

Cooperative Connections



**Electric Co-op
Leaders Get
Involved
Locally**

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for a Cause**

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Safe &
reliable
power.



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South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections

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Black Hills Electric, Custer, S.D.
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Union County Electric, Elk Point, S.D.
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EDITORIAL

SDREA: Backing Local Cooperatives To Serve Members

The true power of locally-owned electric cooperatives are the consumer-members living and working in the communities they serve, and when those co-ops are connected, their collective energy gives them state-wide reach.

That's the role that South Dakota Rural Electric Association and other electric cooperative statewide associations play in supporting the goal of ensuring that co-op members always have safe, affordable, reliable energy.

"Our main objective is to compliment what South Dakota's electric co-ops do at the local level," said Ed Anderson, SDREA General Manager. "We aggregate all of their great work so we can talk about it collectively to all of the interested parties in the state who potentially have an impact on co-op members through laws, regulations or public policy."

At the direction of their affiliated electric cooperatives, statewide associations are regularly involved in education and training, legislative affairs, tax and regulatory matters, economic development and regional planning. They also provide a framework for coordination of many activities that provide more meaningful results when addressed through collective action.

Capitol Concerns

It's not unusual for South Dakota's lawmakers to deal with hundreds of bills and amendments during a legislative session, while many never advance beyond committees or face numerous revisions during hearing and review processes. Keeping track of even major changes is no small feat.

Besides members of state legislatures or general assemblies, there are also regulatory commissions, typically made up of appointees who may be more familiar with major investor-owned utilities than they are with member-owned electric cooperatives.

"It's all about making lawmakers aware of who we are, what we do and why we do it," said Anderson. "We need to do whatever we can to help them understand who we are and most importantly that we're all reaching for the same goal – providing the best electric service we can at the lowest possible cost."

Leveraged Learning

When it comes to safety, operating efficiency and governance, skills and training can help an electric cooperative run more successfully and serve its members better. But when co-op employees are spread across several locations and committed to maintaining 24/7 operations, getting true value for training dollars can be challenging.

SDREA serves 31 electric co-ops in 66 counties. The association provides training on safety, employee learning and industry topics every week of the year.

Engaging Future Co-op Members

Electric cooperative statewide associations also take a leadership role in many of the youth outreach programs supported by local electric cooperatives. SDREA and other statewide associations coordinate the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, sending more than 1,800 high school students from 46 states to Washington, D.C., every June.

"As cooperatives, we understand that our student leaders of today are our community leaders of tomorrow," said Anderson. "What better time to teach these students about the cooperative business model and co-op careers than through our youth programs?"

These are just a few ways that statewide associations like SDREA support electric cooperatives, and everything they do is aimed at one goal: bettering the communities they serve.

Protecting Your Home and Business

Every year, electrical equipment, wiring, appliances and tools cause injuries and fires at both homes and workplaces. Paying close attention to the condition of electrical equipment and taking appropriate and prompt action to correct electrical problems can help to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you. Below are guidelines to help identify and reduce electrical hazards.

Electrical Outlet Safety

- Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances and ensure that electrical loads are appropriate for the circuits.
- Unplug appliances when they are not in use to conserve energy as well as minimize the opportunities for electric shock or fire.
- Use outlets instead of relying on extension cords and power strips. Consider having additional permanent outlets installed where needed.
- Use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) in wet/damp areas like kitchens, bathrooms and outdoors.



Electrical Cord Safety

- Inspect electrical cords to ensure that they are not frayed, cracked or damaged.
- Do not place electrical cords in high traffic areas, under carpets or across doorways where they pose a potential tripping hazard or could be easily damaged.

Certification and Awareness

- Ensure that all electrical products and equipment are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Allow only trained and qualified electrical workers to perform work on electrical equipment.
- Be aware of signs of electrical problems such as flickering lights and/or buzzing, sizzling or humming sounds from electrical systems.

Source: www.acadiainsurance.com

Ladder Safety and How It Affects Everyone

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

+700

ladder injuries
every day*

113

deaths caused by
falls each year*

6-10 ft.

The **most common ladder falls** happen
between 6 and 10 feet off the ground

WHETHER YOU'RE USING A LADDER AT HOME OR AT WORK,
THESE NUMBERS AFFECT YOU.

