

# South Dakota Electric

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

October 2020 Vol. 72 No. 10

## Cooperative Connections

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# “This is one of the best areas in the nation to raise bees.”

— Dusty Backer, Backer Bees

Environment isn't just a buzz word at Basin Electric.

Backer Bees has bees at Glenharold Mine, a reclaimed coal mine that used to supply coal to our first power plant. The reclaimed pasture has a variety of flowers—alfalfa, clover, sunflowers, wildflowers—making it one of the best areas in the nation to raise bees.

Environmental stewardship has always been a guiding principle for us. That's why we're committed to reclaiming and restoring land back to its natural state, like Glenharold Mine.



**BASIN ELECTRIC  
POWER COOPERATIVE**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Your energy starts here.

[basinelectric.com](http://basinelectric.com)



# South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections

ISSN No. 1067-4977

## Produced by the following electric cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota:

Black Hills Electric, Custer, S.D.  
BonHommeYanktonElectric, Tabor, S.D.  
Butte Electric, Newell, S.D.  
Cam Wal Electric, Selby, S.D.  
Central Electric, Mitchell, S.D.  
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Rushmore Electric, Rapid City, S.D.  
Sioux Valley Energy, Colman, S.D.  
Southeastern Electric, Marion, S.D.  
Traverse Electric, Wheaton, Minn.  
Union County Electric, Elk Point, S.D.  
West Central Electric, Murdo, S.D.  
West River Electric, Wall, S.D.  
Whetstone Valley Electric, Milbank, S.D.  
City of Elk Point, S.D.

SOUTH DAKOTA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly for \$6 annually for member cooperatives, \$12 annually for non-members by South Dakota Rural Electric Association, 222 W. Pleasant Drive, Pierre, S.D. 57501. Correspondence to: Editor, South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 1138, Pierre, SD 57501; telephone (605) 224-8823; fax (605) 224-4430; e-mail editor@sdrea.coop

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## Do Your Part: Cast Your Vote on Nov. 3



**Ed Anderson**

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The top priority of South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives is providing all of our consumer-members with safe, reliable and affordable energy.

But this job requires much more than stringing and maintaining power lines. It requires political engagement. That may seem far removed from our core mission, but it's absolutely essential to delivering the services cooperatives provide.

That's why electric co-ops here in South Dakota and across the country are participating in Co-ops Vote, a non-partisan program that encourages all co-op members to take part in national, state and local elections. The program also aims to educate political candidates and other elected officials about the tremendously important role our rural electric cooperatives

play in their local communities.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing the nation's electric cooperative network, launched Co-ops Vote in 2016. Co-ops Vote started as a national get-out-the-vote initiative that helped drive rural voter turnout to the polls.

As cooperatives, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community - one of the seven cooperative principles - through ongoing participation in our democracy. Voting is also a vital part of your cooperative organization as all members have the right to choose who will represent their interests at the board table. Regular free and fair board elections are included in the bylaws of every electric cooperative, big and small.

Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials and decision-makers across the political spectrum trust us because of the work the electric cooperative family has put into political engagement over the course of many decades. It's a structure that began out of a political act when Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration by executive order back in 1935.

When we all get involved and we elect strong and competent leaders, we can make things happen politically and in our local communities.

We know Election Day may look a little different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that's why we're encouraging all co-op members to stay engaged and informed of any changes to polling locations or absentee and mail-in balloting procedures.

Voting is central to American democracy. We hope you will commit to cast your ballot on Nov. 3. To learn more about the upcoming elections and access resources that can help you stay informed, visit [www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop).

**When we all get involved and we elect strong and competent leaders, we can make things happen politically and in our local communities.**

# Use Safety as Your Guide When Planting Trees

If the trees in your yard have grown so tall that they touch overhead power lines, they can cause all kinds of trouble. Branches that sway in the wind and rain can snap an electric line, sending a live wire to the ground, where it can electrocute anyone who touches it.

Plus, power lines that are broken by fallen trees will cause you and your neighbors to lose electricity and require a costly trip from your electric cooperative.

That's why any tree that poses a danger—even an old or favorite tree—could be slated for removal by your electric cooperative.

You can prevent problems on the front end by planting smart.

Here are a few tips:

