

## Cooperative Connections

Winter Wonderland at Falls Park is a main attraction in Sioux Falls that draws visitors from far and near each year.

**COVID-19 Can't  
Stop Christmas  
from Coming**

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**Upgrade  
Electronics to  
Save Money**

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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.



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# South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections

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## Volunteer to Make a Positive Impact



**Ed Anderson**

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With the holiday season upon us and the new year just around the corner, I can't help but reflect on the gratitude I feel for our statewide cooperative system. I think most will agree this has been a year like no other - certainly in my lifetime. And while we've seen our share of challenges, I am heartened by the ways we have all pulled together to make our community stronger.

All across the state, our electric co-ops have taken the lead in getting our local communities through the pandemic and we will continue to do so. Throughout the Christmas season, for example, our co-ops will be active in helping schools, churches, charities, civic organizations and more bring assistance to local families in need. There will be toy drives and fundraisers and donations disbursed through our many Operation

Round Up programs. While these efforts are centered around the holidays, for South Dakota's electric cooperatives, our concern for community is a year-around endeavor.

Because we are co-ops, volunteerism and giving back are a part of who we are. We have line workers who are volunteer firefighters and first responders, putting their lives at risk to help others. Many of our co-op employees coach youth sports, assist in school productions, serve in the National Guard or serve on local boards.

Our cooperatives offer employees flexibility in their schedules to accommodate these volunteer opportunities. We look at co-op volunteerism as a wise investment in our community by enabling our employees to donate their time and expertise to help groups that are doing so much to help others.

I look at volunteerism as the gift that keeps on giving. While it's difficult to quantify the impact that volunteers have, I do know they make a tremendous difference in our community and make our corner of the world a better place. Many organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. Volunteers fill in gaps and spread joy and compassion through their efforts. Even assisting with the smallest tasks can make a big impact in the lives of people or any organization in need. Often a big commitment or special skills are not needed, just someone who cares.

I hope you'll consider volunteering. Give an organization or cause that you care about the gift of your compassion, time and talent. In addition to the organization and the community benefiting from your efforts, you will receive a gift as well. Not only will you enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping a good cause, you will likely make new friends, expand your social network, strengthen existing skills or learn a new one.

At the end of the day, the gift of volunteerism is a gift that will continue giving all year long. So, this holiday season, consider starting a new tradition - give the gift of time.

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# Decorate Your Home Safely

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by Christmas and holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.



## Correction: Pheasant bag limit unchanged

A story on pheasant hunting in last month's issue incorrectly stated that the daily bag limit was increased from three to four birds. This proposed change was considered by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; however, the proposal was not approved.

## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



### "Do Not Shoot the Power Line!"

**Luke Welsh, 10 years old**

Luke is a resident of Oral, S.D., and is the son of Ryan and Rachel Welsh. He warns, "Do not shoot the power line. It might start a fire! Be safe."

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.

# Delicious Holiday Desserts

## Dorothy's Baked Carmel Corn

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 c. butter            | 1/2 tsp. soda              |
| 2 c. brown sugar       | 1 tsp. vanilla             |
| 1/2 c. dark Karo syrup | 6 qts. (24 c.) popped corn |
| 1 tsp. salt            |                            |

Add butter, brown sugar, syrup and salt to a large pan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil 4 1/2 minutes without stirring. Remove from heat. Add soda and vanilla. Stir 1-2 minutes. Pour over popcorn and stir well. Divide into 2 cake pans. Bake 250 degrees 1 hour, mix every 15 minutes. Break up and store in tight container.

**Gloria Puetz, Salem, SD**

## Chocolate Kissed Macaroons

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 14 oz. pkg. sweetened angel flaked coconut | 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk |
| 3/4 c. flour                                 | 2 tsp. vanilla extract                |
| 1/4 c. salt                                  | 24 chocolate kisses, unwrapped        |
| 1 egg white, beaten til frothy               |                                       |

Line two baking sheets with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. In a medium bowl, mix together coconut, flour and salt. Add sweetened milk, beaten egg white and vanilla. Mix well. Mixture will be stiff. Use a cookie scoop, ice cream scoop or tbsp. to divide the dough dropping two inches apart on the baking sheet. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and gently press a candy kiss into the center. Remove to wire rack to cool.