2 most **common ladder accidents** include**:

1. **Missing the last step when climbing down**
2. **Overreaching**

**National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) 2017 Data Highlights*, 2017, CPSC

***ALI Ladder Safety Training and Citation Report* - United States, 2018, American Ladder Institute

Take safety into your own hands by taking ladder safety seriously.
Visit www.LadderSafetyMonth.com to learn more.

National Ladder Safety
Month is presented by



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KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Be careful with farm equipment around power lines."

Carson Lee, 10 years old

Carson is the son of Chris and Marisa Lee, Fairfax, Minn. They are members of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, Danube, Minn.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Seafood Sensations

Clam Chowder Dip

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2 slices bacon, chopped | 1 cup shredded white Cheddar cheese, divided |
| 1/3 cup chopped onion | 1 (6.5 oz.) can chopped clams, drained |
| 1 pkg. McCormick® Original Country Gravy Mix | 2 tsp. McCormick® Parsley Flakes |
| 1-1/2 cups milk | |

Cook bacon in large skillet on medium-high heat until crisp. Remove bacon, reserving drippings in pan. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until translucent. Stir in gravy mix, milk and 1/2 cup shredded cheese. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes or until gravy starts to thicken. Remove from heat. Stir in clams. Pour into 9-inch glass pie plate. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with bacon and parsley. Serve with toasted baguette slices or crackers. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 94, Total Fat 6g, Saturated Fat 3g, Protein 4g, Cholesterol 9mg, Sodium 278mg, Fiber 1g, Carbohydrates 6g,

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Shrimp Lover Squares

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 (8. oz) tube refrigerated crescent rolls | 1/2 cup seafood sauce |
| 1 (8. oz) pkg. cream cheese, softened | 24 medium shrimp, cooked |
| 1/4 cup sour cream | 1/2 cup chopped green pepper |
| 1/2 tsp. dill weed | 1/3 cup chopped onion |
| 1/8 tsp. salt | 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese |

In a greased 9x13-inch pan, unroll the crescent dough; seal seams. Bake at 375°F. for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely on a wire rack. In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sour cream, dill weed and salt until smooth. Spread over crust. Top with seafood sauce, shrimp, green pepper, onion and cheese. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Cut into squares. Makes 2 dozen.

Becki Hauser, Tripp, SD

Crab Quiche

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 beaten eggs | 1 cup chopped imitation crab |
| 3/4 cup milk | 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese |
| 1/2 tsp. salt | 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese |
| 1/2 tsp. ground thyme | 2 T. minced onion |
| 1 T. diced pimento | 1 unbaked 10-inch pie shell |
| 1-1/2 cups chopped broccoli | |

Mix together first 5 ingredients; set aside. Combine broccoli, crab, cheeses and onion; spread in piecrust. Pour liquid mixture over all. Bake at 350°F. for 50 to 55 minutes. Let cool 10 to 15 minutes before cutting.

Barbara Angerhofer, Hendricks, MN

Tilapia Parmesan

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 lbs. tilapia fillets | 4 T. butter, room temperature |
| 2 T. lemon juice | 3 T. finely chopped onions |
| 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese | 1/4 tsp. dried basil |
| 3 T. mayonnaise | |

In a buttered 9x13-inch baking dish, lay fish fillets in a single layer. Do not stack fillets. Brush with juice. Bake at 350°F. for 10 to 20 minutes or until fish flakes. Meanwhile, combine cheese, mayonnaise, butter, onions and basil. Spread cheese mixture on fish fillets and bake an additional 5 minutes or until golden brown.

Cortney Reedy, Tea, SD

Please send your favorite appetizer, beverage, casserole or dairy recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3).

Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2019. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and co-op name.

Spring is Coming

Are Electric Mowers for You?



Pat Keegan

Collaborative Efficiency

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on mower options, please visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.

Dear Pat: I'm seeing a lot of ads lately for electric lawn mowers. I want to save money and help the environment, but from what I've heard, a lot of electric mowers can be underpowered and the cordless ones lose their battery charge too quickly. Do you think it's worth making the switch from a gas mower to an electric mower? – Eric

Dear Eric: Until recently, corded and cordless electric mowers tended to be underpowered. For cordless mowers, this fact was made worse by their sub-par battery life.

