

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Clarence Kooistra of VFW Post 628 in Sioux Falls salutes military veterans interred at the South Dakota State Cemetery

## Honoring our Veterans

**A new resting place for fallen soldiers**  
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## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### SOUTH DAKOTA ELECTRIC

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# GIVING THANKS FOR OUR COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

For me, this is a time of year for reflection, and topping my list of things I'm grateful for is our wonderful cooperative community. I know I speak for all electric cooperative employees around the state when I say that we are thankful to be in such an incredible place. We are fortunate to live in the same place where we work, which makes our ties to our communities that much stronger.

You may recall that last month, my column touched on the first three Cooperative Principles, so this month, I'd like to tell you about the remaining four principles. The Cooperative Principles are essential to the co-op business model and benefit all members of the co-op.



**Trevor Jones**

General Manager

## AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

The fourth principal, Autonomy and Independence, means that the co-op operates in an autonomous way that is solely directed and guided by its members, reflecting the values and needs of our local community. This means the co-op is not being influenced by leaders or shareholders several states away. Instead, the co-op is led by the local members it serves.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The fifth principle, Education and Training, focuses on enhancing the knowledge of co-op employees and board members, which enables them to contribute to the development of the co-op.

By investing in continuous learning for our employees and board members, our co-op is making a commitment not just to individual professional and personal growth, but to the future of the co-op and the high quality of service our members expect and deserve. It's a win-win situation.

We also strive to inform our members (that's you!) and the public about the mission and operations of the co-op. In fact, that's why you receive this magazine every month, so we can share the latest co-op news and updates, as well as energy efficiency and safety tips.

## COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES

Cooperation among cooperatives is the sixth principle and fosters the way that co-ops work together to address bigger challenges. While this principle applies to all types of cooperatives, it is especially relevant in the energy industry. In our case, we put this principle in action after major storms and disasters that cause widespread power outages. When this happens, we call on nearby co-ops to come to our aid and assist with restoration efforts - and we of course extend the same help to them when they need us. I can't think of a better example of cooperation among cooperatives.

In addition, because we are part of the national electric co-op network, we can connect and collaborate with other electric co-ops to tackle industry-related challenges, like cybersecurity and an everchanging energy landscape.

## CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

The seventh principle, Concern for Community, is essential to who we are as cooperatives. We serve our community not only by being an essential service, but by helping to power our local economy. Whether through economic development, volunteerism or donations to local causes, we invest in this community because it's our home too.

I think you'll find that most cooperatives bring good people together to make good things happen. We hope you feel that way about us, your local electric co-op. On behalf of all co-op employees, we're thankful for your membership.



# A house full of Thanksgiving safety

Nearly every household uses extra electricity during the holidays - for cooking, decorating and heating. Take extra care to use electricity safely and to ask family members and house-guests to do the same. Here are some tips:

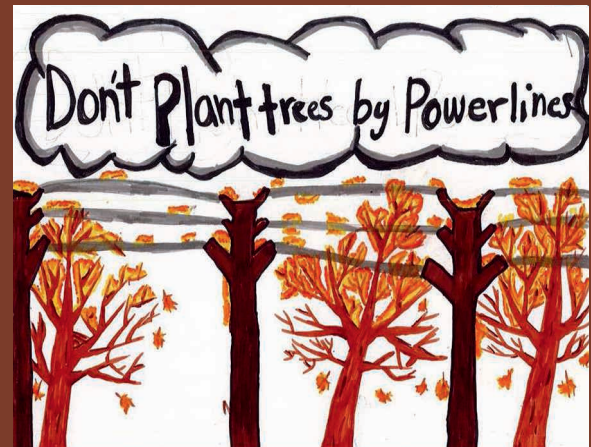
- Stay in the kitchen when broiling or doing any stovetop cooking.
- Keep children well away from cooking appliances while the appliances are in use.
- Keep towels, potholders and curtains away from hot surfaces in your kitchen.
- One of the riskiest holiday behaviors is overloading your electrical outlets. You will overload your wall outlets if you string strand after strand of holiday lights together and plug them into an extension cord that you plug into an outlet.
- Plugging multiple strands of cords into a power strip does not add any juice to the electrical circuit that powers the outlet you plug the strip into.
- Check decorative lights for damaged cords, plugs and sockets. Replace anything that's frayed, cracked or broken. Buy cords that are certified by UL; look for the UL symbol on the package.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, carpets or baseboards, or anywhere they can be a tripping hazard.
- Only use decorations and cords outdoors that are properly rated for outdoor use.
- When you put up outdoor decorations, do not string lights in trees near power lines. Fasten outdoor lights carefully and securely with clips, never nails or tacks.
- Keep electric lights away from decorative metal trees.
- Keep all light strings and other decorations away from pets so they don't get tangled in them or chew the wires.
- Keep all decorations - and everything else - at least three feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces and space heaters.
- Always turn off your decorations when you leave home and when you're sleeping.
- Make sure smoke detectors are present and working properly.
- Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic areas and at least three feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn off space heaters and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave an open flame, including your fireplace or a candle, unattended.

