



FROM RURAL ROOTS TO THE NATION'S CAPITAL:

YOUTH AMBASSADOR REFLECTS ON ELECTRIC YOUTH TOUR

For many high school students, summer break is a time for rest, relaxation, and maybe a summer job or two. For Anna Janowski, a soon-to-be senior at Black River Falls High School, this summer brought a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: a trip to Washington, D.C. As a Jackson Electric youth ambassador, Anna completed an application process and was selected to represent Wisconsin on the National Rural Electric Cooperative's (NRECA) Electric Youth Tour held in June. Her trip was sponsored by Jackson Electric and coordinated through the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA).

What began as a trip to the nation's capital quickly became a powerful journey of leadership development, civic engagement, and lifelong connections.



Anna Janowski, who will be a senior at Black River Falls High School this fall, had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to represent Jackson Electric and Wisconsin electric cooperatives on the Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., held in June.

A Chance to Explore

When Anna first found out she'd been selected for the Youth Tour, she saw it as a perfect opportunity to explore her growing interest in political science. "I am undecided about what I want to do in the future," she shares. "I thought it would be a great opportunity to explore my political science interests."

Exceeding Expectations

Excitement built as the trip approached, but nothing could prepare Anna for just how impactful it would be. "I was most excited for the NRECA meeting with all the states," Anna says. "It surpassed my expectations. The guest speakers were wonderful, and the atmosphere was awesome." Visiting the nation's capital for the first time brought its own surprises. "The city was beautiful," Anna notes, "even if the weather wasn't that great."

Eye-Opening Lessons on Cooperatives

Beyond the monuments and museums, Anna learned a great deal about the backbone of rural America: electric cooperatives. "I didn't realize there were so many different types of cooperatives, like credit unions and farmers' co-ops such as Organic Valley," she says. "It was eye-opening to see just how much of Wisconsin is served by co-ops, and I was surprised to learn about the strong presence of cooperatives in states like Texas, Missouri, and Mississippi."

Moments That Mattered

Among the most powerful moments for Anna was participating in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. She was also honored with a private tour of the barracks at the Tomb, a rare opportunity that left a lasting impression. "It was an

emotional experience to be standing there while Taps was played, overlooking Arlington National Cemetery," she recalls.

Meeting U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin was another highlight. "Even though she was on a tight schedule, she was very gracious and took the time to acknowledge us and answer our questions."

Anna also notes the opportunity to observe a live Senate vote, an experience that brought the legislative process to life for these students. "It's interesting to understand how votes are processed and what our delegates do," says Anna.

Growth Through Connection

The Youth Tour wasn't just about civic learning, it was also about personal growth and connection. As one of only 12 youth representatives from Wisconsin, Anna found herself stepping outside her comfort zone. "I didn't know anyone at the beginning, but by the end of the trip, our group had become very tight-knit," she shares. "I think these friendships will last a lifetime."

Evening reflections led by their chaperone helped reinforce the experience. "Each night, we shared something we learned that day, but we couldn't repeat what someone else said. I liked that. It really helped you reflect and remember."

A Glimpse Into the Future

For Anna, the tour didn't just affirm her interest in leadership, it expanded her view of what's possible. "I've always thought about becoming a senator," she explains. "But I also discovered that there are so many career paths within the cooperative world from finance to line work to marketing."

She's taking those lessons home with her. "I plan to broaden my own interests and influence others to take opportunities and push themselves outside of their comfort zone."

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Top left: Anna had the honor of participating in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Bottom left: The Wisconsin Youth Tour delegates had the opportunity to meet with U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin during their visit to Washington, D.C. Right: Anna (front center) witnessed a Senate vote during a visit to the Capitol Building as part of the Youth Tour experience.

PRESERVING MILLSTON'S HIDDEN STORIES: A TOUR THROUGH TIME AT THE MILLSTON AREA MUSEUM

Community is built and sustained through shared history and human connection. The Millston Area Museum embodies this spirit by preserving and celebrating the stories that link people across time and place.

"It all started with sisters Doris Johnson and Myrtle Bunde, who began a 30-year collection of Millston area memorabilia because they believed in the importance of preserving the area's history," shares Millston Area Museum Board President Jenny Walworth.

By the time the sisters had enough artifacts to display in 2010, however, there was neither funding nor enough volunteers to support the museum. "That's when the museum revival started in 2017," says Jenny. "Sara Hendricks and I approached the town board, and we were given six months to put our plan into action. The museum reopened Memorial Day weekend that year."

The museum shares the lesser-known history of the communities of Millston, Knapp, Shamrock, and Manchester, each deeply connected and rich in heritage. "Whether you're a local or just passing through, the museum has something to teach everyone," Jenny says. "This area has so much more to offer than meets the eye. We have displays that showcase the things that make this area unique."

