




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Communicating Leadership Cooperatively Young Community Leaders Meet in Jackson

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Local young cooperative members attend leader's conference – Heather and Jeff Sullivan of Bedford County recently participated in the Young Leaders Conference in February in Jackson. They joined more than 200 others from across the state for the annual conference designed to develop leadership skills and to renew interest in rural issues that affect their communities and agriculture.

Designed to bring young leaders together, the conference focused on “Communicating Leadership Cooperatively” and offered a variety of topics affecting rural Tennesseans.

The Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation’s Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&H), which co-sponsors the conference with the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives (TCC), is an organization

within the Farm Bureau for men and women ages 18 to 35 with an interest in agriculture. The purpose of the group is to develop future agricultural leaders and to generate new ideas to help Farm Bureau keep up with the constantly changing world of agriculture.

The Tennessee Council of Cooperatives is comprised of a variety of cooperatives across the state including dairy cooperatives, farm credit banks, farm supply cooperatives, telephone and electric cooperatives, tobacco cooperatives, and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation (TFBF).

“Young leaders are vital to our communities and the lifeline of our agricultural industry,” said Mark Klepper, a livestock producer from Greene County who serves as chairman of the Young Farmers and Ranchers. “If we don’t keep young people involved, we’ll all suffer in the long run. This Young Leaders Conference is meant to give us a renewed enthusiasm and confidence in our leadership abilities.”

Participants are selected and sponsored by TCC businesses or TFBF’s Young Farmers and Ranchers to attend the motivational, recreational, and educational weekend. The Sullivans were sponsored by Duck River Electric Membership Corporation.

The conference gave Heather and Jeff the opportunity to attend workshops addressing areas of interest to young farmers and cooperative members. Along with sessions on new cooperatives and cooperative incentives, the program covered such topics as communications, estate planning, the future of agriculture, and securing a financial future. During the conference Tennessee State Representatives Jimmy Eldridge and Barrett Rich also addressed current concerns in today’s state legislature. Senator Dolores Gresham gave the keynote address during conference’s final banquet.

Attendees also toured the West Tennessee Safari farm that included a 2½-mile tour of featuring exotic animals from the Outback. In addition, a trade show gave the participants a chance to learn more about the sponsoring organizations.