But today, with those problems largely solved, the best electric mowers have the power and battery life to keep pace with a gas mower, depending on the size of your lawn.

A cordless, electric mower with a large 56-volt battery can run for about one hour. Plug-in electric mowers don't have this limitation, but using a long electrical cord can be challenging.

Quality electric mowers, especially the cordless, rechargeable ones, tend to cost twice as much as a new equivalent gas model. But you can recoup some of the expense with cheaper operating costs, since electricity is a less expensive fuel than gas and electric engines generally require less maintenance than gas engines.

Another important cost consideration is that rechargeable batteries typically need to be replaced after three to five years. The cost savings also depend on the size of your lot. A small lot uses less gas, so fuel cost savings are less significant.

You can save a significant amount of money on purchase price with a corded mower, if you don't mind the hassle of navigating around the cord.

There are additional benefits of electric mowers besides lower fuel and maintenance costs. Electric mowers are much quieter than gas mowers and they start instantly. Electric mowers produce less tailpipe emissions, but the overall environmental impact depends on how the electricity you're using (to charge the mower) is generated. The environmental benefits will be greater if the electricity is generated from renewable energy sources.

Given all these considerations, my advice is to weigh your priorities. If you are looking to buy new, have a small- to mid-size lot, prioritize environmental concerns and don't mind navigating a cord or recharging batteries, an electric mower could be the right choice for you.

If you don't mind the noise, maintenance and other hassles of a gas mower, have a large lot and prefer not to invest in the upfront purchase price, a gas mower may be a better option.

Unlike models from only a few years ago, many of today's electric mowers have the power and battery life to keep up with gas mowers.



There's also a third choice. If your goals are to save money and hassle while protecting the environment, you can minimize your need for a mower, or get rid of the need completely.

If you're willing to keep your lawn mowed regularly and don't mind breaking a sweat, consider a manual reel mower. Some models are more effective than you might think and they're far less expensive and require little maintenance or storage space.

The most dramatic step you could take is replacing your lawn completely, perhaps with water-efficient landscaping, a rock garden, a vegetable garden or even an artificial lawn. This could dramatically cut your water bill and the environmental impact of a lawn.

Any change you make, whether in mowing or landscaping, will require a little research. But it's great to know the option of an electric mower is more viable than ever!



Thinking About An Electric Ride?

Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Members May Qualify for Nissan Leaf® Rebate

Residents of South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, Nebraska and other states who are members of a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative may be eligible for a \$3,500 rebate on a new Nissan Leaf from one of nearly two dozen dealers in the region.

The rebate, when combined with up to \$7,500 in federal electric vehicle tax credits, could result in up to \$11,000 in savings for the purchaser.

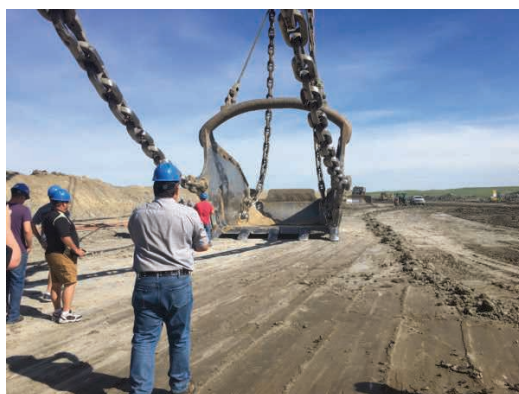
The offer expires April 1, 2019. To get the incentive, obtain a two-page flyer from your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative and bring the flyer along with a copy of your monthly electric bill to your participating Nissan dealership.

Teachers Sought

Teachers throughout the Dakotas, Minnesota and Montana can earn two college credits through the Lignite Energy Council's Education Seminar June 10-13 at Bismarck State College in Bismarck, N.D.

Participants can receive credit from the University of North Dakota (teaching and learning), North Dakota State University (education) or Minot State University (science). Teachers who took the class when it was a one-credit course prior to 2009 can take it again if they need a refresher as there is lots of new information.

The seminar will provide teachers with the information and educational materials they need to teach their students about how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses in the Upper Midwest. In addition, the seminar covers lignite's economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,300 teachers have attended the education seminar.



Sponsors:

The teacher education seminar is sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, in cooperation with Bismarck State College, The Center for Economic

Education at UND, NDSU and MSU.