**Colleen Wolfe, Hot Springs, SD.**

## Scoops Ah Caramel

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1/2 c. butter        | 1 can condensed milk |
| 1-1/2 c. brown sugar | 1 tsp. vanilla       |
| 3/4 c. white syrup   | 3 9-oz. bags Scoops  |

Bring the butter, brown and white sugar and condensed milk to a boil. Boil for 1 minute. Add vanilla. Stir. Put chips on a platter. Pour caramel over Scoops. May drizzle with hot fudge. Keep well refrigerated.

**Ginny Jensen, Volga, SD**

## Reindeer Pecan Brownies

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Nonstick cooking spray                      | 1/2 cup cocoa powder                  |
| 1 stick (1/2 c.) unsalted butter, melted    | 1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional) |
| 1 tablespoon pecan or canola oil            | 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt              |
| 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons, granulated sugar | 20 raw pecan halves, cut in half      |
| 2 large eggs                                | 40 candy eyeballs                     |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract                  | 20 red chocolate candies              |
| 1/2 cup all-purpose flour                   | 1/4 cup chocolate chips               |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In large bowl, whisk melted butter, oil and sugar until well combined. Add eggs and vanilla extract; beat until mixture is thick and pale in color, about 1 minute. Sift in flour and cocoa powder. Add espresso powder, if desired, and salt. Using rubber spatula, fold dry ingredients into butter mixture until just combined. Batter should be thick. Using 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, transfer batter to prepared mini muffin tin. Bake 13-15 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out mostly clean, with some lingering crumbs. Add chocolate chips to heat-proof bowl; microwave until smooth and melted. Pour melted chocolate into sandwich bag and cut off small portion of one corner to use as tip. Use melted chocolate to "glue" on pecan antlers, candy eyeballs and red candy noses to brownies. Allow chocolate to set before transferring brownies to airtight container. Note: Brownies will stay fresh for up to three days.

**AmericanPecan.com**

Please send your favorite holiday 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.

# Three Steps to an Efficient Attic



**Pat Keegan**

Collaborative Efficiency

**Many attics are under-ventilated, which allows moisture and heat to build up. Moisture causes harmful mold and wood rot.**

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on ensuring an energy-efficient attic, please visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

**Dear Pat and Brad:** I'm convinced we could reduce our high heating bills if we add more insulation to our attic. How do I make sure everything's done right? - Kelly

**Dear Kelly:** It's great that you're focused on your attic, as this is often the area you can get the most bang for your buck on energy efficiency investments. Insulation is one part of the energy-efficient attic puzzle. Here are a few tips to keep in mind as you prepare to make your attic more efficient.

## Step 1: Sealing

Attics are often the place where warm air leaks out of the home in winter or into the home during summer. Trouble spots include anything that comes through the attic floor, such as recessed lights, the chimney, the attic hatch and pipes, and ducts or wires coming through the attic floor. It's best to properly seal these spots before adding or improving the insulation. Invest a small amount of money in the necessary supplies like caulk, expanding foam or weather stripping.

## Step 2: Ventilation

Many attics are under-ventilated, which allows moisture and heat to build up. Moisture causes harmful mold and wood rot. During the summer, a poorly ventilated attic is prone to over-heating, which can bake shingles and shorten their life. During the winter, a warm attic can melt snow on the roof, causing it to run into your gutters and then freeze, causing ice dams. Proper ventilation lets air flow from a low point to a high point. This is usually done by installing soffit vents and insulation baffles around the perimeter, plus vents near the peak of the roof. If there is no way to install attic ventilators, an attic fan can provide mechanical assistance to exhausting overheated air.

## Step 3: Insulation

The three main types of insulation for attics are loose-fill, batt and rigid. Whichever type you have, it needs to provide a high-enough level of insulation for your region, measured in R-value. Batt and rigid insulation will often have the R-value printed on them. Loose-fill, which is blown in, is the most common for attic floors, and its R-value is approximately its depth in inches multiplied by 2.8. Generally speaking, your attic should have 14-24 inches of loose-fill insulation if you live in a northern state and 11-14 inches if you're in a southern state. Find the recommended level for your region at [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov).

If you have loose-fill insulation that is less than the recommended amount, you should be able to add more on top of it, as long as there aren't any moisture, rodent, ant or termite problems. If your existing loose-fill insulation was installed before 1990, it could be Vermiculite, which may be contaminated with Asbestos. Asbestos can cause cancer when particles are released into the air, so it's a good idea to have the insulation tested. If it's contaminated, have it removed by a professional. Remember to seal and insulate any walls in the attic that border conditioned space, such as skylight openings.

Some of these steps can be challenging, so consider hiring a professional contractor. If you're a DIY pro and decide to do some of the work on your own, be aware of potential hazards. Disturbing old wiring can cause shorts in your electrical system, and roofing nails will often pierce the attic ceiling.

Another danger is stepping off the rafters. Years ago, I (Pat) decided to do some work in my own attic on a hot afternoon. The heat must have gotten to me because I slipped and crashed through the attic floor. My daughters were quite surprised to see their dad's legs dangling from the ceiling, with broken sheetrock and insulation everywhere. What a mess! First and foremost, always remember safety when tackling projects at home.



SHORTY GARRETT

Saddle bronc rider Delbert “Shorty” Garrett is shown here at the Home on the Range Bronc Match in Sentinel Butte, ND, in August. Garrett has earned a spot in the National PRCA Finals set for Arlington, TX, Dec. 3-12. Photo courtesy of JackieJensenPhotography.com.

## Garrett Chases His Rodeo Dream at PRCA Nationals

Billy Gibson

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Shorty Garrett has been chasing his rodeo dream for nearly as long as he can remember. He recalls sitting at his desk as a third-grader when the teacher told all the students to write down their life goals.

“I put down that I wanted to be a world champion saddle bronc rider one day,” Garrett said. “To have that goal as a kid and to finally see it within reach, that’s really special.”

Delbert “Shorty” Garrett is making quite a name for himself on the PRCA circuit. He finished this past season as No. 4 among the top 15 saddle bronc riders in the country and will be heading off to Arlington, Texas, to compete in the national finals Dec. 3-12. The national competition puts Garrett one step closer to achieving his boyhood dreams. He got close to earning a spot in the finals last year but fell...well...short.

“I made my mind up this year that nothing was going to stop me, and I’m going to go for that title. I just have to focus and stay zoned in. Last year made me that much more hungry,” he said.

It’s not very surprising that Garrett would succeed on the rodeo circuit. He’s been

surrounded and mentored by top rodeo competitors all of his life. He was already training horses when he was 8.

His dad, Juan, and a slew of uncles and other relatives have tasted success in the arena and he’s been picking their brains for the best tips and tricks during most of his 27 years. One of his uncles, T.C. Holloway, stands out as a role model even though he lost his life in an automobile accident at the age of 24 in 2000. From Uncle T.C., Garrett learned about developing a winning style.

“Everything he did was cool and loose and in control. He had a flashy style of riding, more than anyone around. He just made it look so easy, and I tried to mimic him the best I could – and I still do,” Garrett said.

When he was a youngster, Garrett knew he wouldn’t be able to ride until he reached a weight of 100 pounds. He ate everything in sight to try to pack on the pounds, but the process was slow. When he finally reached the mark, Garrett went to his grandfather and said he was ready to ride. The old cowboy set him up with a horse named Three Bees – as in the stinging insect.

“I didn’t really have time to be scared or anything. I’d been watching everybody ride

all of my life. I wanted to be like them,” Garrett said.

He didn’t stay on for long, but that maiden ride got him hooked on that “thang called rodeo.” Garrett heads to the national finals with confidence, thanks to one of his uncles who he said gave the best piece of advice he’s ever received: “The horse is as good as you want him to be.”

Garrett explained often he would be disappointed in the performance of a horse, “Then I’d think about it and ask myself if I did everything I could do to make that horse the best he could be. You have to take accountability and think positively, then everything will work out.”

Whether he returns to Eagle Butte with the winning buckle or not, Garrett has big plans this spring. He and his fiancé, Alex Bush, intend to get married next May. The two have known each other since they were teens. She was a rodeo rider in high school and the two share a love for the sport.

“We get along really good and she helps me a lot. She knows that rodeo gets in your blood and she’s real supportive,” Garrett said. “I really owe a lot to all of my family and friends.”



Storybook Island captures the imagination of the young and old alike both during the summer and the holiday season.

# CHRISTMAS IN SD

## COVID-19 Hasn't Stopped Christmas from Coming

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sarea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sarea.coop)

The coronavirus pandemic has certainly had a substantial “bah humbug” effect since it began sweeping across the globe last spring. And as the virus continues to pose a health risk going into the new year ahead, many familiar holiday festivals and events across the state have been canceled, curtailed or postponed until 2021.

But there are still a number of events across the state that are planning to proceed as scheduled, many of which have become annual holiday traditions for individuals and families looking to get into the Christmas spirit.

That’s the case for those who look forward every year to taking in the sights and sounds of the Winter Wonderland event held at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. For residents of the Sioux Falls area and thousands of out-of-town visitors each holiday season, the brilliant light display is a spectacle that not only sparks the Christmas spirit but also brings back memories of childhood wonder from previous seasons.

The Winter Wonderland exhibit includes 270 decorated trees and light poles and more than 25 miles of string lights throughout the complex that runs along the Big Sioux River. A five-story observation tower also gives park visitors a 360-degree bird’s eye view of the many eye-popping displays.



Storybook Island comes alive each Christmas with thousands of holiday lights.

The 29th Annual Parade of Lights will officially kick off the downtown Sioux Falls holiday season with festive music and a dazzling float parade along historic Phillips Avenue from 13th Street to 5th Street. But due to the pandemic this year, officials have announced there will be a twist: instead of the floats moving past the spectators, the spectators will walk along in front of the floats. The floats will remain stationary for the duration of the event and the public is invited to casually walk along the route and view the parked floats up close.

The “stationary parade” begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 27.



Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer shares the holiday spirit by decorating a bucket truck each year.

Everyone is encouraged to stay for an after-party and awards ceremony where there will be live musical entertainment and other activities. Admission is free.

Storybook Island, a popular attraction in the Rapid City area during the summer months, will hold its annual Christmas Nights of Lights display this season. The park boasts 16 miles of colorful lights, including dioramas, popular children's fictional characters and a variety of additional holiday-related themes. The event takes place Dec. 4-6, 11-23 and 26-31, from 5:30 to 8:30 each night at 1301 Sheridan Lake Rd. Admission is \$3 per person.

In Custer, the Annual Parade of Lights will take place downtown on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The annual event signals the kick-off of the holiday season in the Southern Hills area. After the parade, Santa and Mrs. Claus will make an appearance at Way Park for the Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. The parade begins at 8th and Mt. Rushmore Road and will end at Way Park on 4th and Mt. Rushmore Road.

The residents of Spearfish will celebrate the start of the season with the annual Holidazzle Light Parade and Christmas Stroll sponsored by the Downtown Business Association. The event will take place along Main Street on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning in the morning and lasting all day.

The Christmas Stroll will take place immediately after the parade and will feature special sales and discounts at downtown merchants and business establishments. To add to the holiday mood, carolers will perform from 2 to 4 p.m., and there will be a



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park offers a unique light display along the Big Sioux River.

Community Chili Feed at Common Grounds at 5 p.m.

In Pierre, revelers will ring in the holiday season with the 20th Annual Parade of Lights on Monday, Nov. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place entries and there will also be a Mayor's Choice Award as well as a Griswold Award for gaudiest float.

Also in Pierre, the highly anticipated "Christmas at the Capitol" event will take place once again this year from Nov. 25 through Dec. 26. The rotunda and the hallways of the Capitol Building will be filled with the sounds of carolers and musicians as well as the scent of mountain pine and the soft glow emanating from nearly 100 lighted Christmas trees. The trees are decorated by cities, businesses, non-profit groups and other civic organizations.

Popular displays inside the Capitol include a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments and a wooden nativity scene believed to be nearly 125 years old located on the second floor.

Before scheduling a visit, check for the most recent updates at [www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol](https://www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol).



The Pumpkin Carriage is a popular attraction at Storybook Island.

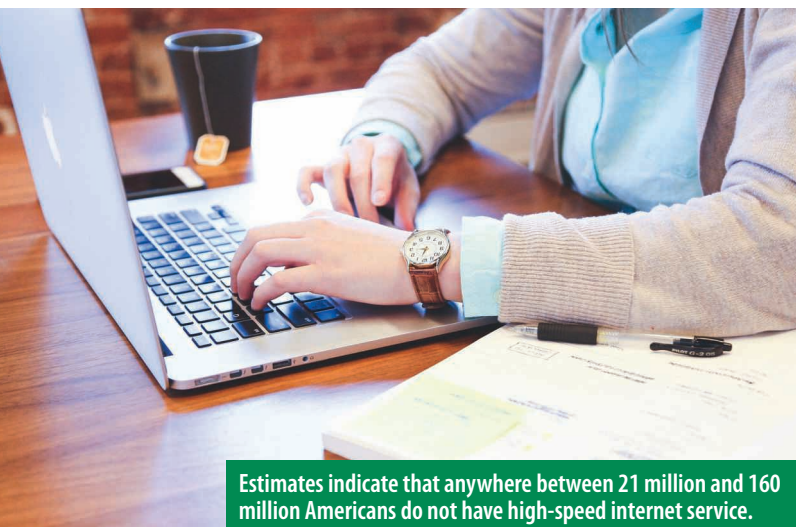
Efforts to bring broadband internet service to rural America are undergoing a surge in momentum.

# Rural Broadband Service

## Momentum grows for bringing broadband to everyone

The United States has quietly launched one of its biggest programs ever - connecting everyone to the internet, even those of us in rural areas.

The program's scope and economic benefits will match the impossible dreams of huge hydroelectric dams built in the 1930s, the interstate highway system in the 1950s and putting people on the Moon in the 1960s.



Estimates indicate that anywhere between 21 million and 160 million Americans do not have high-speed internet service.

It will be expensive. By one measure, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) estimates a cost of \$40 billion. A more ambitious plan would be an additional \$40 billion.

"We're on the cusp of some big changes," says Brian O'Hara, senior director of regulatory issues, telecom and broadband, for

the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

O'Hara's optimism starts with the steadily growing national awareness that bringing high-speed internet access, or broadband, to rural areas will benefit the whole country.

### The importance of broadband for all

Currently, more than 20 million Americans do not have broadband in their homes or businesses. Many of those people live in rural areas and are left out because of simple accounting - the cost of wiring a fast internet connection miles outside a city is more than almost anyone could afford.

That arithmetic is not changing. But decades of internet growth is convincing businesses, politicians and other policymakers that broadband is an essential part of modern life and today's economy.

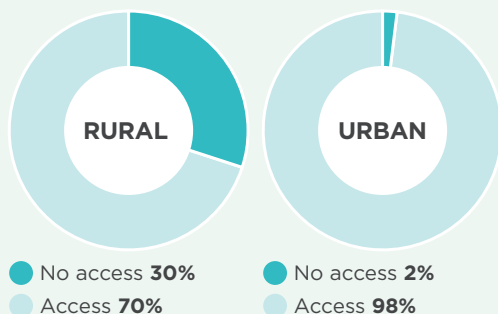
A study by Purdue University found that every dollar invested in broadband would return nearly \$4 to the U.S. economy. The benefits include more civic engagement and a higher Gross Domestic Product. It found that even at current levels of access, people save \$1 billion a year by shopping online. The study also said broadband is more important than traditional infrastructure such as railroads and highways.

Broadband access for rural America brings new challenges as intricate as the engineering of the interstate highways or the technology required when we landed on the moon. One of those challenges is knowing where the people are who don't have internet access - and exactly how many of them there are. The official count of those without broadband is complicated by oddities such as voluntary reporting, reporting by census blocks (meaning if

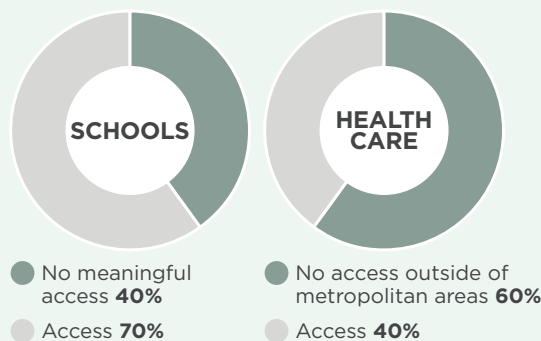
## BROADBAND BY THE NUMBERS

Electric cooperatives are helping to close the nation's digital divide, but more work is needed to achieve the goal of broadband access for all.

### PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS WITHOUT ACCESS TO BROADBAND



### PERCENTAGE OF FACILITIES WITHOUT ACCESS TO BROADBAND



Source: 2019 NRECA Broadband Study and FCC data

Electric cooperatives are committed to the communities they serve and are working with Washington policymakers to improve broadband data collection and target federal resources for unserved and underserved communities.

one person has broadband in an area, it counts as everyone having it) and uncertainty over how fast the internet has to be in order to be considered high-speed.

Because of those uncertainties and unknowns, estimates of the number of Americans without broadband can actually range somewhere between 21 million and 160 million.

Then there's the cost. The FCC's \$40 billion cost estimate envisions bringing broadband to 98 percent of the country. And another \$40 billion to reach the final 2 percent.

Rural broadband advocates agree that the first step is to gain better information on who's not served and where they live. A step in that direction came last March with enactment of the Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act. That new law aims to fix the flaws in how access is counted.

### The pandemic reveals a need

Another reason for hope came last year as the FCC launched a 10-year program called the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund.

Under that program, \$16 billion has been allocated to internet providers, including some rural electric cooperative groups, to begin work next year expanding the reach of the internet. An additional \$4.4 billion is planned for a Phase II.

While that's far from the FCC's \$40-80 billion cost estimate, it doesn't count funding from other agencies like the Rural Utilities Service, or, importantly, actions by individual states. The National Conference of State Legislatures reports that this year, 42 states addressed broadband in some form. Many states offer their own financial aid, as well as offices to coordinate broadband expansion.

O'Hara expects all that progress will be strengthened by this year's COVID-19 outbreak and the stay-at-home measures taken to control the spread of the virus.


"The pandemic has really driven this home," says O'Hara. "Overnight, we went from broadband being, 'Oh yes, this really makes life a lot easier,' to 'Oh my gosh, schools are shut down and teachers are trying to do online learning, and those of us that could work from home are no

**Decades of internet growth is convincing businesses, politicians and other policymakers that broadband is an essential part of modern life.**

longer going into the office."

O'Hara sees the progress toward rural broadband as leading to successes like the Moon landing and interstate highway system, as well as another important national initiative we undertook years ago - bringing electricity to rural America.

"We found a way to electrify the whole country," says O'Hara. "Now it's time to bring broadband to the whole country."



There are several popular electronics on the market that can help you use energy more efficiently.

# Cut Energy Consumption

## Upgrade Electronics for Energy Savings

Are you looking for easy ways to save more money on your monthly energy bills as the year comes to a close?

Beyond some of the more traditional energy efficiency measures, such as sealing air leaks or adding additional insulation, there are several popular electronics that can help you use energy more efficiently.

These devices are relatively easy to incorporate into your home, making them a simple way to help manage your energy use.

Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy at home. With smart thermostats, there's no longer a need to constantly adjust the temperature. They can be programmed to follow a pattern of heating and cooling throughout the day and year to maximize your comfort and energy use at the same time.

Some advanced smart thermostats out on the market today can even learn your habits and adjust the temperature in your home accordingly. Another great benefit is the ability to control a smart thermostat remotely from an app on your phone, allowing you to set the temperature to your liking before you even arrive home.

Lastly, some smart thermostats can be integrated with a more complete smart home hub, like Amazon Alexa or Google Home,

which are both hot sellers in the market. Smart thermostats can be pretty pricey upfront, but if it's time to upgrade your home's thermostat, you'll soon discover that smart options offer more convenience and savings that make them worth the initial investment.

If you're looking for ways to save energy while you and your family are on a budget, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs can be inserted into any standard electrical outlet and can help you manage the energy of the devices that are plugged in. With con-



Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy. Photo provided by Ecobee.

**If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal.**

trol of the smart plug, you can stop power-hungry devices from being on longer than necessary.

Some smart plug models have a scheduling option, allowing you to turn on lights or turn off the TV at certain times of the day, such as when you leave in the morning and when you anticipate returning home. Others offer a dimming function, allowing you to change the brightness of lights that are plugged into the smart plug. These features can be controlled through an app on your phone, and some models also have voice-controlled options when connected to a smart home hub.

Another useful gadget is the home energy monitor, which helps you monitor home energy use and set energy budgets. If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal. They are connected to your electric meter and provide a big picture on your home's energy use.

Additionally, some home energy monitors can show which appliances are using the most energy, giving you the knowledge on which devices to cut down on. There are also a few additional features among home energy monitors that provide several different benefits. Some models can show you real-time electricity use and costs, while some can help create a personalized plan for energy efficiency. Most home energy monitors can be connected through a smart phone app, which can send notifications, warn about abnormal energy use and provide tips for further energy savings.

These simple devices can help you save a little more energy each month. Considering what your needs are will help you choose a device with the appropriate features. As with any new product, do some homework first to determine which device suits your home best.

## Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Safety

During the holidays, many of us turn our attention to gift giving, and while the shiny, trendy and pricey may make a big splash when the unwrapping's done, practical gifts can leave lasting impressions. What's more, they can really make a difference by enhancing safety and improving security.

Here are a few practical gift ideas that can make a real difference in helping to reduce safety risks year-round.

**Smoke Detectors:** Most of us have at least one in our homes, but experts say that's not enough. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a working smoke detector be installed in every bedroom, on every level of a home, and in hallways outside of sleeping areas. And, if smoke detectors are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced.

**Carbon Monoxide Alarms:** Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless gas

created by incomplete consumption of fuels like gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane, oil, coal or methane. The gas is highly toxic, so having CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and on every level of a home improves safety. Local fire departments respond to about 80,000 non-fire CO incidents each year. Fuel-burning heating equipment and cooking appliances should be professionally inspected once a year to reduce the risks of malfunction and detect structural problems early.

**Extension Cords:** They are not all created equal; subject to wear; have specific use guidelines; and are never recommended for permanent use. Brittle and cracked plastic can indicate heat damage, and exposed wires or frayed connections increase risk of shock, shorts or fires. An extension cord that's warm or hot to the touch is a good indication it's not designed to safely do the job. Consider giving an assortment of extension cords designed for indoor or outdoor use. Before you buy, look for the label of a nationally recognized testing lab like Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA-International (CSA) or Intertek (ETL).

**Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters:** Arcing and sparking are indications that a home's electrical wiring needs service. Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) can help address fire hazards before they occur. Properly installed by a licensed electrician, AFCIs can often replace circuit breakers in the electrical panel box. This should be completed by a qualified electrician because the installation involves working inside the panel box, which carries current even when main circuit breakers are turned off.



## CO-OP SPIRIT OF GIVING



Black Hills Electric employees assist in clean-up efforts after the flood of 2019 in Custer. From left to right are Carlos Rodriguez, Danny Dooley, Scott Schramm, Beau Bradeen, Mark Svoboda and Rory Halverson.

## CO-OP SPIRIT OF GIVING

### The Cooperative Spirit of Giving is Alive Year-Around

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

For member-owned electric cooperatives, the spirit of giving associated with the Christmas holiday season is something that continues long after the presents have been opened and the egg nog container has been emptied.

Electric cooperatives are committed to serving their communities, a commitment - Concern for Community - that is part of the 7 Cooperative Principles that guide all member-owned cooperative organizations.

Across the state and across the country, for example, electric cooperatives participate in a program called Operation Round Up where members are encouraged to “round up” their bills to the next whole dollar amount. The funds are then used to support civic organizations, local charities and in some cases individuals or individual families who are in need.

There are many other examples. Cooperatives support education through scholarship programs and safety demonstrations, and also engage in youth development programs such as the annual Washington Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion. Employees regularly volunteer their time to participate in local fun runs, community clean-up days, and other projects organized to enhance the quality of life for all.

This commitment to serve is something that has been a hallmark

since the beginning of the rural electrification movement more than 80 years ago and continues unabated today.

Ed Anderson, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association based in Pierre, said the spirit of giving is an integral part of the fabric that unites all electric cooperatives, and it extends beyond the delivery of electric power.

“Electric cooperatives were created for one purpose only, and that’s to do everything we can to improve the quality of life for the people we serve, as well as everyone else in the community,” Anderson said. “It begins with the thing that everybody needs - electricity - but it also includes a solid commitment to be active, to be engaged and to be involved in those things that make our homes better places to live, work and raise our families.”

Anderson also noted that the commitment to serve also includes not just staff but also cooperative leaders such as upper and middle management and board members.

“Board directors are elected by the members to establish policies that set the future course of the cooperative,” Anderson said. “By definition, they are also members of the cooperative themselves and have a keen interest in supporting the community while also making the decisions that will lead to more reliable power and affordable rates.”

## Four Ways Santa Saves Energy in His Workshop

The holiday season is finally upon us, and Santa and his elves have been especially busy as they gear up for their biggest night of the year.

It's no secret that Santa is known for running an efficient workshop - how else could he make all those toys in time for Christmas Eve? Rumor has it that one way Santa ensures an efficient workspace is through energy-saving measures.

Here are four ways Santa saves energy in his workshop.

**1.** Santa leaves his decorations up year-round, so by using LED holiday light strands, he's able to save on his monthly energy bills. LED holiday strands can last up to 40 seasons, which make them a great option for any festive home.

**2.** Santa requires several power tools to make a year's worth of new toys. That's why he insists on using cordless power tools with the ENERGY STAR® rating. According to energystar.gov, if all power tools in the U.S. used ENERGY STAR®-rated battery chargers, 2 billion kWh hours of electricity could be saved - that's equivalent to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 1.7 million tons!

**3.** Mrs. Claus loves the comfort of a fire, and Santa knows one of the best tricks to ensure fireplace efficiency. While a fireplace can keep a small area of your home cozy and warm, it can also pull heated air from the room through the chimney. That's why Santa always closes the flue when a fire isn't burning.

**4.** Santa also saves energy by using power strips. Power strips are ideal for workshops, craft nooks, game rooms and other spaces in your home. With one simple switch, you can conveniently control several devices and electronics that are plugged into the power strip.



Last year, Sioux Valley Energy employees volunteered to wrap Christmas presents at the Sioux Empire Mall to raise money for the Children's Home Society. Pictured from left to right: Sarina Hanson, Kim Hansen, Kara LeBrun, Lori George and Chinelle Christensen.



Santa paid a visit to Pipestone, MN, last year. The event was made possible through Sioux Valley Energy's Operation Round Up program, which provided a new suit and related items for Mr. Claus.

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for "Co-op Connections Plus" and you'll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



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

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**November 20-21**

Holiday Arts Christmas Show,  
112 E. 5th St. Masonic Hall,  
Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

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**November 21-22**

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

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**November 24-December 26**

Christmas at the Capitol, Free  
Admission, Pierre, SD

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**November 27**

Hill City Olde Tyme Christmas  
Parade and Celebration  
Kick-Off, 5 p.m., Downtown  
Hill City, SD, 605-574-2368

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**November 27**

Black Friday Trap Shoot, Sioux  
Falls Izaak Walton League,  
10:30 a.m., Lunch Available,  
5000 North Oakview Place,  
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

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**November 27**

Annual Sioux Falls Parade of  
Lights, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Phillips  
Ave., Sioux Falls, SD  
605-338-4009

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**November 28**

Holiday Celebration and  
Winter Market, 2 to 6 p.m.,  
Free Admission, Main Street  
Square in Downtown Rapid  
City, SD

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**November 27-December 27**

Trees and Trains at the South  
Dakota Railroad Museum,  
Weekends, Contact the  
Museum for Days and Times.  
Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



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**December 4**

Christmas in the Hills Parade  
of Lights, 6 p.m., Downtown  
Hot Springs, SD,  
605-745-4140

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**December 4-5**

Creekside Crafters 13th  
Annual Bazaar, Snappers  
Club Building in City Camp-  
ground, Friday 1 to 8 p.m. and  
Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.,  
Spearfish, SD

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**December 4-6 and 10-12**

Same Time, Next Year,  
Dramatic Comedy by  
Bernard Slade, Grand  
Opera House, Pierre, SD,  
[www.pierreplayers.com](http://www.pierreplayers.com)

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**December 5**

Manager Medlodies Concert  
Christmas in the Hills, 7 to  
9 p.m., Mueller Center, Hot  
Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

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**December 5**

Rapid City Garden Club's  
59th Annual Wreath and  
Centerpiece Sale, 8 a.m. to  
1 p.m., Lions' and Bridger  
Buildings, Central States  
Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD,  
605-343-0710

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**December 5**

Custer Christmas Parade,  
5:30 p.m., Downtown Custer,  
SD, 605-673-2244

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**December 5**

Festival of Trees, Newell City  
Hall, Newell, SD, Admission:  
Two Cans of Non-Perishable  
Food Items Per Person,  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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**December 6, 20**

VFW Bingo, Wall Community  
Center, Wall, SD,  
605-279-2663

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**December 12**

Christmas for Kids, Ages  
0-10 visit with Santa and  
Mrs. Claus, Custer High  
School, Preregistration is  
Required, Register via email  
[custerchristmas4kids@  
gmail.com](mailto:custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com), Custer, SD

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**December 12**

Frontier Christmas, 11907  
434th Ave., Lake City, SD,  
605-448-5474

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.