



Eastover, St. Matthews teens win \$500 for podcasts

Lexi Harris of Eastover and Laurie Ann McGee of St. Matthews have each earned a \$500 award in a podcast competition sponsored by Tri-County Electric Cooperative and other South Carolina electric cooperatives.

Harris and McGee were each a part of 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 Post and Courier* newspaper for the Virtual Youth Experience Podcast Challenge.

The winning team of Grace Johnson from Hartsville, Salena Robinson of West Columbia and Mackenzie Starnes of Hilton Head Island were each awarded \$5,000 scholarships.

In addition to the \$5,000 winners and Tri-County's \$500 winners Lexi and Laurie, ten other students from across the state are each receiving \$500 as finalists in the competition. The other ten \$500 winners are:

1. Berry Bonds of Winnsboro (Fairfield Electric Cooperative)
2. Caden Booth of Lamar (Pee Dee Electric Cooperative)
3. Laney Brown of Conway (Horry Electric Cooperative)
4. Taylor Gadsden of Saint Stephens (Palmetto Electric Cooperative)
5. Mary Luebbert of Sumter (Black River Electric Cooperative)
6. JK Marlett of Laurens (Laurens Electric Cooperative)
7. Matthew Morris of Summerville (Berkeley Electric Cooperative)
8. Ayoola Oladimeji of Goose Creek (Berkeley Electric Cooperative)
9. Harsh Patel of Orangeburg (Edisto Electric Cooperative)
10. Emily Rabon of Aynor (Horry Electric Cooperative)

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). VYE was a web conference which took place June 19–25 and allowed the students to engage with state leaders including Gov. Henry McMaster, U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham and Tim Scott, S.C. Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman and state epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell, among others. Following VYE, 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.

"One of the goals of the project was to give students a platform from which they could share their stories, reflections, and opinions," says Dr. George Scouten, the upper school head at Heathwood Hall Academy and an advisor on the project. "The student podcasts not only achieved our goal but quite often surpassed our expectations. We were especially impressed by the four finalists."

Tri-County Electric had five students participate in VYE and the podcast challenge, including Destiny Houser of Santee, Jaden Kovach of Orangeburg, Mattie Zeigler of Elloree.

Direct link to Destiny Houser's podcast: <https://anchor.fm/ecsc/episodes/Virtual-Youth-Experience-Podcast---Group-8-eh25j7>

Direct link to Jaden Kovach's podcast: <https://anchor.fm/ecsc/episodes/Virtual-Youth-Experience-Podcast---Group-13-eh26f8>

Direct link to Laurie Ann McGee's podcast: <https://anchor.fm/ecsc/episodes/Virtual-Youth-Experience-Podcast---Group-14-eh26oi>

Direct link to Lexi Harris's podcast: <https://anchor.fm/ecsc/episodes/Virtual-Youth-Experience-Podcast---Group-15-eh2268>

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