A Step Inside: Stories from Every Corner

Once a schoolroom, the museum has been transformed into a capsule of local history, organized by communities, industries, businesses, and organizations. Near the entrance, visitors are drawn to the North Settlement Quilt. "The



Top left: The front of the museum recreates a classic one-room schoolhouse—chalkboard, desks, and all. Top right: Millston Area Museum Board President Jenny Walworth stands near the North Settlement Quilt and vintage post office boxes, sharing stories stitched into local history. Bottom left: Logging was once the heartbeat of Millston, with the Black River serving as a vital timber highway. Bottom right: Children carried cold lunches to school in tin pails.

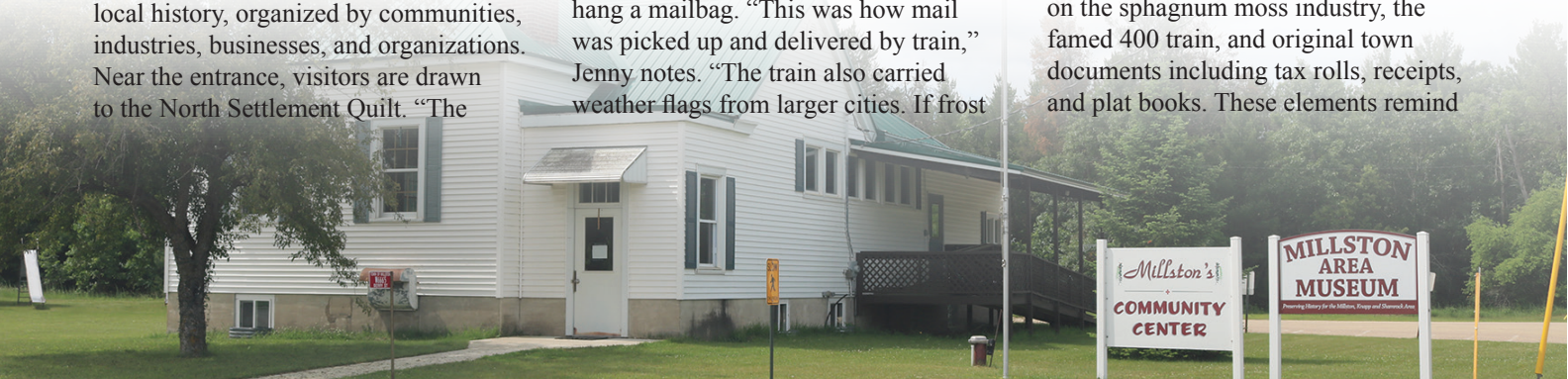
quilt was made by Ida Strozewski, a woman from the North Settlement Community," Jenny explains. "The state came in during the Resettlement Act in the 1930s and bought out the farmers, turning their farms into state forestland. Many of these families still have local ties or relocated to other areas of Jackson County."

Continuing through the room, guests will encounter the original post office boxes from Millston's first post office, accompanied by a photo of Post Mistress Marie Jay climbing a pole to hang a mailbag. "This was how mail was picked up and delivered by train," Jenny notes. "The train also carried weather flags from larger cities. If frost

was predicted, cranberry growers could flood their crops to protect them."

The logging history of the area is brought to life through a detailed display and a documentary that explores the critical role of the Black River in transporting timber. A standout feature is a miniature replica of the Zeda, McKenna, and Goodyear Logging Camp, donated by the Arity family. "Look at the detail," Jenny says, demonstrating how each building can be opened and explored.

Around the outer walls are exhibits on the sphagnum moss industry, the famed 400 train, and original town documents including tax rolls, receipts, and plat books. These elements remind



The Millston Area Museum is located at W6665 Berry Street, Millston, inside the Millston Community Center.



From left to right: Center displays spotlight business and civic groups like the Millston Homemaker Club, whose efforts led to a life-saving railroad crossing. Along the outer wall, explore the town's unique industries, from the railroad that fueled its growth to sphagnum moss harvesting. Artifacts from Mosser Lee, founded in 1932, highlight Millston's legacy as the largest moss producer in the United States.

visitors of Millston's once-bustling role in regional travel and trade. "The town thrived around the railroad, and Highway 12 was the main road before the interstate," Jenny explains. "The introduction of the interstate really impacted Millston, as it did many small towns," Jenny continues.

At the front of the museum, a recreated one-room schoolhouse display features the original chalkboard, vintage desks, a lunch pail, and a life-size cutout of a local teacher, Ellen Potter. "Students who tour are always surprised that children brought cold lunch in a pail," Jenny laughs. "They also can't believe that teachers had to dress very professionally and weren't allowed to be married."

The final wall highlights histories from the Shamrock and Manchester areas, Native American heritage, churches, and agricultural industries, such as cranberries and blueberries. "It's not well known, but this area used to ship out blueberries by the case on the train," Jenny says. "The fields were burned to encourage growth, but the state put a stop to the controlled burns."

In the center of the room are displays on notable area figures, local clubs, and once-thriving businesses that have since disappeared. "This exhibit focuses on the annual Labor Day MDA (Muscular Dystrophy Association) Fundraiser event, a popular community tradition," Jenny points to the display.