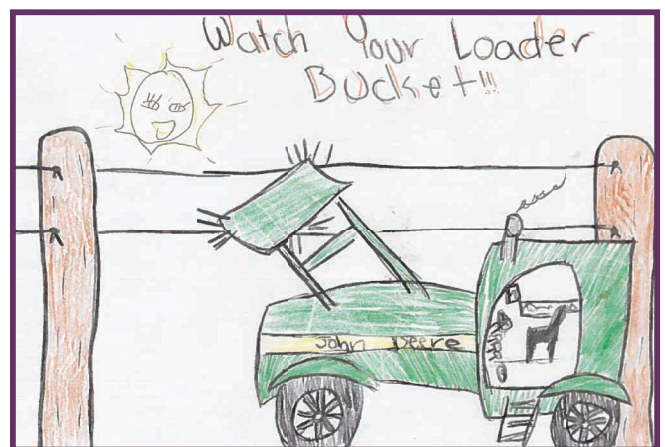
- Do some research and learn all you can about the particular type of tree you want to plant. Learn how tall it will grow when it matures and how wide the full span of its mature branches will become. Use those dimensions to determine how far away from an existing power line you should plant it. Some trees are safe only when they grow 30 feet or more away from a line.
- If the landscape design you like requires you to plant trees in close proximity to electric lines, choose a low-growing variety that will never be tall enough to pose a hazard.
- Before digging any holes to plant trees, call 811, the state's "call before you dig" service. If you don't call and hit underground utility lines, you could be liable for damages.
- Avoid planting in the right-of-way on the edge of your yard or personal property. Your local electric cooperative and other utility companies must maintain that space and could wind up trimming trees out of the way of power lines, possibly leaving the tree looking lopsided.
- Don't plant shrubs too close to your home's outdoor air conditioning unit. AC units require breathing room and should never be crowded by shrubbery or debris.
- If your yard is already home to trees that are close to power lines, keep the trees trimmed so they don't touch any overhead wires. Hire a professional tree trimmer with the proper tools and training to provide this service for you. Don't risk doing it yourself.

From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric cooperatives are proud to serve 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

## #PowerOn



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Watch Your Loader Bucket!"**

**Adalin Homola, 11 years old**

Adalin Homola is the daughter of Joe and Sonja Homola from Lake Nordin. They are members of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

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.



# People-Pleasing Pasta

## Pasta Florentine

16 oz. penne pasta	1 zucchini, cut in thin strips
1 red pepper, thin cut	2 cans mushrooms, drained
1 onion, chopped	1/8 cup butter
1 cup tomatoes, chopped	1/4 cup flour
1 cup skim milk	1 cup chicken broth
1/2 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 tsp. pepper
1 pkg. frozen spinach, thawed, drained	1/4 cup Parmesan

Prepare pasta, cooking 7 minutes. Drain. Spoon into greased 9x13 baking dish. Cook and stir zucchini, peppers, mushrooms, and onions for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in tomatoes. Spoon mixture over pasta and gently mix. Whisk flour with drippings in skillet. Whisk in milk. Add broth, nutmeg and pepper. Cook over medium heat and stir until mixture comes to boil and thickens. Add spinach and cheese. Pour sauce over casserole. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

Glen and Linda Erickson, Chester, SD

## One Pan Chicken Alfredo

3 tablespoons olive oil	1/2 lb. penne pasta, or any bite-sized shape pasta, uncooked
1/4 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts	2 c. freshly shredded real parmesan cheese
2 cloves garlic, minced	Salt and pepper
2 c. low sodium chicken broth	Flat leaf parsley for garnish
1 c. heavy cream or half and half	

Cut chicken breasts into half-inch and 1-inch pieces. Season with salt/pepper. Brown chicken in olive oil over medium heat. It will finish cooking as it simmers. Add minced garlic and saute for 1 minute. Add broth, cream or half and half and uncooked pasta and stir. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce to a simmer. Keep pan covered while simmering. Simmer for 15-20 minutes or until pasta is tender. Remove from heat, stir in shredded parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

Judy Mendel, Doland, SD

## Pizza Hot Dish

2 lb. hamburger - brown, sprinkle with onion and garlic salt	1/2 cup water
1 10-oz. can pizza sauce	1/2 tsp. salt
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce	1/4 tsp. pepper
	1 tsp. oregano

Simmer above ingredients 20 minutes. Add 1-1/2 cup grated American cheese (Velveeta) and 8-oz. package of wide noodles, cooked. Put 1/2 of sauce in 9x13 cake pan. Top with noodles. Add rest of sauce. Top with mozzarella cheese and sprinkle generously with parmesan cheese. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

Shirley Miller, Winfred, SD

## Shrimp Scampi

8 ounces pasta linguine	1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons butter	1 dash crushed red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	1-1/2 pounds large or extra-large Aqua Star shrimp, shelled
4 garlic cloves, minced	1/3 cup parsley, chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine or seafood broth	1/2 lemon, juice only
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt	

Cook pasta according to package directions. In large skillet, melt butter and oil. Add garlic and saute until fragrant. Add wine or broth, salt, red pepper flakes and black pepper. Bring to simmer and reduce by half. Add shrimp and saute until shrimp turn pink and opaque, approximately 2-4 minutes depending on size. Stir in parsley, lemon juice and cooked pasta. Provided by [www.aquastar.com](http://www.aquastar.com).

