

Transcript of Power Chat in the Electric Lounge
Season 2 – Episode 5 “SECO Energy Youth Programs”
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00:08 – 00:22

Narrator: Power Chat in the Electric Lounge is powered by SECO Energy, an electric distribution cooperative serving over 260,000 members across parts of seven Central Florida counties. For more information about us, visit secoenergy.com.

00:26 – 01:12

Curtis Wynn, SECO Energy Chief Executive Officer: Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you ready? Well, welcome back to Power Chat in the Electric Lounge. I'm your host Curtis Wynn and today's conversation is all about investing in the next generation. We're talking youth tour, leadership and the kind of opportunities that can really shape a young person's future. Joining me today is Megan Shaw, who leads our youth tour program here at Seco Energy, along with two very impressive young leaders, Jaylee Lewis and Lillian Brogan, both of South Sumter High School, who represented Seco Energy as our 2025 Youth Tour delegates in Washington DC. Not only that, they're also recipients of our 2026 scholarships, each receiving \$4,000. Welcome to the Electric Lounge.

01:13 – 01:15

Megan Shaw, SECO Energy's Youth Tour Representative: Thank you for having us. This is exciting.

01:15 – 01:17

Jaylee Lewis, 2025 SECO Energy Youth Tour Delegate: Yes. We're very happy to be here.

01:18 – 01:19

Lillian Brogan, 2025 SECO Energy Youth Tour Participant: I can't wait.

01:19 – 01:35

Curtis Wynn: You can't wait? You ready? All right. Well, well, Megan, let's start let's start with you. Um, I think a lot of people hear youth tour and assume that it's just a trip to DC and but there's actually a whole journey behind it. Would you tell us more about that?

01:36 – 2:01

Megan Shaw: There really is. Youth tour is an experience like no other. It's designed to teach future leaders about electric cooperatives and our impact on rural America in a fun

and engaging way. And one of the first things I always like to point out is that both the Tallahassee trip and the Washington DC trip are completely paid for by SECO Energy. So, it's an opportunity that's fully accessible to all students. We want them focused on the experience, not the cost.

02:02 – 02:10

Curtis Wynn: Not the cost. That's great because without that I'm sure many students would not have that opportunity. So, tell us a little bit about how the process works. How does that work?

02:11 – 02:33

Megan Shaw: Uh absolutely. So, we start out by selecting a group of high school juniors across SECO Energy's Service Territory, historically about 10. From there, they go on to the 2-day Florida Youth Tour in Tallahassee. And from there, they compete in a video competition where we select two to attend the National Youth Tour in Washington DC, which is about a weeklong.

02:34 – 02:45

Curtis Wynn: Wow. All right. So, Jaylee, Lillian, all right, let's take us back to Tallahassee. How did that go and what was that experience like for the two of you? Who wants to start?

02:46 – 03:13

Lillian Brogan: It was a lot of fun. I think my biggest take away from it was all the things I got to experience that I wouldn't usually see in like a day to-day like getting and going to see everything, especially like the connections I made like with people. People I would have never met. Some of them live like 3 hours away from here and I still talk to them. So, my biggest takeaway was not just what I got to experience, but who I got to experience it with and the connections you can make other than just within your school.

03:14 – 03:17

Curtis Wynn:

Nice. Nice. And you're still making those connections, huh?

03:18 – 03:23

Lillian Brogan:

Yes. I still talk to Kai, Tommy. They were all in Tallahassee, of course Jaylee, like we go to school together. We're really good friends.

03:24 – 03:25

Curtis Wynn: Sure. I'm sure you talk to her a lot, right?

03:25 - 03:26

Lillian Brogan: Yeah. Yeah.

03:27 – 03:28

Curtis Wynn: So, Jaylee, what was it like for you and tell us?

03:29 – 03:44

Jaylee Lewis: I really enjoyed how hands-on it was, how we got to actually speak to our representatives and see the legislative process behind the scenes and actually sit in on the House of Representatives as they were debating a bill and just seeing what things were actually like instead of just hearing about it as you usually would.

03:45 – 4:00

Curtis Wynn: Right. Right. So then then there's that video. So that's where it's all on the line. Uh the qualifying piece that brought it all together. So, you want to tell us about that, how did that make you feel?

