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P.O. Box 548
 Kingstree, SC 29556
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**SANTEE ELECTRIC
 COOPERATIVE NEWS**

Joanna Arnsmeier, *Editor*
jarnsmeyer@santee.org

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**SANTEE ELECTRIC IS AN EQUAL
 OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND
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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



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 any good
 to recruit
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Technical colleges a smart choice

IF YOU HAVE READ many of my columns, you know that two of the things we are passionate about at Santee Electric Cooperative are education and economic development. Both lead to better jobs and a better quality of life in the communities we serve. In this month's column, I want to talk about a topic that merges these two initiatives—our state's technical college system.

It doesn't do any good for SEC to build industrial parks and recruit industries to our counties if there are no trained people to fill the jobs created. We are fortunate to have a different technical college system in each of our four counties. Central Carolina Technical College covers Clarendon County for us, while Florence-Darlington, Horry-Georgetown and Williamsburg Technical Colleges, as their names suggest, cover the other three counties we serve.

Students at technical colleges generally fall into three categories. As you would expect, a large group of them attend a technical college to get a two-year associate's degree in a field of their choosing. What might surprise you, though, is that another large group is taking care of the general education requirements for a four-year university at a much-reduced price. Finally, a third large portion of their students are earning certifications that take less than two years to complete. For example, Horry-Georgetown Technical College trains future linemen for SEC and other utilities in a program that only takes one semester!

While both technical colleges and four-year universities offer paths to success, for many students, the combination of lower tuition and quicker entry into high-demand careers—and the salaries associated with them—make technical college a smarter choice.

Depending on what part of the state you are in, a registered nurse starts between \$28 and \$40 per hour. Radiology and surgical technicians can expect \$22 to \$32 per hour. In the industrial field, machine tool operators begin between \$24 and \$32 per hour. Finally, welders, maintenance technicians (mechatronics majors) and electricians can start between \$25 and \$35 per hour. Can you imagine making \$70,000 per year as a 20-year-old, or possibly breaking into six figures when you consider overtime?

I'm going to assume that the average reader of my column is not a high school student. Therefore, I need you, the parents and grandparents of those high school students, to share these statistics with your kids and grandkids. You know this already, if you've had to pay a plumber, an electrician or an HVAC expert to do work for you recently, but those folks make good money. I'll make this deal with you—Santee Electric will keep bringing jobs to our community, if you help us push the workforce of tomorrow into making great decisions about their future. I appreciate you!

ROBERT G. ARDIS III
 President and Chief Executive Officer

‘Creating new bonds, learning new things’

Santee Electric sends two local students to nation’s capital

BY JOSH P. CROTZER

WALKING ALONG the softly lit memorials of Washington, D.C., Jernee Ford lingered a few extra moments at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. Ford had been given the name of a fallen soldier from her hometown of Manning, and she searched carefully until she found John Coleman Ardis engraved on panel 11E.

“Finding my soldier’s name at the Vietnam Wall was especially meaningful,” says Ford, a rising senior at Scott’s Branch High School. “It was definitely one of my favorite moments of the week.”

Ford’s experience at the iconic memorial was just one part of Washington Youth Tour, a five-day, all-expenses-paid trip to the nation’s capital and surrounding landmarks sponsored by Santee Electric Cooperative and South Carolina’s other electric co-ops. She joined Andrews High School’s Peyton Davis and Santee Electric employee Joanna Arnsmeier, who served as a chaperone, on the trip. They were among 71 students representing South Carolina’s electric cooperatives on visits to historic and educational sites such as George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Fort McHenry in Baltimore and the Smithsonian museums in Washington.

In addition to the museums and memorials, the students spent a day on Capitol Hill. Santee Electric’s student delegates visited U.S. Rep. James Clyburn’s office and toured the U.S. Capitol.

“That’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” Davis says. “You don’t get to tour the Capitol every day. The whole week has



PHOTOS BY JOSH P. CROTZER

During their visit to Capitol Hill, Peyton Davis (left) and Jernee Ford (right) were welcomed into U.S. Rep. James Clyburn’s office and heard from U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott on the Capitol steps. Santee Electric’s Manager of Community Relations Joanna Arnsmeier (center) served as a chaperone.

meant everything—creating new bonds, learning new things and discovering places I didn’t even know existed.”

The trip was also an opportunity for the students to interact with peers from other parts of South Carolina and the 43 other state delegations that converged on Washington that week. The Youth Tourists traded state pins with one another—South Carolina’s pins depicting the notorious Lizard Man were popular—and came together for Youth Day, where they heard from national cooperative leaders and inspirational speakers.

“It might start slowly because you don’t know anyone yet,” Davis says. “But you’ll definitely have a blast and learn so many new things.”

Throughout the trip, Ford served as co-manager of Soda Pop Co-op, a student-run market that sold snacks and beverages to their fellow youth tourists.

“You make amazing friends from your state and even from other states,” Ford says. “It’ll probably be one of the best times you’ll ever have.”



As co-manager of Soda Pop Co-op, Ford made sure her fellow Youth Tourists were nourished and hydrated in between stops throughout the trip.



PEYTON DAVIS

There were lots of great places for selfies with new friends, but perhaps none better than during the boat cruise down the Potomac River.