Please send your favorite vegetarian, garden produce and pasta recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Make your basement more efficient



**Pat Keegan**

Collaborative Efficiency

**As you look at the ductwork, ask yourself if rooms throughout the home are heated or cooled unevenly.**

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

For more information on making your basement more energy efficient, visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

**Dear Pat and Brad: I've heard that energy can be lost through my home's basement. Is that true? If so, what can I do to make my basement more efficient? – Andy**

Dear Andy: Yes, basements can account for a large portion of your energy use, especially in colder climates. More importantly, basements are often a key area when you're looking to improve energy efficiency.

Moisture is a common problem in basements and crawl spaces, and can lead to mold, rot and lowered effectiveness of insulation. As you make efficiency improvements, you can solve moisture problems, but you could make them worse if you're unsure of the work you're doing. Look for signs of water damage or moisture buildup, such as rotting wood, mold, a stain on a wall or floor or a musty smell. Any untreated wood in contact with a cement floor or wall could be rotting. Search online for "test basement walls for moisture" and you'll find a simple test you can conduct.

Before making improvements, consider whether radon or carbon monoxide could be a problem. If you live in an area where radon has been a problem, you should conduct a radon test through a licensed professional or purchase a DIY home test kit. Carbon monoxide problems can be deadly. If you have any type of combustion, whether it's a furnace, water heater or even a fireplace, make sure they have adequate ventilation and that you have working carbon monoxide detectors nearby.

If you have a forced-air heating system, your basement is abundant with opportunities for improving ductwork. Unless you're in a newer home or the ductwork has been tested and sealed in the last decade, your ductwork is likely leaking. Sealing these leaks helps your system distribute air more efficiently and should make your home more comfortable. The best way to seal ducts is with duct mastic. Metallic tape is the next best solution. Do not use duct tape. An energy auditor or HVAC professional can test your home's ductwork and identify any leaks.

As you look at the ductwork, ask yourself if rooms throughout the home are heated or cooled unevenly. If so, you'll want to enlist the help of a professional. Sometimes minor modifications to the ductwork can make a big improvement in comfort.

You'll find lots of air leaks in basements and crawl spaces, particularly where pipes and wires enter or exit the space. Air often enters the home around the sill plate, which sits on top of the foundation. If you can get to the sill plate, apply caulk around it. You can also increase efficiency by sealing any gaps or leaks around basement windows.

Insulation is an effective tool for reducing energy use and improving comfort, but the applications are quite different in basements and crawl spaces. In both cases, the insulation strategy and the installation must be done correctly to prevent mold or exacerbate moisture problems. The place to begin in basements is the rim joist, which is right above the sill plate on the top of the foundation wall. Rigid foam board can be carefully fitted between the joists.

Insulated basement walls make a room more comfortable. If you're building a new home, there are advantages to insulating the outside of the foundation wall, but this isn't practical for most homes. You can insulate the inside of the foundation wall if you're sure moisture is not leaking through the wall from the outside. Experts do not recommend fiberglass insulation in contact with the foundation, which was a common practice for decades. Instead, they prefer sprayed-on foam or rigid foam board applied directly to the foundation wall. A wood-framed wall can be butted up against the rigid foam and insulated with fiberglass or mineral wool batts. The bottom plate of the wall, which sits on the concrete floor, should be pressure treated wood.

There are two ways to insulate crawl spaces. Over the past several years, the most common approach was to insulate under the floor with fiberglass batts. This allowed the crawl space to be vented to the outside, which alleviated any moisture buildup. If all the right moisture control and drainage steps have been taken, the crawl space can be unventilated, and the insulation can be applied to the foundation walls instead of underneath the floor. That said, there are pros and cons to this strategy, so do some research online or consult with a local expert.





Sam Cahoy enjoys pursuing hunting and fishing and other outdoor activities with his family. Shown here, left to right, are Haley, Michyl, Camden and Sam Cahoy. Camden bagged this turkey during last spring's Mentor Hunter Program. Photos provided by Sam Cahoy

## The Right Stuff

### Aberdeen Taxidermist Sam Cahoy Earns International Recognition

#### Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Sam Cahoy is in a heated competition with himself. As the owner of Showpiece Taxidermy in Aberdeen, Cahoy's personal goal is to make the next mount better than the one before.

For Cahoy, every job presents its own set of challenges because the animals that come through his door to be mounted aren't exactly in pristine condition. The first step in the process is to determine how much damage was done during the harvesting.

"In taxidermy, you're always brainstorming and trying to find a way to work around the damage and other obstacles because you never have an animal that comes in without some kind of problems," Cahoy said. "You have a lot of options."

Multiple containers of Bondo come in handy and a creative approach also helps in delivering a product to the customer that will be associated with a lifetime of memories. And that, Cahoy said, is the reason he began pursuing taxidermy first as a high school student and then later after college when he looked toward making it a career.

"The thing I enjoy most about taxidermy is trying to reproduce nature and satisfying the customer," he said. "The goal

is to return to them an animal that will remind them of an experience that they'll remember the rest of their lives."

Cahoy grew up loving the outdoors and always enjoyed hunting, fishing and camping. As a high school sophomore, he became interested in the species he would see mounted in museums and tried his hand at tanning hides. He came across a series of pamphlets that showed the steps in tanning deer hides and mounting ducks. The more he read, the more interested he became.

