

## Valley Telephone Cooperative Foundation expands scholarship opportunities to support vocational and technical education

- [Hector Acuna hector.acuna@myheraldreview.com](mailto:hector.acuna@myheraldreview.com)



Ayshleen Lopez, left, a junior from Deming High School, and Paige Evans, a sophomore from Animas High School were selected to represent Valley TeleCom at the 2024 FRS Washington Youth Tour in June.  
SUBMITTED

WILLCOX — Valley Telephone Cooperative announced on May 7 a significant expansion of its scholarship program which will include a new category for vocational and technical education.

In 2024, Valley awarded three special scholarships for members pursuing vocational and technical training, marking the extension of its educational support beyond traditional academic paths.

These scholarships were granted to students attending the Universal Technical Institute, Eastern Arizona College for Dental Hygienists, and the Hogan School of Real Estate, reflecting the varied interests and career aspirations of Valley members.

Overall, the Cooperative granted 39 scholarships this year, totaling \$103,000.

The expansion is a strategic move as part of what Valley says is its ongoing commitment to support the educational aspirations of its members in rural communities.

"The expansion of our scholarship categories to include vocational and technical schools underlines our commitment to all forms of higher education and our belief in the diverse career paths our members choose," said Troy Judd, Valley CEO.

Scholarship outreach initiative is spearheaded by Pauline Cook, Executive Assistant, and Camme Carlson-Watkins, Marketing Representative. The team traveled extensively, visiting high schools and colleges within Valley's service area, throughout Southeastern Arizona and Southwestern New Mexico.

Recipients of this year's Valley Telephone Cooperative Foundation scholarships are Oren Allsup, Harley Boone, Mia Cazares, Kennedy Cook, Valerie DeLaCruz, Mikala Driscoll, Phoebe Dullum, Kaylee Essary, Aubry Evans, Lilly Friend, Alec Fuentes, Jazmyn Garcia, Elyse Gonzales, Cadence Green, Clara Guy, Alexa Hernandez, David Hurt, Heather Lentz, Letty Lopez, Brooke Lunt, Kash Macumber, Maycee Michaels, Edelweiss Molinar, Kayla O'Connell, Jack Owen, Marissa Paz, Kyrie Pollard, Helena Ramirez, Diego Renteria, Karissa Riggs, Bridger Sanborn, Rachel Sumner, Edward Tingle, Keeley Wagley, Brody Waters, Parker Winkler.

The vocational scholarship winners are Bryson Kibler, Jose Lopez and Zaley Medina.

Applications for the 2025 scholarships will be available at [www.vtc.net](http://www.vtc.net) starting in early January. Valley said it encourages all aspiring students within the service areas to apply and take advantage of the opportunity to advance their education and career prospects.

The funding for these scholarships comes from the Valley Telephone Cooperative Foundation, primarily through unclaimed capital credits. These funds also support various other community enhancement projects, including the Washington Youth Tour.

On March 28, Valley announced that for a second year, they would be sending students on their Foundation for Rural Service (FRS) Washington Youth Tour. This year, seven students from three different high schools entered the Washington Youth Tour contest.

To qualify, students had to complete an application and submit a 500-word essay on the topic, "What moment in American History do you wish you had been a part of and what would you have contributed?" Essays covered a wide range of topics, from the era of buffalo roaming the plains to the Space Race.

Selected to represent Valley on the 2024 FRS Washington Youth Tour in June are Ayshleen Lopez, a junior from Deming High School, and Paige Evans, a sophomore from Animas High School.

Britany Gomez, Valley's Customer Care Specialist, who has been a part of the interview team for two years, expressed her excitement about the process.

"I love being a part of the WYT interviews because it is exciting to hear our youths' responses and to interact with them," she said. "I also love seeing their excitement and interest in the trip."

During their time in D.C., the students will have the opportunity to tour the U.S. Capitol, meet with their Congressional Offices, visit the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and explore Mount Vernon.

According to Gomez evening tours of iconic memorials including the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, Martin Luther King Memorial, WWII Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial are planned.

Heather Floyd, Valley's PR Specialist, shared her enthusiasm for the program based on her experience traveling with two students from Animas High School last June.

"The experience was awe-inspiring. Yes, there were the expected aspects, history, patriotism, and the beauty that DC offers; but the interaction among the students and focused conversations with Congressional staffers were the true highlights," Floyd said.