



YOUTH AMBASSADOR RETURNS TO D.C.



Cassandra Berger, a participant in Jackson Electric’s Youth Ambassador Program, had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., June 9–14 to participate in the Electric Youth Tour for a second time. The purpose of the Youth Tour is to give students the opportunity to

visit D.C., learn about political processes, and interact with government officials.

After attending last year’s Youth Tour, Cassandra realized how important cooperatives are to rural citizens, especially those in this area. She says, “Our representatives need to understand that cooperatives are a large part of our lives.” This year, the Wisconsin youth had the opportunity to speak with Tammy Baldwin, Sean Duffy, and Ron Kind. The youth asked questions of the representatives, including how cooperatives influence the way they vote.

The youth also had the opportunity to tour the White House, sit in on Senate and House sessions, observe many memorials, and visit the Smithsonians. Asked how she would describe D.C. to someone who has never been there, Cassandra says, “A stir-fry because there are a lot of different people that come together with various perspectives, but they work together to make one great flavor of a nation.” She adds that it would take months to fully appreciate everything that D.C. has to offer.

Established in the late 1950s, the tour gives high school students the opportunity to meet with 1,500 youth from around the country. At the state level, this year’s Youth Tour was focused on uniting the small group of Wisconsin youth. By engaging in conversation with students representing other Wisconsin cooperatives, Cassandra recognized that she and her peers don’t fully appreciate the great communities they come

from. “I love the experience I have had with Jackson Electric,” shares Cassandra, “and I didn’t realize how much the cooperative has impacted my life choices.”

This fall, Cassandra will be attending Saint Mary’s University in Winona to study music. She will use her Youth Tour experience to show others how cooperatives affect rural communities. “I gained skills that will allow me to talk to others openly,” Cassandra shares.

The Electric Youth Tour is held in June each year in Washington, D.C. At the local cooperative level, this tour is open to high school juniors or seniors who participate in Jackson Electric’s Youth Ambassador Program. Students who apply for the Youth Tour are required to complete an application and a written essay or video. Jackson Electric believes it is important for youth to learn about how electric cooperatives and the government interact.—*Brandi Shramek, executive coordinator*



Cassandra experiences a rare opportunity to tour the White House.

Jackson Electric is still accepting applications for this year’s Youth Ambassador Program. Do you know a high school junior or senior? Is he/she interested in learning about cooperatives or the opportunity to tour a power plant? How about eligibility for a scholarship or the trip to D.C.? To request an application or more information regarding this program, contact Brandi at bshramek@jackelec.com.

MY CO-OP

Members are invited to Jackson Electric Cooperative’s Annual **MEMBER PICNIC IN THE PARK**

Tuesday, August 14, 2018
Serving 3:30 to 6:00 p.m.
Lunda Park Upper Shelter, Black River Falls

Serving pulled pork sandwiches with the traditional picnic sides, including ice cream. Golf cart shuttles available from the parking lot to the picnic site.

JacksonSolar LLC

We continue to seek participation from members who may be interested in purchasing and installing either a 4 kW or 8 kW solar system. Please contact our office if you would like to participate in this pilot project.

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The grass is
Sweeter
on this side
(and so is the lifestyle)



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to escape from reality, just for a few hours? Imagine a place you could visit and forget about the concept of time, to live in the moment. What if you do not have to travel far to find this place? Would you go? An area family has already made this place a part of their everyday routine and reshaped their entire lifestyle because of it.

Sweetgrass Stables is a horse boarding stable conveniently nestled in the outskirts of Black River Falls, just a short drive from the Lunda Park. Michelle Greendeer-Rave and husband, Lance, are owner-operators of the community-focused business. Their children are also actively involved with the business. The business has been in operation since July of 2015. However, Michelle has many years of horse experience. “I



Michelle’s experience with horses began as a child. Michelle is pictured with Skye, a speed paint horse.

The 32-acre facility is open year-round and offers a variety of amenities, including the use of large riding pastures.

grew up on the Oneida Indian Reservation,” shares Michelle. “All of the farms had horses—we rode day and night.”

Asked the greatest challenge of running the business, Michelle responds, “Initially it was the change of lifestyle. It’s not material, it’s life.” A few months before the business was in full operation, the family removed television and internet from their daily lives. Michelle also realized the importance of teaching her children how to garden, a skill she acquired as a child. The family is striving to be more sustainable by producing their own food. Installing solar is also an option the family has explored. “The greatest reward,” continues Michelle, “is finding happiness. You forget about society...it’s you, the land, and the animals.”

The family’s change of lifestyle correlates with their goals for the business. “It was not established with the intention of profit, but for the community value,” comments Michelle. In just its first two years of operation, Sweetgrass organized and hosted community events on site. The largest turnout was a Native American fitness event with the NB3 Foundation and Nike. The Ho-Chunk Nation was a participant, and Sweetgrass was chosen to host the event, which saw over 300 people in attendance.

According to the Foundation’s website, the “NB3 Foundation was founded by Notah Begay III (Navajo/San Felipe/Isleta Pueblo), a four-time PGA Tour winner and the only full-blooded Native American to play on the PGA Tour.” This Native American nonprofit organization is dedicated to reducing Native American childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes through “evidence-based, community-driven, culturally relevant programs that promote healthy weight, physical activity, and healthy nutrition.” The program is designed to provide

Native American populations and tribal nations with the tools and inspiration to create long-lasting changes in their communities.