After that, it was off to college at South Dakota State University where he earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees in wildlife and fisheries. He took a two-week summer course in taxidermy before enrolling in graduate school and began learning the finer points of the craft.

Cahoy relocated to Denver, where he worked for the state Division of Wildlife and later went on to work at Coors as a brewhouse specialist, using his minor concentration in microbiology and chemistry.

"I moved back to Aberdeen in 2015 to see if I could make a living out of doing this. Fortunately, I haven't had to find a 'real' job yet," Cahoy joked.

All the years of honing his craft have paid off for Cahoy.

In 2017, his mount of a sandhill crane was proclaimed "Best in World" in the upland game bird category at the Taxidermy World Championships in Peoria, Ill.

Cahoy has completed high-quality mounts of African lions, brown bears, bison, white-tail deer, pheasants, fish, ducks and even a bongo antelope.



Cahoy has won numerous awards for his work.

His wife, Michyl, also enjoys outdoor adventures along with daughter Haley, 9, and son Camden, 7. The siblings have both participated in the South Dakota Mentor Hunter program. Daughter Mikelyn, born in July, has yet to don camo, but Cahoy said he'll be looking to teach his youngest the joys of outdoor recreation.

For more information on Showpiece Taxidermy, call Cahoy at 605-228-0661.





While the ag markets have experienced shifts and changes, rural South Dakota continues to offer a favorable business climate for many industry sectors.

# S.D. IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

REED Fund supports business growth in rural areas

**Billy Gibson**

editor@sdra.coop

The old adage about making hay while the sun is shining is not lost on the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

During the summer months, the department launched an aggressive regional advertising campaign called "South Dakota Means Business," aimed at encouraging companies from surrounding states to relocate to a more business-friendly environment.

The timing of this marketing strategy was intended to take advantage of the favorable national publicity the state has received for its response to COVID-19 and also to lure disaffected businesses weary of increasingly onerous and burdensome regulatory policies in other states.

The promotional initiative was based on a long list of advantages that make it easier in South Dakota for companies to maximize positive margins and plan for future growth.

The campaign featured Gov. Kristi Noem emphasizing the fact that South Dakota has been ranked best in the nation in several categories: lowest business costs; most accessible financing; two-year college graduation rates; lowest regulatory restrictions; lowest state tax revenue volatility; and more.

"We hear over and over from business owners in other states that increased government regulations are making it difficult to earn a profit and plan for growth," said Commissioner Steve Westra. "We want to get the word out that it doesn't have to be this way."

"As out-of-state businesses become more frustrated with

Dakota Style is a thriving business that has received REED funding through Codington-Clark Electric.



overreach by their state governments, they're turning to South Dakota," said Gov. Noem. "The number of new businesses interested in moving to South Dakota has increased dramatically. We're ready to show these businesses what South Dakota can do for them."

While Gov. Noem pushes to attract more businesses to South Dakota, the state's rural electric cooperatives continue to be engaged in efforts to spark community development. Twenty of the state's electric cooperatives collaborate with five western-Minnesota co-ops to support local business growth through the Rural Electric Economic Development, Inc. (REED) Fund. The non-profit corporation provides financing in all or parts of roughly 70 counties in the two states.

The REED Fund was created in 1997 to boost business growth in small communities and has issued nearly 400 loans totaling more



than \$102 million. That financial support has resulted in more than 9,000 jobs.

While the fund is used by rural electric cooperatives to boost economic activity in their service areas, it is not restricted to co-ops. Many loans have gone to retail entities, manufacturing facilities, agriculture processing and marketing and support services. The fund has also been used to support rural health care, education, recreation, arts, public safety, community infrastructure, housing and office space.

The fund is supported by state and federal government entities, including the Governor's Office of Economic Development and the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, and also private groups such as Dakota Resources, Basin Electric Cooperative and banking institutions.

The REED Fund had a record year in 2019, with \$12.8 million in new loans. REED and Avera Health also signed a new workforce housing development financing partnership as Avera committed to a \$2 million investment in the fund. This investment, along with an additional \$1 million pledge from SDN Communications and another \$1 million from First Bank & Trust, will expand efforts to finance workforce housing.

Two loans issued in August went to Lesterville Fire and Rescue from Bon Homme Yankton Electric, and to 605 Sires, LLC, from Southeastern Electric.

Bon Homme Electric Manager Stephanie Horst said the money would go toward the purchase of new air packs and a new building addition for the local volunteer fire department.

"A big part of our guiding principles as locally-owned, locally-controlled electric cooperatives is to do whatever we can to improve the quality of life in our service areas and to expand the range of economic opportunities available to our members and our communities," Horst said. "It's very gratifying for us to know we're making a positive impact."

She noted that more than 80 percent of the REED Fund's lending is established in communities of fewer than 4,000 people and 98 percent of REED-financed projects have local ownership.