The Heart of the Museum: Connecting Families and Memories

Beyond the displays, the museum

offers a deeper, more personal service through what it calls the "family file," a cabinet organized by surname, containing photos, newspaper clippings, and documents tied to families from the region. These archives have helped people uncover long-lost connections.

"I once helped a man discover who his biological mother was and connected him to his siblings," Jenny shares. "Another time, I found photos for a woman who had only ever seen one or two pictures of her mother, who died young."

These stories are a reminder of the museum's deeper purpose, not just to display history, but to reconnect people with their roots.

A Living Archive of Community and Resilience

Though this may be just a brief literary tour, the full experience of the Millston Area Museum is best had in person. Open on select days or by private appointment, the museum welcomes guests who are curious, nostalgic, or looking to rediscover their own family's place in local history.

At its heart, the Millston Area Museum is more than just a building filled with artifacts: it's a living archive of community, identity, and resilience. Whether you have ancestral ties to the area or are simply curious, the museum provides a powerful reminder that every small town holds stories worth preserving.

—Brandi Shramek, Member Relations Supervisor

Upcoming Events

July 30—August 3, 2025

Jackson County Fair display in the Jackson County Historical Society building, located near the antique tractors and antique building.

August 9, 2025—1:00 p.m.

History Makers Tour with guest speaker Rebecca Hopman

Presented by the Wisconsin State Historical Society

Learn how to use state records to trace immigrant roots.

Seating is limited. Admission is by freewill donation.

December

Christmas Gift Wrapping & Bake Sale Fundraiser

Support the museum and get your holiday wrapping done in one stop!

Did You Know?

The Millston Area Museum also offers:

- Document scanning and copying services
- Volunteer opportunities for students earning community service hours
- One-room schoolhouse presentations (*narrated copies available for purchase in the future*)
- Donation opportunities—all artifacts in the museum have local ties

Museum Hours

Open to the public:

- Every 3rd & 4th Wednesday | 4–8 p.m.
- Every 3rd Sunday | 1–3 p.m.
- Private tours available by appointment

Follow the Millston Area Museum Facebook page for updates on pop-up dates.

WHAT ARE THOSE CHARGES ON MY BILLING STATEMENT?

Understanding the Commitment to Community Fee

You may have noticed a “Commitment to Community” line item on your monthly Jackson Electric billing statement. This fee is required by the State of Wisconsin and helps fund programs that benefit residents across the state. Other utilities might list it as a “public benefits fee” or “state low-income assistance fee.”

This requirement began with Wisconsin’s Act 9 in 1999, which mandated that utilities collect funds to support energy conservation, energy efficiency, and low-income assistance programs. In 2005, Act 141 expanded on that by requiring utilities to collect an average of \$16 per customer each year. This is where the \$1.40 monthly “Commitment to Community” charge on your bill comes from.

This non-taxable charge is shown as a separate line item on your electric bill, as outlined in Wisconsin Statutes §§ 16.957 and 196.374. Of that \$1.40, half (\$0.70) goes toward low-income energy assistance programs, while the other half supports energy efficiency initiatives.

Jackson Electric uses the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) to provide aid to qualifying members needing help with their energy bills. In addition, Jackson Electric runs its own rebate program to support members who make eligible energy-efficient upgrades.

Jackson Electric does not participate in the statewide Focus on Energy program. As a member-owned cooperative governed by nine directors, we believe that the funds collected through the

Commitment to Community fee should stay local, benefiting members within our service territory. If we joined Focus on Energy, the energy efficiency portion of your fee would be distributed statewide, and we’d lose flexibility to design programs that best serve our members.

So, the next time you see the Commitment to Community fee on your bill, know that it’s more than just another fee. It’s helping neighbors stay warm, supporting smart energy use, and keeping valuable resources right here in our community.

Current Service Detail

Facility Charge		35.65
Facility Charge		5.00
Commitment To Community		1.40
Energy Charge	228 kWh @ 0.1306	29.78
DF Energy Charge	240 kWh @ 0.1	24.00
Demand Charge	1.74 kW @ 0.0	0.00
PCA	468 kWh @ 0.0	0.00
Area Light (Qty: 1)		12.00
Wisconsin State Tax		4.72
Jackson County Tax		0.48
Total Current Charges		113.03

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A Message to Future Ambassadors

To youth ambassadors considering applying for the Youth Tour in the future, Anna is clear: go for it. “It’s only one week, and it’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You’re not going to find these private tours anywhere else,” she explains.

Above all, Anna is grateful for this opportunity. “I’d like to say thank you to Jackson Electric for making this trip possible for me. I will never forget this experience.”

To be eligible for the Washington, D.C. Electric Youth Tour, students are required to participate in the Youth Ambassador Program. Student’s parent/guardian must have their primary residence OR a registered business, determined by membership application, on JEC’s service lines.



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Members are invited to attend the
ANNUAL MEMBER PICNIC
Wednesday, October 8, 2025
4 – 7 p.m.

Jackson Electric Cooperative Building
N6868 County Road F
Black River Falls, Wis.

More details to come in the September issue
of the *Wisconsin Energy Cooperative News*



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Fridays, 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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