Speakers and Tours:

At the seminar, teachers hear presentations by educators, researchers and lignite industry representatives. One day is devoted to touring mining operations, reclamation sites and coal conversion facilities. Question and answer sessions in the classroom and on the tour give teachers the opportunity to find out what they need to know for their individual classroom needs.

Professional Development Credit:

Two graduate professional development credits are available through the Center for Economic Education at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, N.D., North Dakota State University, Fargo, N.D., or Minot State University, Minot, N.D. To receive the credits, teachers must attend all portions of the seminar and prepare lesson plans demonstrating how they will use the seminar information and materials in their classrooms.

Materials Available:

Teachers attending the seminar will receive lecture outlines on each presentation, lesson plan examples, classroom exercises, coal and ash samples, audiovisual materials and information on the facilities toured. They also receive resource guides listing publications and audiovisual materials available for energy education.

Logistics:

Free lodging is provided in a Bismarck State College dormitory (two people per room). Meals will be provided. Also, transportation will be provided by the Lignite Energy Council for the tour of a mine and power plant.

An online application for all teachers is available at <http://www.lignite.com/teachers>.





Rushmore Electric's Mike Bowers, fifth from left, is one of 17 members of the Rapid City YMCA board of directors.

LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Co-op Leaders Contribute to Local Boards, Youth Programs and More

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sdrea.coop

When cooperatives say they are committed to their communities, it's not just lip service. It's service rooted in fact.

From city councils, township boards and county commissions to school boards, church boards and other community organizations, co-op employees and directors are answering the call to serve on boards of various shapes and sizes.

Some specialize, focusing their involvement in one arena. Others are generalists, taking the skills and lessons they've learned through their roll at their local electric cooperative and translating it to benefit their local community through involvement on several boards and groups.

For much of his co-op career, Mike Bowers has also served on boards associated with the Rapid City YMCA. Bowers, the manager of Rushmore Engineering, a part of Rushmore

Hundreds of co-op employees and directors across South Dakota and western Minnesota give thousands of hours of service to local boards and organizations throughout the region, working with their neighbors to improve their local communities.



Electric Power Cooperative in Rapid City, has spent 20 years on the YMCA building committee. He's also been a part of the YMCA board of directors for 10 years, serving as secretary and board chairman.

But, his Y involvement has even deeper roots.

"I grew up with the Y," said the Wisconsin native. "I've been a Y member here for 42 years. I joined the Y the first month I was in town and never looked back."

Bowers said the YMCA's commitment to people in the community is appealing and resonates well with the work of electric cooperatives.

"Both invest in the community, absolutely," Bowers said. "The YMCA is very much a cooperative structure; not-for-profit, open to all and every member is an owner, if you stop to think about it."

The Rapid City YMCA and the Rapid City Area Schools are in the midst of a \$10 million renovation of a 68,000 square foot building in downtown Rapid City that once housed an electric and gas utility company. When completed, the facility will house YMCA early childhood development and also provide

infant childcare as well as hold school district administrative offices.

The facility, which is slated to open in August, will be known as the Rapid City Education Center. It recently secured \$1.1 million in funding from the Rapid City Vision Fund.

We all need to be involved and give back to the community.

"The Rapid City Education Center will more than double our capacity for childcare," Bowers said.

Bowers sums up his work with the YMCA succinctly.

"This is the way I want to be involved and give back," said Bowers.

Bowers is not alone in his commitment to his local community.

From youth wrestling, basketball, baseball and football programs to coaching varsity-level sports and serving as

referees, co-op employees and directors are working alongside their neighbors to ensure these programs succeed.

You'll also find co-op employees and directors setting aside their co-op hats to take on the work of members of school boards at several districts across the state.

Dozens of co-op employees serve as trustees and council members of towns and communities across the state. More than a dozen township boards are comprised of officers who work for electric cooperatives or who serve as a director for an electric cooperative. County commissions from Custer County in the west to Grant County in the northeast – and a few counties in between – have co-op employees and directors serving on their governing boards.

And, the work doesn't stop there. You'll find co-op directors and employees in service organizations like Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis, on in veteran's organizations like the American Legion and VFW, church boards, airport, library and transportation boards.

As Bowers notes, "We all need to be involved and give back to the community."