At Southeastern Electric, General Manager Brad Schardin said 605 Sires, LLC, used its financing to expand its family-owned, full-service bull collection and donor facility. The company opened in 2017 and delivers its products to customers both domestically and internationally.

According to Schardin, "Delivering electrical power that is safe, affordable, reliable and accessible is a tall order in itself. But our commitment goes beyond providing electricity. We also have an obligation to enhance and improve the communities we serve. The REED Fund is an excellent resource to help us fulfill that commitment."

For more information on the REED Fund, visit [www.reedfund.coop](http://www.reedfund.coop) or call 605-256-8015.

## Future of Energy Storage

Energy storage technology is extremely versatile - it's small enough to fit in your phone, or large enough to power your entire home.

Many people are familiar with small-scale batteries for handheld devices, but utility-scale batteries take energy storage to a whole new level. The ability to store energy helps to ensure that energy demand meets supply at any given time, making electricity available when you need it.

The most widespread form of energy storage in the U.S. is through pumped hydropower, a form of mechanical energy storage. Pumped hydropower has been used for several decades now, and currently makes up about 97 percent of the country's utility storage capacity.

Energy is stored by pumping water uphill from a lower elevation reservoir to store in an upper water basin. When energy is needed, the water is allowed

to flow through an electric turbine to generate energy, the same way it flows through a hydroelectric dam. This method is largely dependent on surrounding geography and any potential resulting ecosystem issues.

Battery technology is also gaining a lot of ground. In 2018, the power capacity from battery storage systems more than doubled from 2010. The most common type of battery chemistry is lithium-ion because of a high-cycle efficiency and fast response time. Some less-common battery types for utility storage include lead acid batteries, nickel-based batteries and sodium-based batteries. However, each chemistry has varying limitations. Beyond pumped hydropower and batteries, there are a few other forms of energy storage used at the utility scale: thermal, hydrogen and compressed air.

Energy storage currently plays a crucial role in incorporating renewable energy into our electric grid. Solar and wind energy are weather-dependent, so when energy demand is low but energy supply is high from the sun or wind, storing the excess energy makes it possible to use it later when demand is higher. As renewable energy becomes more prevalent, energy storage will help to create a more resilient grid.

Although battery prices have been decreasing steadily over the last several years, energy storage can be expensive to attain. Currently, there are 25 gigawatts of electrical energy storage capacity in the U.S., and many experts expect capacity to grow.







Cooperative service territories cover more than half the land mass in the United States.

# Electric Cooperatives and the Local Communities We Serve

We like the word local.

We like it because it's the nearby hardware store where we can get what we need. It's where we meet friends for coffee. It's the shop where they look us in the eye and smile. It's a word of warmth that makes us feel known.



Today, 900 electric co-ops provide electricity to more than 19 million businesses, homes, schools and farms.

Local also means your electric co-op. It's as local as you and your neighbors because you own it. It's grown and changed with you, possibly starting before you were even born. Because it's made up of you and your neighbors, it's as unique to each part of the country as you are. And it changes to help out with what's going on in your community, whether that means bringing

electricity to farmsteads 80 years ago, providing the community with access to high-speed internet or helping to navigate COVID-19 social distancing today.

October is National Co-op Month, and this year, it makes sense to use this time to recognize and celebrate the variety that is the essence of being local.

That local heritage for electric co-ops started in the 1930s with neighborly visits, often on horseback from one farm to the next, talking about the lights they could see in the city but didn't have themselves. They weren't likely to get those modern conveniences because no company saw a profit in stringing wires to power a few light bulbs in a remote farmhouse.

## No such thing as a typical co-op

So, the local farmers took matters into their own hands. They pooled \$5 startup fees, organized member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives, and convinced local politicians to create a federal loan program to help with the rest of the cost. They created what others didn't see: one of the most efficient agricultural economies in the world and communities based around a variety of business and industry, from manufacturing to tourism.

Today, 900 electric co-ops provide electricity to more than 19 million businesses, homes, schools and farms. They cover more than half the land in the United States. They employ 71,000 people and invest \$12 billion a year in local economies, generating 5 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Because electric co-ops are so uniquely local, it's hard to describe a typical co-op.

They're big and small. The largest electric co-op serves nearly



**From 2009 to 2016, co-ops reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 8 percent, nitrogen oxide emissions by 24 percent and sulphur dioxide emissions by 66 percent.**

350,000 members; the smallest, 113.

They're in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. While the electric co-op rural heritage meant they don't serve cities, many of their communities have grown over the decades. About 40 percent serve counties classified as rural and 60 percent classified as metropolitan. Another way to look at that variety is by the average number of members served by each mile of its power lines. The co-op with the densest population serves 78 members for each mile of line. The most remote co-op averages less than one person per mile of line.

While those numbers reflect the variety and uniqueness of who co-ops serve, what they do also matters.

