variety of training courses for cooperative employees more efficiently.

The Civic Center also will be open to the public at a reasonable rate, and, members of HILCO, you will receive a 10 percent discount on hall rental.

The event center is geared to accommodate large and small crowds and cater to the needs of businesses as well as the communities we serve. Included in the construction is the option to divide the main hall into quarters and halves. The 18,745-square-foot facility is capable of housing up to 1,040 guests banquet-style or up to 1,600 guests theater-style.

"We're very excited that it's completed," said General Manager/CEO Debra Cole. "It exceeded all our expectations. We hope the community finds value in it and utilizes it as much as we think they will."

If you are interested in more information, visit the website at hilcocivic.com or call 1-800-338-6425. Follow the Facebook page for upcoming community events at facebook.com/hcec2017. We look forward to seeing you at our Annual Member Picnic this year!





HILCO Electric Scholarship for Excellence

Application Deadline April 16, 2018

Do you aspire to go to college or vocational school?

If you're a high school senior with the strong desire to attend **college** or **trade school**, we can help. Every year we award scholarships to young men and women to help make their dreams a reality.


Who can apply?

Any graduating high school seniors who are dependents of HILCO members and meet the eligibility requirements listed on the application.

How to apply

Visit www.hilco.coop and download the application

For more information on our scholarship program call 800-338-6425 or email Kendra Markwardt at kmarkwardt@hilco.coop

Follow us on 

A MESSAGE FROM THE HILCO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

How Can We Better Serve You in 2018?

It's amazing what we learn through listening and observing

IT'S A NEW YEAR—TIME TO PUT NEW IDEAS INTO ACTION. HERE at HILCO Electric Cooperative, we're always trying to come up with new ways to satisfy our members' needs. We've found the best way to do that is by listening to your suggestions.

For example, many members asked for an easier way to monitor their accounts and pay bills. In response, we offer you SmartHub to check the status of your electric service and receive real-time updates on energy use.

These services are just some of the ways we connect with you, as are the member services representatives who answer when you call or greet you when you visit our office. They help us offer the quality services you expect us to provide.

Another of our goals is to find more ways to help you control energy costs. That's why we communicate with you in these pages about ways we can work together to ease the burdens on your wallet.

Listening improves understanding, builds trust, strength-

ens relationships and fosters cooperation. It's also crucial to collaboration and success. That's why our co-op employees still love face time with our members. 4705403701

One of the best venues for that is our annual meeting, a social event for our whole co-op family. We hope you'll make plans to join us at our new facility for a gathering that includes taking part in co-op business, visiting with friends and neighbors, and partaking in fun and prizes.

So, how do we serve you better in 2018? The same way many of us try to serve the community, society and family better each day: by listening. In our offices, on the phone, through social media and in our face-to-face meetings, we're ready to listen.

When you have questions about energy efficiency, electrical service or any of our products or services, just ask us. When we know just what you want, we're in a better position to deliver successful results. So stop by and see us, give us a call or drop us a line. We're always glad to hear from you.

We Asked the Questions, You Answered

97 ACSI Score Puts HILCO EC Among Nation's Top Utilities

HILCO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS HAVE SPOKEN, earning the co-op an American Customer Satisfaction Index score of 97. The ACSI is a national indicator of customer satisfaction. The score is calculated using four key components: overall customer satisfaction, how a utility measures up to expectations, how it compares to an "ideal" utility and customer loyalty.

Local investor-owned utilities earned scores of 70 and 76. The average score for all electric utilities is 72.

"As a cooperative, we exist to serve our members' needs and work to meet or exceed their expectations. Our first priority every day is to do it well and with gratitude for their support," said General Manager/CEO Debbie Cole. "We will continue to identify the areas we can improve. The opinions of our members are important. We would like to thank all of the members for their input and a big thanks to the staff of HILCO for the hard work they put in every day."