Chris Larson, General Manager of Clay-Union Electric Corporation in Vermillion, moderates the District 17 Legislative Public Forum held in October. Larson is member of the VCDL Governmental Affairs Committee, which hosted the candidate forum. Candidates present were, from left, Gregory Baldwin, Ray Ring, John Gors and Howard Grinager. Arthur Rusch attended by phone.



SDREA Board President Don Heeren presides over the association's annual meeting.

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES FIND COMMON GROUND

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sdrea.coop

South Dakota's electric cooperatives gathered in Pierre Jan. 10 and 11 for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's 77th annual meeting. During the meeting, the 325 cooperative leaders, which represented each of the state's 31 electric cooperatives, heard presentations that focused on a variety of topics of concern to the state's electric cooperatives.

On Thursday, cooperative directors attended a session on attracting and retaining employees and using generational mentors. They also had updates on national issues from staff from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

A state legislative update was held prior to the evening's Legislative Dinner, which saw more than 440 people attend.

"Throughout our history, we know that cooperatives succeed when we unite on that common ground," said SDREA board president Don Heeren of Parker.

"Our Co-op Day at the Capitol on Feb. 20 will provide an additional occasion for co-op members, directors and employees to get to know our lawmakers and become more familiar with the legislative process," said SDREA general manager Ed Anderson.



Loren Noess, former general manager of Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell and Brad Schardin, general manager of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Marion, were each presented the SDREA Legacy of Leadership Award for their contributions to electric cooperatives in South Dakota and the nation. The award recognizes co-op leaders whose talents, dedication and commitment to their co-op, their communities and the larger co-op family stand out among many. This is the sixth year the award has been presented.

Gov. Kristi Noem spoke to the group on Friday morning and the noon luncheon speaker was Sen. Mike Rounds.

During his comments, Rounds said, "You serve a huge and significant portion of the entire state. Can you imagine what the quality of life would be in South Dakota if it wasn't for the rural electric... Think of how many families would see their children wanting to return to the farm if we didn't have that quality of life."

Safety Recognized

Eight cooperatives were recognized for their 2018 safety accomplishments during the SDREA annual meeting.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric in Tabor; Butte Electric in Newell; Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell; Dakota Energy Cooperative in Huron; East River Electric in

Madison; Grand Electric in Bison; H-D Electric in Clear Lake; and Sioux Valley Energy in Colman; each completed its three-year enhanced assessment process in 2018 as part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program.

Board Reorganizes

Following the meeting, the board of directors held its re-organizational meeting.

Southeastern Electric director Don Heeren of Parker was re-elected as the association's president while Grand Electric director John Long of Red Owl was re-elected as the association's vice president. Kingsbury Electric director Richard Abrahamson of Oldham was re-elected secretary of the association and West Central Electric director D.J. Mertens of Kennebec was re-elected as the association's treasurer.



Years of Service Recognition

Fifty-two cooperative directors and employees were recognized for 25 or more years of service to the state's electric cooperatives. Those recognized, along with their years of service and the cooperative they are affiliated with, include: **25 years:** Gary Kluthe and Stephanie Zacher, Black Hills; Ken Carda, Bon Homme Yankton; Lori Rueb, Clay-Union; Dave Eide, Codington-Clark; Troy Ziebart, Douglas; Larry Bowar and Scott Moore, FEM; John Long, Grand; Simon Carroll, Kingsbury; Wendy Shupick, Moreau-Grand; Garry Wetzler, Rosebud; Kimberly Hansen and Jim Kuypers, Sioux Valley Energy; Bob Kalda and Leslie Mehlhaff, Southeastern.

30 years: Mike Chase, Black Hills; Dean Whitney, Black Hills; Adam Zvorak, Butte; Scott Artz, Cam Wal; John Vetch, Central; James Ryken, Clay-Union; Neil Duxbury, Dakota Energy; Michael Lemburg, Grand; Steve Hanson and Pat Kirby, H-D; Tom Schlack, Lacreek; Russ Hohn, Oahe; Lyle Haney and Dean Holmberg, Rosebud; Dena Tveidt-Scott, SDREA; Lynell Hofer, Southeastern; and Howard Knappe, West River. **35 years:** Russell Gall and Michael J. Whalen, Charles Mix; Mike Kruse, Clay-Union; David Appel and Jerry Weber, Northern; Robert Shaffer, Rosebud; and Brad Schardin, Southeastern. **40 years:** Tim Johnson, Central; Craig Biever, Dakota Energy; Merl Bechen, East River; Kenny Kocer and Colle Nash, Grand; Rodney Haag, Oahe; Ken Cerny, Goldie Warnkvist and Delbert Wendell, Rosebud; Susan Wilts, Traverse; and Tom Cummins, Kingsbury. **50 years:** Phyllis Hrdlicka, Douglas.