## **Less pollution, more renewable energy**

As co-op members became more aware of environmental priorities, co-ops focused on reducing power plant emissions. From 2009 to 2016, co-ops reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 8 percent, nitrogen oxide emissions by 24 percent and sulphur dioxide emissions by 66 percent. Co-ops also launched energy efficiency programs, many offering home and business "energy checkups" to make sure members got the best value for their energy dollar.

Electric co-ops are helping power the growth in alternative energy. They pioneered the development of community solar, which allows co-op members to participate in renewable energy without the expense and effort of installing solar panels on their own property. Co-op

solar capacity has more than quadrupled in the past five years. Seventeen percent of co-op electricity now comes from hydroelectric power, solar, wind and other renewable sources.

Electric vehicles offer a promising technology with special hurdles for co-op territories that are outside of city centers. Some electric co-ops are making electric cars available to members to try out. Others are working to set up charging stations that will be required for a viable electric vehicle industry.

High-speed internet service is increasingly required for a vibrant local economy, so co-ops around the country are exploring ways their members can get connected.



**Electric cooperatives provide the power needed to sustain the conveniences of modern life.**

And now that we're all faced with the fallout from the effects of COVID-19, electric co-ops are again on the job as the virus changes everything from the national economy to how we say hello to our neighbors.

Electric co-ops are developing payment plans for people out of work. They're socially distancing line crews. They're setting up drive-in or virtual membership meetings, and offering virtual energy audits.

The world keeps changing, and electric co-ops will continue to adapt. Each co-op's approach may differ, but they'll do whatever it takes to adapt in ways that make the most sense for the people in their community. That's what it means to be a local electric co-op.





Life on farms and in small towns changed for the better when electric co-ops brought power to the countryside.

# CO-OP HISTORY

## Co-op legacy provides a road map to success

**Billy Gibson**

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On Nov. 29, 1935, a handful of local farmers huddled together in a nondescript general store near Vermillion.

They knew that six months earlier President Franklin Roosevelt had signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). They knew the purpose of this new federal entity was to provide low-interest loans so that small communities all across the nation could build the power delivery infrastructures required to bring power to the countryside. And they knew this would be their best opportunity to accomplish something for themselves that the for-profit corporate utilities were unwilling to do: energize rural America. They were all in.

While there were a few fits-and-starts along the way, what emerged out of that meeting was South Dakota's first rural electric cooperative, Clay-Union Electric Corp.

Meanwhile, this exact scenario was being replicated in other small towns and villages from coast-to-coast as the rural electrification movement gained momentum and transformed the lives of millions. From those humble beginnings, the movement has swelled to more than 900 locally-owned and locally-controlled cooperatives serving 42 million Americans in 47 states.

The improbable feat of individuals coming together, organizing, planning and building such a vast power delivery system through the most sparsely populated and inhospitable landscapes has been recognized as one of the country's crowning achievements.

America's electric cooperatives take a great deal of pride in their legacy of service, their spirit of independence, their ability to work together for a common purpose and their democratic system of control and decision-making. It's a system rooted in the



Local citizens got together in the 1930s to organize electric co-ops.

very ideals that made the country great.

So why should today's generation care about this legacy?

Dan Lindblom thinks he knows. Lindblom, along with his fellow co-op leader Verdon Lamb, recently received the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's (SDREA) Legacy of Leadership Award for 2020. He said the rich history of the cooperative movement is important because it provides a model for success that both current and future generations can use to overcome obstacles and challenges, to help navigate through difficult and seemingly intractable situations.

Having served 27 years on the board at Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer and 23 years on the SDREA board, Lindblom certainly knows about how to approach difficult dilemmas. As a statewide board officer, Lindblom found himself in the middle of many imbroglios and political squabbles over the decades.

Whether the battleground was in Pierre or Washington, Lindblom fought to protect the interests of electric cooperative





Co-ops led the way in energizing rural America and today lead the way in developing new technologies such as electric vehicles.

members through a wide range of issues such as service territory disputes, state and federal environmental regulations, taxation, transportation and more.

In the process, he learned the art of compromise and the virtue of demonstrating mutual respect. He recalls the not-too-distant past when political



Co-ops improved the lives of all citizens in their communities.

opponents maintained personal, respectful relationships despite any ideological or policy differences they may have had. He also learned the meaning of the old axiom, “United we stand, divided we fall.”

“Speaking with one voice pays off, especially in the political arena,” Lindblom said. “We had situations where an issue may impact one or two co-ops, but we all had to stand together to provide the strength we needed to win. It’s a difficult decision to engage in a fight when you think you don’t have a dog in the hunt, but it’s necessary if you’re going to do what’s good for co-op members across the state. The next time, it may be your issue that comes up and you’ll need the support.”

Lindblom said the secret sauce of success is adopting a posture of give-and-take while standing in solidarity behind a set of shared values.

Verdon Lamb, the other 2020 Legacy of Leadership recipient, served 40 years on the board at Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative in Watertown and also served on the SDREA board. He said the history of the electric co-op movement is a prime example of what can be accomplished when people work together.