04:01 – 04:03

Jaylee Lewis: It was very nerve-wracking. Yeah, definitely.

04:04 – 04:30

Lillian Brogan: I had to find an app that I could say my speech and have my speech up while I was also talking. And there's not many free apps. So, I had to like start a free trial so that I could like record it. And then I had to put it on TikTok to like put in all the pictures because I didn't know how to do it and my mom couldn't help me because she's not very tech savvy. So, it was fun, but I definitely took it like 20 times, I would say. I read it a lot.

04:32 – 04:56

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Yeah. Well, you must have done okay with it because you both made a sizable impression especially for the folks who were the judges and made that selection. So, you go from Tallahassee to being selected to uh go to Washington DC as our 2025 delegates. Um, uh, what did that feel like when you first heard that you were selected? How, what was your reaction to that?

04:57 – 04:59

Lillian Brogan: Uh, I'll let you talk first.

05:00 – 05:30

Jaylee Lewis: Um, I was very excited. I didn't think that I had a super high chance of being able to go. I just submitted the video with hopefully hopes that I might be able to be um, an alternate or something. But then I actually got selected and I was very excited that especially what Miss Megan said earlier about how it's paid for because that's something that usually when you get invited to a program you are expected to pay for it and knowing that we could go and experience the whole week and meet with people and it was covered and we didn't have to worry about that. I was very excited for the opportunity.

05:31 – 06:17

Lillian Brogan: So, my experience was a little different because at first I was not the one that was like picked to go. It was me, Jaylee, and Tommy. And Tommy and her were going to go and then he ended up having another opportunity or something he had already decided he was going to do. So, he couldn't make it. So, then I got to go. So, it was after already being told I was an alternate. I was excited that I got that close to going. But then when I was told that I was going, I was so excited. I didn't tell anyone I was an alternate. I didn't want anyone to know. I only told Jaylee. As soon as I found out I was going, I called her and I was like, "You're never going to believe this." I was like, "I'm going." She's like, "You're lying." Because we're friends, so like we wanted to go together because we already know each other. So, it was it was really like exciting to hear that we were going to get to go and go together, especially.

06:18 – 06:21

Curtis Wynn: Wow. So, is that both of your first time going to Washington DC?

06:22

Lillian Brogan: For me, it was

06:23 – 06:27

Jaylee Lewis: It was my second, but the last time I had gone, I was really young, so I didn't have a lot of memories.

06:28 – 06:32

Curtis Wynn: Okay. So, what was it like for you know, being in the nation's capital? What was that like for you?

06:33 – 06:51

Lillian Brogan: A lot. There's like things going on everywhere you go. there's like politics like and I don't we don't see that here in Sumter County like people aren't just on the side of the road protesting. So, it was really eye opening to see like what other cities like experience whenever you're going somewhere else that you don't usually go.

06:52 – 07:16

Jaylee Lewis: Yeah. I'd also say that there's a lot going on and just seeing everything up close and personal and also seeing all the monuments and museums that's really cool. Especially here in Florida, we have history, but it's not as rich as it is in Washington DC and learning about more of the nation as a whole and seeing the monuments and the sacrifices that people made for our country and then learning how we can continue that legacy into the future.

07:17 – 07:26

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Yeah. Rich is a good word for this. I mean, I've seen and heard from people who just spend a full day. It could take several weeks to see it all. There's just that much up there.

[07:26]

Lillian Brogan: There's a lot.

07:27 – 07:43

Curtis Wynn: There's a lot to see. So, Megan, I understand uh this group of students including Jaylee and Lillian made quite an impression beyond just that trip itself. So, would you mind elaborating a little bit more uh about that impression and your from your perspective?

07:44 – 07:53

Megan Shaw: Yes, the SECO Energy Board of Trustees was so impressed with this group of students, their professionalism, their leadership, and how well they represented the cooperative.

07:54 – 08:27

Curtis Wynn: Yeah, we had a just a few days ago had a chance to have dinner with uh the students many of additional students just like the two of you who really just from my perspective it really makes you feel pretty positive about the outlook of our future. We hear so many things that are not as positive, but that was that really makes me feel good to be in that type of environment. So, um so they were impressed but there was something that came with that being impressed. So, what changed as a result of that?