2018 ACRE® Honor Roll Systems – South Dakota

100% Board and Management

Black Hills Electric Cooperative, Custer, 100% CENTURY CLUB

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Tabor, 100% CENTURY CLUB, 100% Employee Participation

Butte Electric Cooperative, Newell

Cam Wal Electric Cooperative, Selby

Central Electric Cooperative, Mitchell, 100% CENTURY CLUB

Charles Mix Electric Association, Lake Andes, 100% Employee Participation, all at CENTURY CLUB

Clay-Union Electric Corporation, Vermillion, 100% Board CENTURY CLUB

Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative, Watertown

Dakota Energy Cooperative, Huron, 100% CENTURY CLUB, 100% Employee Participation

Douglas Electric Cooperative, Armour

East River Electric Power Cooperative, Madison, 100% Board CENTURY CLUB, 100% Management PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL

FEM Electric Association, Ipswich, 100% Board PRESIDENTIAL LEVEL, 100% Management CENTURY CLUB, 100% Employee Participation

Grand Electric Cooperative, Bison

H-D Electric Cooperative, Clear Lake, 100% CENTURY CLUB

Lake Region Electric Association, Webster

Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, Timber Lake, 100% Employee Participation

Oahe Electric Cooperative, Blunt

Sioux Valley Energy, Colman, 100% Management CENTURY CLUB

Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Marion, 100% Employee Participation

South Dakota Rural Electric Association, Pierre, 100% CENTURY CLUB, 100% Employee Participation

Union County Electric Cooperative, Elk Point

West Central Electric Cooperative, Murdo, 100% Management CENTURY CLUB, 100% Employee Participation

West River Electric Association, Wall, 100% CENTURY CLUB

Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Milbank, 100% CENTURY CLUB

100% Board

Kingsbury Electric Cooperative, De Smet

Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, Rapid City

100% Management

Northern Electric Cooperative, Bath



Kimball School received \$1,000 from Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program to update their former playground for safety, entertainment and school pride.

MAKING CHANGE

Contributions by Co-op Members Add Up for Good

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sirea.coop

Thirty years ago, South Carolina's Palmetto Electric Cooperative conceived of an idea to benefit residents in the three counties it serves. By having members round up their monthly electric bills, co-op members could have a lasting impact on charitable groups in the area.

Since that beginning in 1989, Operation Round Up® has been an incredibly successful way in which the co-op and its members have been able to help the less fortunate in their community. Through Operation Round Up, Palmetto Electric automatically rounds up a participating member's electric bills to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumer's monthly bill of \$52.73 would be automatically rounded up to \$53, with the additional 27 cents going to the Operation Round Up fund. On an annual basis, the co-op is able to donate roughly \$6 for each participating customer – and that pool of money is then allocated to a variety of worthy causes throughout their service area.

The concept spread nationwide and today, several cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota have the program.



Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program awarded \$2,300 to Helping with Horsepower, a therapeutic riding program at Reclamation Ranch outside of Mitchell, S.D., for a lift that allows wheel-chair-bound clients to ride horses.

Since 2000, members at Sioux Valley Energy have awarded more than \$1.5 million to community groups, including funding more than \$10,000 in scholarships each year to members and their children.

Across the border at Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative in Tyler, Minn., their Operation Round Up board funds grant requests ranging from fire department requests to school and other educational requests.

Danube, Minn.-based Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association is launching its Operation Round Up in June.

“All co-ops adhere to the seven cooperative principles, including “Concern for Community.” The Operation Round Up® program is the perfect embodiment of this core principle,” said Lenae Wordes, Renville-Sibley’s communications manager. “The average co-op member donates \$6 with a maximum possible contribution of \$11.88 per year. This may not seem like a large amount, but when combined with nearly 1,900 of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power member accounts, it adds up to make an impact.”