Sweetgrass provides opportunities for children who are unable to own a horse of their own. The kids are taught how to behave around a horse and how to groom them. Michelle and Lance both value the smile of someone on a horse for the first time. The property also attracts nearby high school students who want to come after school and help.

The business offers opportunities for veterans and disabled children and adults to form relationships with the horses. Michelle would like to obtain certification in equine therapy to extend the business's community outreach because there is a need for the therapy in this area. Therapy horses are trained to be drawn to those who need it. They make people feel comfortable. However, these horses are difficult to find and can be expensive. If a regular sized horse is not an option, Sweetgrass has an interest in mini therapy horses.

Future plans for the business include organizing more community events such as horse education courses, horse shows for beginners, and mock rodeos. Sweetgrass sees the value of horses in the community and would like to increase awareness of horse safety. Other ideas include hosting a history day, rendezvous, or Native American trading post.

A featured service at Sweetgrass Stables is the Overnight

Horse Hotel. While traveling, horses also need a break. Located just five minutes from the interstate, Sweetgrass provides an opportunity for travelers to rest for the night while also having a place for their horse to stay. "We have had travelers stop on their way to Kentucky, or while in transport to Canada," recollects Lance.

The 32-acre riding and boarding facility also offers many services to area residents. The business operates year-round, and the indoor arena is available for 24-hour use. "This allows flexibility for those who work during the day and want to take their horse out at night, or if they work at night and want to take their horse out during the day," adds Michelle. The options for boarding your horse include a 24-hour all-access indoor stall board or a 12-hour all-access pasture board for a reduced fee. Some of the many amenities available to both boarding options include access to the large indoor riding arena, the outdoor round pen and large riding pastures, horse trailer parking, and use of equipment. Sweetgrass Stables is also an organic farm. "We have nice grasses and clover" says Michelle. "It's all natural here."

It only takes a phone call to set up a tour of the facility and take the initial steps to using Sweetgrass Stables' services. A full list of services and contact information is available online: www.sweetgrassstablesbrf.com. —*Brandi Shramek, executive coordinator*



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1. The large, lighted indoor riding arena is available for 24-hour use.
2. Bobby Sox enjoys the natural grasses on the farm.
3. SA Jafar, an Anglo-Shagya Arabian Verband and Thoroughbred, and Cooper, an American Paint Horse, enjoy their morning out in the pasture.
4. 11-year-old daughter, Leila, is a barrel racer and a champion fancy shawl dancer at Pow Wows. Leila is practicing parade preparation and riding in her regalia for the first time with her horse Chinook.



CATCHING UP WITH PAST YOUTH AMBASSADORS

Aspen Bue and Maria Lee were part of the 2012–13 group of Jackson Electric Cooperative youth ambassadors. We caught up with them to learn what they're doing now.



Aspen Bue currently serves in the U.S. Army and is deployed in Afghanistan.

He is currently serving in the U.S. Army, deployed in Afghanistan.

Aspen plans to return to college when his enlistment in the Active Army is finished. He anticipates graduation from Martin Luther College in 2023, earning his liberal arts degree in classical languages, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. "I plan to continue my education at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin," Aspen adds.

Asked how his experience as a youth

ambassador has made an impact in his life, Aspen says, "It has helped me become a better leader in many areas of my life." Aspen has been taking on leadership roles throughout his military training. He also notes that he has been a leader in a classroom setting, in a teaching capacity.

He also described that the youth ambassador program gave him an appreciation for cooperatives and how they operate. "I especially could see it while at college," explains Aspen, "where most people had little experience with cooperatives." Since high school graduation, Aspen has had interaction with cooperatives through his membership at his local cooperatives.

Maria Lee graduated from Black River Falls High School in 2013. Following high school graduation, she attended UW-La Crosse where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in exercise and sport science in 2017.

During college, Maria says, "I was involved with many clubs and honor societies." Throughout her academic career at UWL, she was involved in the Pre-Physical Therapy Club, Exercise and Sport Science (ESS) Club, and the Spanish Club. She was also inducted into



Maria Lee plans to graduate in 2020 with a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

the Golden Key National Honor Society, the Eta Phi Alpha Honor Society, and the Sigma Delta Pi Spanish Honor Society.

Jackson Electric's youth ambassador program provides students

with the opportunity to learn about cooperative principles. Asked about her interaction with co-ops since high school graduation, Maria shares, "I often shop at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse." Participation in the youth ambassador program also made a positive impact on Maria's leadership abilities. "It helped inspire confidence in me, as well as a drive to always be and do my best," explains Maria.

Maria is enrolled in UWL's physical therapy graduate program, and she plans to graduate with her Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree in 2020. She currently holds a research assistant position, working under a professor in biomechanics.

Reese Vold began his summer employment at Jackson Electric on June 11. He has been assisting with maintenance around the building and grounds. He is from Black River Falls and graduated from Black River Falls High School in June. This fall, Reese will be attending UW-Oshkosh to pursue a degree in economics.



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