08:28 – 08:43

Megan Shaw: Yes, and it's really exciting because of the impact that this group of students made the board made the decision to expand the programs increasing the number of Tallahassee delegates from 10 to 12 and the number of Washington DC delegates from 2 to four.

08:44 - 09:12

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Yeah. I had had just this morning had breakfast with President Anderson. He's still talking about this. Very impressed with it. I'm sure all the other trustees are as excited and as supportive as he is. Um and the recognition didn't stop there. Um you were both selected to receive \$4,000 in scholarships for 2026. Uh can you tell us a little bit about what that means to you to receive that?

09:13 – 09:41

Lillian Brogan: Well, for me it means a lot because I can't go to the university that I wanted to go to because I wasn't going to be able to afford it. And now I have the opportunity to go there whenever I'm ready because I'm going to stay at Lake Sumter, and I can afford all the tuition just from this one scholarship. And with this, I've gotten other opportunities being able to add it onto applications and it looks good. And I've actually gotten some other scholarships and I think part of the reason is because of this opportunity I had.

09:42 - 09:45

Curtis Wynn: So, you've been able to leverage that even more even though that's great.

09:46 – 09:47

Lillian Brogan: It looks very good.

09:48 – 10:22

Jaylee Lewis: Yeah, it's very it's really nice to have. Like even if you work all through your high school career, you try to get bright futures. You know, even with that, that doesn't necessarily cover 100% of tuition. They just average out what all of the universities are. And

people don't think about, you know, you have books, you have transportation, you have housing. So, some money that might not seem like a lot, it's definitely a lot. and it's going to be helpful for continuing education, especially for my degree because I require a very expensive laptop for engineering. And so that's something that I didn't think I was going to be able to afford, and the scholarship has helped me toward that.

10:23 – 11:29

Curtis Wynn: Yeah. Well, you know, Bright Futures, I'm Yeah, I'm sure will supplement that. Um, so let's talk about the future for a second. And I just want to put a plug in here because you both have big plans and but I'm going to throw this out there now. SECO Energy is a place where you can build a meaningful career. Just saying. And we need leaders, we need problem solvers, we need bright people to help us fulfill our very important mission and that is to serve not only our members but our communities as well. And we want we always look for people who care about their communities. So, I'm just going to leave it like that and just say that right in front of both of you. So, you know there are folks looking, and you all said you're going to spread the word about this podcast. You are going to have a lot of folks watching it. So, what advice do you have for those uh who may be watching you uh and might be in a position to emulate what you got what the two of you have done?

11:30 – 11:58

Jaylee Lewis: I would say just go for every opportunity that you have. Don't be scared to try new things. I know for a lot of people it might seem like, oh, going to Tallahassee with people I don't know, like that's going to be scary. I'm not going to know what to do. But you really just have to put yourself out there and Miss Megan did a good job as a chaperone and making us all feel comfortable and we got to know each other and you know I'm kind of a shy person and Lily being there helped me be a little bit more outgoing but you really will become friends with these people and it'll be an experience that you will never forget.

11:59 -12:00

Curtis Wynn: Lillian, what about you?

12:01 – 12:19

Lillian Brogan: The advice I'd give is to go for the opportunity even if you think that you might not get it because you don't really know what people are looking for. So, whether you think that you're in the position to fill what they want, that's not up to you. It's the person that's going to review it. So don't put yourself under somebody else. Give yourself the chance to get it.

12:20 – 13:31

Curtis Wynn: Great. Well, Lily and Jaylee, thank you so much. Uh you all really are impressive. And you know, programs like Youth Tour are so special. It's not just about a trip. It's about growth, opportunity, and opening doors. maybe even doors that lead right back here to Seco Energy. A big thank you to you, Megan, uh for your leadership with this program. You're doing a tremendous job. Uh the results are speaking for themselves. And we appreciate what you're doing. And to Jaylee and Lillian, our outstanding 2025 youth tour delegates and 2026 scholarship recipients. And to our listeners, if you know a student who's ready to step up, lead, and explore opportunities like this, and parents or guardians who is a SECO Energy member, please encourage them to apply when the time comes around because you never know where it might lead. From Tallahassee to Washington DC to college scholarships, internships, and maybe even a future, a career future right here at SECO Energy. Again, I'm Curtis Wynn, and this has been Power Chat in the Electric Lounge.