“Renville-Sibley’s program will operate



with a board of trustees that is different from the board of directors for the electric co-op. This allows a group of members to focus on the mission of representing our communities,” said Wordes.

In the Watertown, S.D., area, Codington-Clark Electric’s Operation Round Up has helped 4-H clubs, a child hunger group and a local living history fair.

Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., awarded \$12,500 to 10 groups in November 2018. Among the groups receiving funding were community improvement associations and community centers, speed meters for two cities, 4-H, Habitat for Humanity and other groups. Since launching the program in 2015, the program has made \$72,500 in awards.

“Applications typically come from volunteers in your community who feel strongly about a project and making a difference,” said Courtney Deinert, Central’s manager of communications.

For the past 10 years, members of Oahe Electric Cooperative in Blunt, S.D., have distributed more than \$92,000 to groups and organizations in Hughes and Sully counties. The money raised has helped volunteer fire departments, animal rescue shelters and other groups selected by the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees.

At Elk Point, S.D., Union County Electric Cooperative started its program in 2018. This year, it awarded \$4,000 to four organizations including the local historical society, the Boys and Girls Club, an animal rescue and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars group.

Co-op members at West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D., are also involved. In 2018, the Operation Round Up fund awarded more than \$8,200 to groups ranging from rodeo booster clubs and cemetery associations to ambulance services, athletic groups and pre-school and community groups. One award helped purchase a heater for the New Underwood city pool.

Contact your local cooperative to find out what ways they are involved in their communities and how to participate.



The Letcher, S.D., 4-H “Kids Kountry Club” breaks ground on their new playground area after receiving a \$3,500 Operation Round Up grant from Central Electric Cooperative members.

Fighting to Keep the Lights On

Paul Wesslund

NRECA

Did you know squirrels, lightning and trees have something in common? They can knock out your electricity.

Electric cooperatives work hard to keep your lights on all the time, but “you’re going to have power outages, and that’s just the way it is,” says Tony Thomas, senior principal engineer with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

An electric utility’s basic job of keeping the power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also means battling the unpredictable. Thomas cites the top three troublemakers to electric reliability as trees falling on power lines and other interferences from vegetation, lightning strikes and animals going about their daily routines, especially squirrels chewing on electrical equipment.

“Utilities do an awfully good job,” says Thomas. “But Mother Nature gets in the way sometimes.”

Humans contribute to power outages as well, with vandals deliberately damaging electrical equipment and drivers accidentally crashing into utility poles.

Statistics say the lights are almost always on.

Numbers collected from electric utilities show that power in the United States is incredibly reliable. According to these figures, the percentage of time that the average American has electricity at the flip of a switch is 99.97... oh forget it, you get the idea. Thomas says what’s most important to know about those numbers is that they don’t change much.

“I don’t see big swings from year to year,” says Thomas. “If things are fairly consistent, that means the utility is operating about as efficiently as it can.”

But utilities still try to improve on that reliability. Among the techniques being used to foil critter catastrophes are snake



When it comes to electric reliability, the biggest challenge is maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation's electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines.

barriers around substations, buzzard shields on transmission towers and mesh coverings on wood poles to protect them from woodpeckers.

For some of the other causes of outages like trees and lightning, there’s now an app for that.

Utilities operate extensive right-of-way programs to keep vegetation away from power lines, from clearing underbrush to publicity campaigns asking people not to plant trees where they can fall on power lines. These days, those efforts can be aided by digital software that forecasts the growth of trees and other plants so that utilities can prune branches before they cause a problem.

Other software tries to manage lightning by analyzing the age and wear on the utility’s equipment that minimizes the damage from lightning strikes so it can be

replaced before it fails.

Fighting storms and squirrels are two ways to keep the power on, but by far the biggest part of reliability comes from the decades of building, maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation’s electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines. Banks of substations and transformers step-down that voltage to send it to homes and businesses through 5.5 million miles of local distribution lines.

Keeping that network up and running calls for a lot of planning among utilities to anticipate how electricity will be used in the future. Part of that reliability planning has focused on protecting the electricity system from computer-based digital attacks.



