Each year since 1964, Missouri teens have traveled to Washington, D.C., as part of the annual Rural Electric Youth Tour. This year’s trip, held June 8-14, saw 80 Missouri high school seniors traveling to the nation’s capital for a week of history, education, fun and friendships that will last a lifetime.

This tour, intended to encourage leadership and citizenship, is sponsored by electric cooperatives from across the state. This year, 28 Missouri co-ops held essay contests to select delegates. All expenses for the trip are paid by participating co-ops.

While in Washington, the teens toured America’s most beloved monuments and memorials, including those devoted to Presidents Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson and Franklin Roosevelt, as well as those honoring veterans of World War II, the Vietnam War and the Korean War. They visited Arlington National Cemetery and watched the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns. They toured museums and art galleries and visited the home of George Washington.

The Missouri delegation participated in citizenship by meeting with their elected representatives, both in the House of Representatives and with Sen. Claire McCaskill. They also learned about the electric cooperatives which sponsored their trip, through educational activities in Jefferson City and in Washington, D.C.

The group took time for fun, too, with an evening boat cruise on the Potomac River and a dinner and dance with delegates from other states.

The 2007 Rural Electric Youth Tour is the trip of a lifetime for 80 Missouri teens.