

My Washington Youth Tour experience

By: GARRETT BOTKIN



One of the most interesting stops on the WYT happened on “Capitol Hill Day” when we enjoyed the unique opportunity to tour the U.S. Capitol building and meet with Georgia’s congressional leaders. I particularly enjoyed meeting with Congressman Sanford Bishop.



I enjoyed a quiet moment on the riverboat cruise of the Potomac River.

The Washington Youth Tour (WYT) was a tremendous blessing to me. I’ll never forget the friends that I made - over 100 - nor the impact that participating in the WYT has left on me. Our nation’s capital is truly wonderful, and remarkably different from my small town of Leesburg.

Looking back on the trip invokes a feeling of longing in me to go back for just one more day, just one more hour, just one more second. At the beginning of the WYT, one week seemed like an eternity. By the end of the week, it seemed like a second. It is safe to say: The WYT was a huge, life-changing event for me that will have a lasting impact on my life.

My favorite stop on the tour was the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Throughout the packed week, we visited almost every site imaginable in Washington, D.C. Stops included Arlington National Cemetery, the numerous Memorials, the Smithsonian museums, and so much more. One stop stood out the most to me

though: The Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Our tour began with an elevator ride to the top. As we entered, we were greeted by a single screen that relayed to us the basics of the holocaust. I lack the skill to put into writing the sense of sorrow I felt as I walked down the four stories of the museum. Beset on all sides by stories, pictures, and belongings, I was moved beyond words as the Holocaust Memorial

Museum brought to life the suffering inflicted on millions by the Holocaust.

The WYT was a trip of a lifetime for me. I thank the coordinators for the innumerable hours they put into this trip every year. I thank Sumter EMC for sponsoring and enabling me to attend WYT. This trip is a true blessing to the Georgia delegates who are fortunate enough to participate in it.



No trip to our nation’s capital would be complete without a stop to see the White House. Delegates crowded around to admire the “people’s house” and take photos to commemorate the occasion.

My Washington Youth Tour story

BY: RONNY TUCKER

I could never write enough to describe the trip I was blessed to be a part of this past June. The 2017 Washington Youth Tour will forever be a part of my heart, as will the people I met and the relationships I formed over the course of just a week.

During this trip I met intriguing personalities, saw beautiful monuments, and learned so much about America, other people and myself. On Sunday June 11th, I took part in the wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. The ceremony left an indelible impression on my heart for the soldier who willingly gave up his life and identity for his country. For a Navy SEAL hopeful as I am, laying the wreath just added another brick to the foundation of my desire to serve our country and defend the freedoms we enjoy every day.

During the trip I learned to never approach an experience with a closed mind. So many people showed me it is not about what you do in life but about how you approach what you do. After seeing places such as the WWII memorial, Korean War memorial,

Arlington National Cemetery, and the Marine parade, my career plans to pursue becoming a Navy SEAL were even more solidified. I walked away from this trip a better leader because of the people who surrounded me. I learned to stay humble and remain true to myself in all situations, and I have my new friends to thank for that. I also learned how to be more supportive of others, encouraging them to do things they normally



Posing with friends at the Newseum, where I fell in love with the phrase, "Alpaca my camera."

would not do.

It's really impossible to pick my favorite stop of the tour, because there were so many beautiful, breathtaking experiences. But if I had to choose just one, the most captivating moment was during the Sunset Parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial. I was able to see the Marines and their comradery while being surrounded by many friends who all had different plans in life and outlooks on the world.

If I could give advice to future delegates, it would be to meet as many people as you can as quickly



Sarah Kate Hall and I laid the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This was a blessing to me and a truly unforgettable moment not many people experience.

as you can. You only have a week to create friendships that will last a lifetime, and you never know where life will take the people you meet, so make as many connections as you can during the trip and enjoy every minute of their company and the atmosphere created by the trip. Everyone, and I mean everyone, on this trip is so accepting and loving. Being able to meet and talk with so many beautiful personalities was the greatest blessing to me from the entire trip.

Also, bring multiple pairs of tennis shoes, break in those Chacos and bring plenty of deodorant! There is a TON of walking in the hot sun! However, every mile is worth it, and everyone would do it again if we had the chance!

I would like to thank the Board of Directors of Sumter EMC, the Youth Tour coordinators, the chaperones, Gale Cutler, Andrea Walker, Jan Morris, the men and women who serve our country, and most importantly, each and every delegate from the trip for making this the best experience of my life.



The Agouti Crew in front of the Capitol - best friends for life!



Grace Wilson and I pause for a photo at the Lincoln Memorial.