Electric cooperatives' top priority of keeping power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also requires preparing for the unpredictable. Electric co-ops are winning the reliability battles against the top three troublemakers: storms, squirrels and hackers.

The never-ending job of cyber security

Bridgette Bourge is among those over-seeing how digital technology affects reliability for electric co-ops and their consumer-members. As director of government affairs for NRECA, she sees both the positives and the negatives to the latest internet-based, or cyber, technology.

“Cyber helps a lot on reliability because it gives us the ability to monitor and know everything right away,” she says. “But whenever you increase reliability through a technology, you do potentially open up vulnerabilities as well from the security angle.”

For any organization, including electric utilities, the benefits of the internet come infested with mischief makers. Bourge says it's routine for a company to receive tens of thousands of attempts each day to break into its computer network. Those “knocks” at the cyber door can come from individuals, countries and organizations, or from the army of automated “bots” roaming the internet worldwide, testing for weaknesses where a hacker could enter.

For a utility, a troublemaker inside the computer network could affect electric service, and that's why NRECA has organized a variety of cyber reliability programs.

Bourge says those cyber reliability programs aim to help protect against a range of threats, from broad attempts to shut down parts of the electric grid, to more focused efforts to corrupt pieces of software used by electric cooperatives.

As community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.

NRECA's cyber protection efforts include a national program of working closely with the nation's electric co-ops to share the techniques for protecting utility systems from internet invaders. NRECA also works closely with federal government cybersecurity groups in the Department of Energy and the Department of Homeland Security.

NRECA is also part of a national program to create a cyber mutual assistance agreement. Much like how groups of line-

workers from an electric co-op travel to help restore power after a hurricane, these cyber agreements would be able to utilize teams of information technology experts in the case of a cyber incident.

“You can't solve cybersecurity,” says Bourge. “No matter what you do today, the bad guys are going to figure out a way around it tomorrow. You have to keep thinking about the next step.”

Bourge sees electric co-ops as well-placed to pay attention to cybersecurity. She says as community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.

“Electric cooperatives take cybersecurity very seriously,” says Bourge. “It's built into their DNA.”

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

December 15-March 31

South Dakota snowmobile trails season, Lead, SD, 605-584-3896

February 21-23

Sno Jam Comedy Festival, Sioux Falls, SD, siouxfallssnojamcomedyfest@gmail.com

February 22-23

State Wrestling Tournaments, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4111

February 23

Annual Outhouse Races and Chili Cook-off Contest, Nemo, SD, 605-578-2708

March 1-2

Mardi Gras Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

March 9-10

2019 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. MST, Philip, SD, 605-441-8466 or 605-441-1216

March 9-10

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Davison County 4-H Grounds, Mitchell, SD, 605-630-2199

March 9-12

Summit League Basketball Championship, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

March 14-16

SD State Class A Boys Basketball Tournament, Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD

March 14-16

SD State Class AA Boys and Girls Basketball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD



March 15-16

28 Below Fatbike Race, Lead, SD, 605-584-3435

Photo courtesy: travelouthakota.com

March 14-16

SD State Class B Boys Basketball Tournament, Barnett Center, Aberdeen, SD

March 16-17

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Codington City Ag Building, Watertown, SD, 605-793-2347

March 22-23, 29-30

Mystery Dinner Theater, Legion Hall, Faulkton, SD, 605-380-1556

March 23

Ag Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

March 29-30, April 5-6

Annual Schmeckfest, Freeman, SD, 605-925-4237

March 29-31

Black Hills Home Builders Home Show, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-7850

March 30-31

29th Annual Hats Off to the Artist Art Show, Community Center, Faulkton, SD, 605-598-4482

April 4

McCrossan Banquet Auction featuring Loop Rawlins and the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena, Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets: \$75 each, 605-339-1203, www.mccrossan.org

April 4-5

Holiday Arts Spring Craft Show, Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

April 5-6

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

April 5-7, 11-14

Green Earth Players presents Drinking Habits, Palace Theatre, Luverne, MN, 507-283-9226

April 5-7

Professional Bull Riders Unleash the Beast Tour, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

April 7

Unni Boksasp from Norway in Concert, 2 p.m., Riggs Theater, Pierre, SD, 605-222-1992

April 13-14

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Rushmore Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-270-0764

April 18

John Mellencamp, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

May 1-5

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9454

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.