

TEXAS YOUTH TOUR | VOLUME 9

# YOUTH TOUR



**JOIN THE  
YOUTH TOUR  
ADVENTURE**

**Travel with your  
new best friends  
to Washington, DC**



# WELCOME

**TEXAS' ELECTRIC** cooperatives first banded together in 1965 to send students to Washington, D.C., on the Government-in-Action Youth Tour, and ever since, the tradition has been a treasured one. Those who go on the trip refer to it as the trip of a lifetime, and it's easy to see why.

Teens from across Co-op Country join in exploring museums and monuments, meeting their representatives, and making lifelong friends and memories. Every participant is answering the historic call in 1957 from then-Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson to “see what the flag stands for and represents” by expanding their knowledge and horizons in Washington.

For alums reading this magazine, we hope you look back with fondness on the experiences these young people have had. If you haven't gone on the trip before, you're encouraged to apply and be a part of a legacy more than 60 years strong.



Best Regards,

Mike Williams  
President/CEO  
Texas Electric Cooperatives



“I'd never been away from home without my parents, so this was a really good experience for me to learn the independence I need.”

— KENDALL COOPER,  
MEDINA EC, 2024



## YOUR TOUR | TEXAS YOUTH TOUR

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ALL YOUTH TOUR PHOTOS: ALEX DAL SANTO | TEC





# Family First

Siblings grow closer over shared Youth Tour experience

BY ALEX DAL SANTO

With three older siblings, it can be hard to stand out. **Molly Seago**, a student at St. Joseph Catholic School in Bryan, knows this better than anyone. She applied to and attended the Government-in-Action Youth Tour with 146 other Texas teens, hoping she could finally step out of their shadows.

“I thought that maybe I was just selected because all of my brothers have been to D.C. through Bryan Texas Utilities as well, but when I found out that personal information that could point to who we are was redacted from our application, that completely changed my attitude,” Seago said. “I knew that I had earned this chance on my own, without needing my family name to do the work for me.”

Seago’s Youth Tour trip was a personal one—a pilgrimage—because not only did she follow in the footsteps of her three brothers, she also got to connect with another branch of her family’s tree. She was able to visit the tombstones of three family members buried at Arlington National Cemetery: her great-grandparents Lt. Gen. Edward John O’Neill and Marie O’Neill and uncle Kevin John O’Neill Jr., who died just after birth.

“Sharing this experience with my brothers brought a lot of meaning to the visit,” Seago said. “It’s a similar feeling to having

their senior portraits hanging in the walls of our school. It was like they were with me in spirit.”

Seago, 18, said that having this bond over Youth Tour experiences was a big deal for her and her brothers, ages 23, 26 and 29, who were “over the moon” excited when she was selected. They were eager to tell her their stories and give advice.

“Because of our age differences, there’s not a lot we shared growing up, so getting to share such a meaningful thing like Youth Tour definitely played a part in the bond we have now that we’re older,” she said. “My biggest worry was making friends in such a short amount of time.”

But with advice from her brothers, she found that was no trouble at all and realized that making connections on something like Youth Tour, away from family and everyone she knew, is a valuable skill she can use for the rest of her life.

“Learning to make meaningful connections is the skill that will make college life fuller and easier to navigate,” she said. Seago plans to attend Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, majoring in philosophy with a music minor.

Seago doesn’t have any siblings to follow in her footsteps, but she’s not quiet about encouraging others to apply.

“Youth Tour is the most impactful American experience I’ve had,” she said. “I’ve encouraged every eligible student I know to apply in the hopes that they may feel the impact of Youth Tour that my brothers and I did!”



**MOLLY SEAGO**  
2024



**SAMUEL SEAGO**  
2019



**BENJAMIN SEAGO**  
2017



**NATHAN SEAGO**  
2013





**“ALL OF THE different places we get to tour are absolutely incredible and each represent such an amazing part of our history.”**

—JULIA FAHRENTHOLD,  
COSERV, 2024

**YOUTH  
TOUR**  
by the Numbers

**150 TEXAS  
TEENS  
7 DAYS IN D.C.  
0 DOLLARS**



**“IT IS SO MUCH FUN.  
You’re going to meet  
so many people.”**

—REAGAN HUTCHINSON,  
PEDERNALES EC, 2024

**“IT’S LITERALLY  
a once-in-a-  
lifetime trip.”**

—EVELYNN LANDRY,  
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC, 2024

Flight, hotel, entertainment and food costs on any trip add up. But what if you could visit our nation’s capital for free?

Apply now for Youth Tour, an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., where you’ll experience museums, memorials, the U.S. Capitol, Supreme Court and more while making memories with new friends from all over the state and country. Youth Tour is sure to be the trip of a lifetime.