“It’s about leadership, sacrifice and working in harmony to do something that’s worth doing for other people,” Lamb said. “I always felt it was worth the sacrifice of giving up my personal time and my farming time to represent the members who put their faith in me and elected me to serve on the board.”

While some say the sense of community, sacrifice and selflessness are lost on the current generation, Lamb said he has hope that young adults will come to understand those ideals exemplified by electric co-ops.

“You know, people said the same things about us when we were kids,” said Lamb, who graduated from high school in 1953. “They said we weren’t going to amount to much, but we turned out okay.”

Chris Larson is manager at Clay-Union Electric Corp., where South Dakota’s electric cooperative system began. He pointed out that the legacy of electric cooperatives is rooted in friends, family and the community. Because cooperatives have always been owned, operated and controlled independently, and have always been geared for local service, they demonstrate the power of human connections and the strength that comes with

teamwork. He said this is especially clear to see as cooperatives and their members deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

“When times get tough, you look to your family and friends, and those are the people who make up our cooperative,” Larson said. “Cooperative communities work together to accomplish things that would be impossible to do alone. That’s what the cooperative legacy is all about, and we see how it lifts us up and sustains us through troubling times.”

Larson said electric co-op history points back to a time in the 1930s when the country was racked by a slumping economy. Co-op organizers went door-to-door to rally support and ask for a membership fee. It was money that many households simply didn’t have. He noted that the first attempt at forming the co-op failed because the start-up funds weren’t there. But by working together and staying focused on the goal, the community accomplished the mission of energizing homes, farms, schools and businesses.

“Friends and families in the Clay County area pulled together and found a way to improve the quality of life for all,” Larson said. “The result is that today we provide power to water districts, banks, grocery stores, elevators, hotels, ag supply stores and more. Electricity is the life blood that makes our local economy run. That’s why our history is so important – it shows the possibilities of what can be done. It’s a road map for achieving what some think is impossible. That’s a message we can all learn from and has no expiration date.”

Larson said that by being attentive to the legacy of electric cooperatives, members of the younger generation can make a real difference in the future of the country.





## CO-OPS VOTE

Cooperative members encouraged to make their voices heard

Billy Gibson

[editor@sdrea.coop](mailto:editor@sdrea.coop)

The act of voting is not only a basic right of every American citizen, it's also a hallmark of the country's rural electric cooperative system.

The monumental rural electrification movement that began in the 1930s was founded on the principle of one member, one vote. As communities all across the nation began building infrastructures to deliver electricity to farms and schools and homes in outlying areas, the idea that every member had only one vote – regardless of that member's status, wealth or influence – quickly gained widespread appeal.

The same set of democratic principles that have served as the system's bedrock from the beginning continue to sustain the cooperative network today.

All of the more than 42 million electric cooperative members across the country are encouraged to cast their vote for their local board representative with the aim of installing competent, effective leadership. Exercising the right to cast a ballot in board elections ensures that the members maintain a measure of democratic control over the organization that they collectively own.

While voting power rests in the hands of cooperative members, as it does with the general electorate, that power is lost if those responsible for being engaged in the political process don't do their part. If electric cooperative members don't elect qualified, committed representatives to look out for their interests at the board table, this puts the future of the cooperative in doubt. The same applies to the national political system as well.

Participating in the political process is so paramount to maintaining and upholding democratic institutions that the more

than 900 member-owned electric cooperatives across the country have launched a promotional initiative called Co-ops Vote. The campaign is designed to raise awareness not only of the upcoming national elections but also the voting process that takes place each year at every cooperative.

Long before the launching of the Co-op Votes campaign came the formation of a federal political action committee called the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE). Founded in 1966, ACRE is a non-partisan organization that provides support for candidates who serve as advocates for the best interests of electric co-ops, their member-owners and their communities.

The grassroots organization is backed by a diverse group of more than 35,000 individuals in 47 states who make an average annual contribution of just \$65. Through the ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action, an off-shoot of the original ACRE program, local cooperatives are able to reach out to their residential member-owners and invite them to be politically engaged in marshaling financial support for candidates and involved in other significant grassroots advocacy initiatives.

South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives are strong participants in the effort to make sure the voices of co-op members reach the halls of the statehouse in Pierre and also resonate on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. According to Ed Anderson, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, those voices include calls for electrical power that is safe, reliable, affordable and accessible for all South Dakota citizens.

"Electrical power is essential to sustaining our way of life," Anderson said. "We need power to run our homes and farms



and businesses. With our relatively low population density, it's a challenge to keep power rates at a point where our members can afford their monthly electric bill. That's why it's critical that we make sure the decision makers in Pierre and in Washington are listening to our voices and listening to our concerns."

South Dakota's electric cooperative leaders, employees and members are stepping up to the plate by increasing their participation in ACRE and ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action. Roughly half of the 30 cooperative boards in the state boast 100 percent participation in ACRE at the \$100 per year (Century Club) level.