HILCO Electric Cooperative Board of Directors



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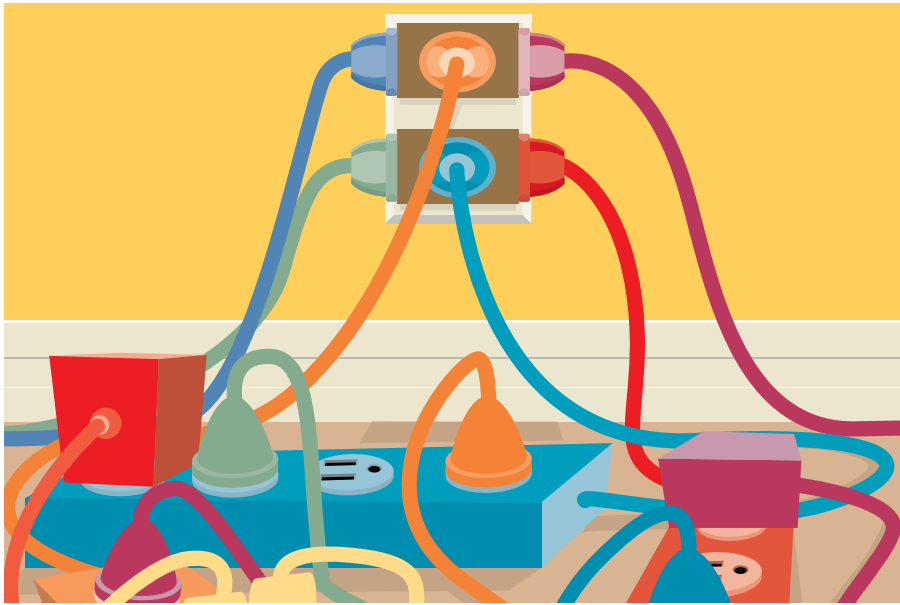
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Resolve To Save Energy in 2018

SAVING ENERGY—AND MONEY—SHOULD BE ON EVERYONE'S RESOLUTION LIST. HERE are 10 quick tips to help you get started in 2018.

1. Replace your lightbulbs. Most people have switched from traditional incandescent bulbs by now, but in case you're still on the fence: An \$8 LED lasts up to 25 times longer and costs only \$30 to operate over that period.

2. Beef up the insulation in your attic. Attics can be sources of heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. Payback varies by region, but it's usually within two years, and your home's comfort will show a difference.

3. Install programmable thermostats. Up to 20 percent of the average home's yearly energy bill goes toward heating and cooling. Programmable thermostats save money by adjusting the temperature during unoccupied hours.

4. Maintain your HVAC system. Heating and cooling system equipment runs best when maintained. Change your filters on a regular basis and have equipment serviced annually to make sure it's running efficiently.

5. Unplug. Check around the house to see if devices are unnecessarily plugged in. Cellphones, chargers, TVs, entertainment systems, computers and appliances still draw power when not in use.

6. Weatherize. Weatherizing your home means sealing against airflow around doors, windows and places where pipes enter the home.

7. Conduct your own energy audit. Do you really need two refrigerators? Is there a fish tank with no fish? Is your house so hot in the winter that you need to wear a Hawaiian shirt? Walk around your house to check for—and eliminate—wasteful energy loads.

8. Replace your single-pane windows. Upgrading to more energy-efficient windows can help control temperature and air infiltration in your home. It can be costly, but payback can take just a few years.

9. Upgrade your appliances. Energy Star-rated appliances mean more energy efficiency and can save you hundreds of dollars over their life span.

10. Contact your electric cooperative for information about energy audits, efficiency rebates or other programs offered.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



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Black Bean Soup

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup finely chopped onion
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup finely chopped celery
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped carrots
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon smoked Spanish paprika
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 can fire-roasted diced tomatoes (14 ounces), drained
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups vegetable broth, salted
- 2 cans black beans (15 ounces each), drained
- Salt to taste
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen or canned corn, drained (optional)

1. Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a large pot. Add onion, celery, carrots and cumin, and cook 2–3 minutes or until onion is tender and fragrant. Add garlic and cook 1 minute more.

2. Stir in paprika, honey, tomatoes, broth and black beans. Stir well and season to taste with salt.

3. If desired, purée the soup in a blender, return to stove and heat until warm. Or skip the puréeing, add frozen or canned corn, rewarm and serve chunky-style.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at
TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM