

## **2025 Idaho Youth Rally – Memories that last a lifetime**

The CVEA Community Foundation, in partnership with Alaska Power Association, is proud to offer two high school students a youth leadership scholarship each spring, to attend the Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association (ICUA) Youth Rally. This year, Merrick McCumby and Savannah Barton, both from Valdez, were selected to attend. This fun-filled 4-day program is much more than just another summer camp; it is a leadership program, with an emphasis on educating high school students on the electric industry and the important role cooperatives play in rural communities. For a week in July, students from Idaho, the Pacific Northwest, and Alaska assembled at Northwest Nazarene Campus in Nampa, Idaho to push beyond the boundaries of their comfort zones, acquire leadership skills, enhance social networking techniques, and explore the exciting realm of cooperative utilities. These students were provided with a welcoming and safe environment allowing them to ask questions and grow into the next generation of cooperative members and employees.

One unique aspect of this program is that it is led by second-year Youth Rally student delegates. At the end of each camp, one student from each co-op is selected by their peers to return the following year as a student director. These students create the agenda, maintain order during camp, and keep the schedule running smoothly. The students embrace the challenge, while adult chaperones keep a watchful eye to ensure everyone's safety. The most rewarding aspect is seeing students step up to the challenge, set an example for others, and develop their teaching skills, ultimately flourishing into the next generation of industry and community leaders. This also serves as an inspiring model for incoming students, who frequently express to their chaperones their excitement and anticipation to come back the following year as student directors.

Students have many opportunities to earn scholarships and be selected to attend the National Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. the following year and serve on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Youth Leadership Council (YLC) for a two-year commitment. This year, Merrick McCumby received a \$600 scholarship and was selected to serve on the YLC in 2026-27. After returning home from the Rally, Merrick told us, "I learned that cooperatives are all about working together and making sure everyone has a voice. It's cool that members actually help shape how things run".

While at camp, students engaged in a variety of enjoyable activities outside of the classroom setting. Savannah Barton reflected on her favorite part of camp, "My favorite part about the camp was just meeting new people and enjoying the experience with them, especially the talent show". Other activity favorites included an action-packed cornhole tournament and a trip to a water park. Part of the CVEA Community Foundation mission is to provide educational and leadership scholarships to students. Through the Youth Rally scholarship, all expenses for the student to attend the Rally – airfare, lodging,

meals, travel expenses – are paid for by the Foundation so the student and their family does not need to pay anything out of pocket. If you know a high school sophomore or junior looking to make a difference in their school or community, or who is interested in pursuing a career in the electric industry, the Youth Rally is a perfect opportunity. The 2026 CVEA Community Foundation Scholarship Program will be announced in December 2025.

For more information on the ICUA Youth Rally and the CVEA Community Foundation Youth Rally Scholarship, please visit the Scholarship Program page, under Community Support at [cvea.org](http://cvea.org).