One of those cooperatives, Black Hills Electric based in Custer, also has an employee participation level of 100 percent, in addition to its management, key staff and seven-member board.

CEO and General Manager Walker Witt said supporting political leaders who can relate to the unique challenges faced by rural South Dakotans is important.

"The management, staff and employees have supported ACRE since its inception. We believe in the importance of electing representatives who believe in the importance of the rural electric program and

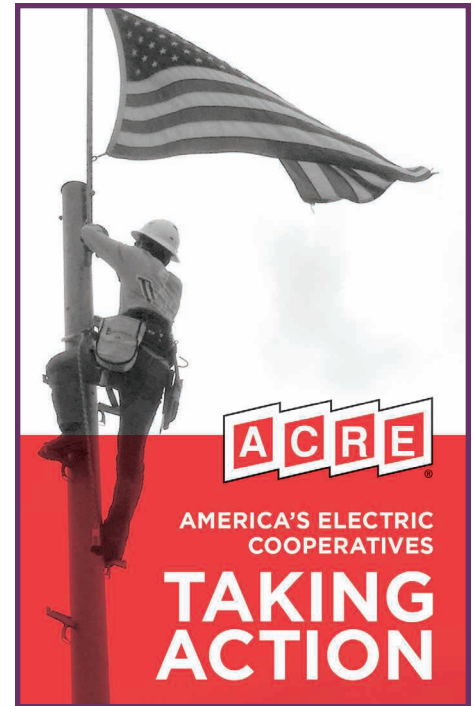
those co-ops on the front lines of rural electrification. ACRE dollars help keep the struggles of rural America in the forefront of the legislative arena. ACRE has helped us build political capital in South Dakota and Washington."

Tim McCarthy, General Manager and CEO at Sioux Valley Energy in Colman, echoed Witt's observations.

"Our Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and Board of Directors believe it is important to be politically engaged. We view our role as advocates for our member-owners and it's part of our commitment to them. We are engaged at all levels of the political process and, in fact, employ a government relations professional to ensure continued involvement. ACRE supports candidates who will speak for and protect the interests of electric cooperatives and their consumer-owners."

Sioux Valley Energy has also made an effort to appeal directly to members by conducting community-based forums, a process that has been temporarily disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

According to McCarthy, "We have worked hard to engage our members in the political process, hosting what we call 'Take Action' forums. We invite



elected officials to speak at these events and it allows our members to hear about energy-specific legislation and regulation that may impact their rates and or service. They also have the chance to ask questions and hear directly from their elected officials. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, we will not be hosting any this year."

## Rural communities depend on Co-op Voters.

- ✓ Learn about the issues.
- ✓ Talk to your family and friends.
- ✓ Cast your vote.

**Election Day is  
November 3, 2020**



**Be an active participant in our democracy. Be a Co-op Voter.**

**[www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop)**



**Note:** Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.

### September 24-26

Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival, 13329 US Highway 16A Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

### September 25-27

Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Massey Harris Tractors, Meadow, SD, 605-788-2229

### September 26

Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival, 526 Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

### September 26

Chamberlain/Oacoma Harvest Festival, Chamberlain, SD, 605-234-4416

### September 26-27

Menno Pioneer Power Show, 616 N Fifth Street, Menno, SD

### September 26

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD,

### October 2-3

First United Methodist Church Rummage Sale, 629 Kansas City St, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-4294

### October 2-3

Oktoberfest, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

### October 3

Cruiser Car Show & Street Fair, Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

### October 3

Cowboys, Cowgirls and Cowcatchers Soiree, 6 p.m., South Dakota State Railroad Museum, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



**Sept. 26**  
Wheelin' to Wall, Wall, SD,

### October 3-4

Marshall Area Gun Show, Red Baron Arena, 1651 Victory Dr., Marshall, MN, 507-401-6227

### October 3-4

Harvest Festival, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

### October 3-18

Pumpkin Festival, Canton, SD, 605-987-5171

### October 10

Annual Fall Festival, 4-6 p.m., Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD, 605-255-4329

### October 10

Groton's 5th Annual Pumpkin Fest, Groton City Park, Groton, SD, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch Served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### October 10-11

Pumpkin Festival, 27249 SD Hwy 115, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

### October 24

Ladies Day Shopping Extravaganza, The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### October 29-30

Helping with Horsepower's Phobia - A Haunted Trail, Reclamation Ranch, 40789 259th St., Mitchell, SD, 7-11 p.m. 605-770-2867

### October 31-November 1

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

### November 7

Silver Star Bazaar, Lake Norden Community Center, Lake Norden, SD, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### November 7

Helping with Horsepower's RibFest, 4 p.m., Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, Contact mattcarter1421@gmail.com to Register Your Team

### November 14

Annual Holiday Extravaganza, Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters, Sisseton, SD, 605-698-7425

### November 21-22

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S Washington Street, Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

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.