

Stratford's Zach Carter named SC Youth Ambassador

ZACH CARTER—a football-kicking volunteer fireman and student body vice president at Stratford High School—was probably headed to Palmetto Boys State this summer. After all, the prestigious youth program was sort of a family legacy.

There was only one problem. Palmetto Boys State is the same week as the Cooperative Youth Tour and his fellow student council member, Spencer Condon, had been telling him about the great experience she had the previous summer when Berkeley Electric Cooperative selected her to join other students from across the nation on a four-day tour of Washington, D.C.

“She was talking to me about the cooperative principles,” says Carter. “They align with my values. Cooperatives are a very personable, people-oriented organizations.”

Carter chose to apply to Youth Tour and Berkeley Electric selected him as one of their 11 representatives. But both trips were cancelled due to COVID-19. However, South Carolina's students were given the opportunity to participate in the Virtual Youth Experience (VYE), a week-long web conference that allowed



After initial disappointment when Youth Tour was canceled, Carter says he was “blown away” by the Virtual Youth Experience.

Carter and his peers to engage with the state leaders from the safety of their homes.

“I was really down when I heard it was cancelled,” Carter admits. “When I heard about the experience being virtual, I was a little apprehensive, but it

really blew away my expectations. It was amazing. I didn't know how much fun it was going to be, and I loved every aspect of it.”

From June 19–26, Carter and 78 other students selected by their local cooperatives interacted with Gov. Henry McMaster, U.S. Senators Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham, U.S. Congressman Jim Clyburn, State Superintendent Molly Spearman and the state's chief epidemiologist, Dr. Linda Bell.

“My favorite speaker was Dr. Linda Bell,” says Carter, who wants to be a physician. “She is a very intelligent person that is leading our state through all of this.”

Carter's enthusiasm was one of the reasons why he was nominated by VYE's adult advisors and then voted by his peers to be the South Carolina Youth Ambassador. He and Horry Electric's Hannah Zincone will speak with co-op leadership from across the state about what the VYE has meant to them and their fellow students.

“It was a wonderful experience and I really miss it,” says Carter. “I really want to thank Berkeley Electric and everyone who helped put it together.”

Three local students each win \$500 for podcasts

Matthew Morris of Summerville, Taylor Gadsden of Saint Stephens and Ayoola Oladimeji of Goose Creek have each earned a \$500 award in a podcast competition sponsored by Berkeley Electric Cooperative and other South Carolina electric cooperatives.

Morris, Stephens and Oladimeji were a part of separate creative teams whose podcasts were among four finalist groups judged by a journalists Craig Melvin of NBC's TODAY show, Kenneth Moton from ABC's World News Now and Cindi Scoppe and Avery Wilks from The (Charleston) Post and Courier newspaper for the Virtual Youth Experience Podcast Challenge.

Each member of the winning team was awarded \$5,000 scholarships. There was a total of 20 competing teams comprised of 77 high school students from across South Carolina. The students had been selected by their local cooperatives to

participate in Virtual Youth Experience (VYE) June 19–26.

Each team wrote, recorded, and produced the short form podcasts about how the COVID-19 crisis and other events this year have impacted their generation.

Berkeley Electric had ten students participate in VYE and the podcast challenge, including Zachary Carter and Chloe Clark of Goose Creek, Amari Walker and Jalen Wallace of Moncks Corner, Anna Claire of Huger, Suzanna Feeney of Mount Pleasant, and Aniya Nelson of Summerville.

All of the students' podcasts are available online at anchor.fm/ecsc or by searching Virtual Youth Experience Podcast Challenge on Spotify.