## **WANT TO GO?**

**LEARN MORE AT  
[TEXASYOUTHTOUR.COM](https://TEXASYOUTHTOUR.COM)**



**HOW TO APPLY**



**SEE THE VIDEO**



# DOUBLE TAKES

On a trip full of eye-opening moments,  
identical twins met identical twins

BY ERIN SINCLAIR



**BENEDICT  
PATANPATAN  
2024**

**JAHZIEL  
RODRIGUEZ  
2024**

**FRANCIS  
PATANPATAN  
2024**

**OZIEL  
RODRIGUEZ  
2024**

**THE GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION** Youth Tour is a trip of firsts for most attendees, including some firsts that are hard to wrap your mind around. Like when identical twins **Jahziel and Oziel Rodriguez** got to experience meeting—and trying to tell apart—identical twins **Benedict and Francis Patanpatan**.

“I finally knew what others went through when they first saw us,” Jahziel said.

Since 1965, Texas’ electric cooperatives have sent more than 4,700 students on Youth Tour (including previous trips with multiple sets of twins).

In 2024, the Patanpatans, sponsored by Taylor Electric Cooperative, and the Rodriguezes, sponsored by Magic Valley Electric Cooperative, were among very few attendees who knew someone else on the trip to Washington, D.C.

They share genes—and maybe even jeans—but underneath the surface, they’re each one of a kind.

“Being a twin is something that I think is hard to explain,” Oziel said. “We find it funny how we can tell each other apart, but to others it seems like they’re looking into a mirror.”

The Rodriguez brothers, who live in Alamo, have one small but noticeable difference they like to point out to people struggling with double vision. Oziel has a small scar on his eyebrow acquired during a hide-and-seek accident many years ago. “Fun fact, I was the cause of it,” Jahziel said. “I always say that I made it easier on people to not mix us up; while he disagrees and says I was tired of getting mixed up with him.”

The Patanpatans can relate. Francis said they tell people to “just call us ‘Twin.’ We usually both look.” No hard feelings.

Francis and Benedict said they’re best friends and do many activities together, including cross-country running, which they plan to continue at Angelo State University. Benedict wants to study nursing and hopes to open a clinic in the Philippines where the brothers have family. Francis may follow the same path, though his competitive side may lead him to coaching instead.

Jahziel and Oziel plan to take different routes when they graduate. Oziel wants to study electrical engineering, and Jahziel wants to study computer engineering, possibly at different colleges. But they know, no matter how far apart they end up, they will always be there for each other.

When they found out they’d be there for each other on Youth Tour though, it was shocking and exhilarating for both pairs of brothers. “It was such an awesome thing, I didn’t know how to react,” Benedict said.

The Rodriguez twins shared similar sentiments. “It never crossed my mind that there would be a world where both of us would get the chance to travel together,” Jahziel said.

It may have been a little easier to take on their first big trip as a pair, but the twins still shared some pretrip nerves. Jahziel, who had never been outside Texas, said “it was easier to go many miles away knowing that I still had a part of my home with me.”

Once in Washington, those seven days were a whirlwind of bus chants, exploring a new city, sharing culture and expanding horizons. “I will always remember the

people I met and the amazing new experiences I got to do thanks to Youth Tour,” Oziel said.

Despite what you might expect, the four twins will tell you they each registered very different experiences.

Oziel’s favorite stop was the National Harbor. He said he loved learning about other regions of Texas from his fellow participants. Jahziel savored his time to decompress in the bus, perhaps part of the reason his bus won the chanting competition. The Smithsonian Institution museums were at the top of Benedict’s list; he wished he

had two more weeks to explore them. And Francis was charmed by the beauty and nostalgia of Mount Vernon, but “the best part for sure was getting to meet new people,” he said.

When they got back, Benedict couldn’t resist telling everyone that “Youth Tour was definitely electric.” The trip helped him understand how much co-ops do for their communities.

The Patanpatans had some advice for students on the fence about applying. “We told [our classmates] y’all all need to go because it really is a trip of a lifetime,” Francis said. “Apply, apply, apply.”

Jahziel wants people to remember, “Fear is a part of life. It will always be with you. You cannot let it choose what you can and can’t do.”

The pairs live 500 miles apart, and while they didn’t stay in touch (“it’s crazy how big Texas is,” after all, Francis said), they’ve got enough memories to last a lifetime.

**“It never crossed my mind that there would be a world where both of us would get the chance to travel together.”**

—JAHZIEL RODRIGUEZ,  
MAGIC VALLEY EC, 2024



“The monuments are  
so iconic. You see  
them, and they’re  
a national symbol.

It’s so worth it.  
Once you get here,  
you’ll make so many  
new friends.”

—RHETT RANGEL,  
CONCHO VALLEY EC, 2024



## JOIN US NEXT YEAR

Ask your electric  
co-op how to apply  
for Youth Tour  
2026