## GOVERNOR'S STUDENT ART COMPETITION



The Governor's Office and the South Dakota Arts Council invite students to participate in the Governor's Student Art Competition.

Students in K-12 will compete in four age divisions. Winning entries will be exhibited in the State Capitol from January through September 2022. Submission deadline is Nov. 12, 2021. All artwork is to be submitted electronically as a high-resolution jpeg image, along with the Artwork Submission Form and the Authorization Release Form. Competition guidelines, instructions and all necessary forms are accessible at [https://artscouncil.sd.gov/events/student\\_art\\_Main.aspx](https://artscouncil.sd.gov/events/student_art_Main.aspx). Contact Rebecca.cruse@state.sd.us or call 605-773-3301 for details.



### Don't plant trees by power lines

Jazzlyn Magera

Jazzlyn shares good advice to avoid planting trees near power lines. Jazzlyn attends Brandon Elementary School and is the daughter of Rachel Schettler. They are members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

# SLOW COOKING BRINGS OUT FLAVORS OF FALL

## BABY BACK RIBS

### Ingredients:

2-1/2 lbs. pork baby back ribs, cut into eight pieces  
5 cups water  
1 med. onion, sliced  
2 celery ribs, cut in half  
2 tsps. minced garlic, divided  
1 tsp. whole peppercorns  
1/2 cup barbecue sauce  
1/4 cup plum sauce (Asian section of grocery store)  
Dash of hot pepper sauce

### METHOD

Place ribs in a 5-qt. slow cooker. Add water, onion, celery, 1 tsp. garlic and peppercorns. Cover and cook on low for six hours or until meat is tender. In a small saucepan, combine the barbecue sauce, plum sauce, hot pepper sauce and remaining garlic. Cook and stir over medium heat for five minutes or until heated through. Remove ribs. Discard cooking juices and vegetables. Coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray before starting grill. Brush ribs with sauce. Grill, uncovered, over medium low heat for 8-10 minutes or until browned, turning occasionally and brushing with remaining sauce. Can also be finished in the oven using the broil setting.

**Melissa Roerig, Sioux Falls**

## CHILI BEEF AND PASTA

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. lean ground beef  
2 packages McCormick® Chili Seasoning Mix  
1 can (14.5 oz.) diced tomatoes  
2 cans (8 oz. each) tomato sauce  
1 cup coarsely chopped bell pepper  
1 cup frozen or canned whole kernel corn  
1 cup elbow macaroni, cooked and drained (about 2.25 cups)  
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

### METHOD

Cook ground beef in large skillet on medium-high heat until no longer pink; drain. Place in slow cooker. Stir in Seasoning Mix, tomatoes, tomato sauce, bell pepper and corn until well blended. Cover. Cook six hours on low or three hours on high. Stir in cheese and cooked macaroni during the last 10 minutes of cooking.

**mccormick.com**

## WHITE PHEASANT CHILI

### Ingredients:

3 boneless pheasants cooked and shredded  
1 large onion chopped  
4 Tbsps. butter  
1/4 cup flour  
3/4 cup chicken broth  
2 cups half and half  
2 cans Navy beans  
1 tsp. Tabasco sauce  
1-1/2 tsp. chili powder  
1 tsp. cumin  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. pepper  
1-2 jalapeno peppers  
1-1/2 cups Monterrey jack cheese  
1/2 cup sour cream

### METHOD

Cook and shred pheasant. Set aside. Cook onion with 2 Tbsps. butter until soft, add flour and remaining butter, whisking constantly. Add broth and half and half while whisking. Bring to boil for 5 minutes, or until onions are tender. Put in crockpot and add remaining ingredients. Put on high heat for one hour then reduce to low heat for one to two hours.

**Alice DeHaai, Keystone**

Please send your favorite holiday dessert 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



### Dear Pat: I read your recent article about electric trucks and SUVs, and I'm excited that some electric vehicle options are now better suited to rural areas. Can you tell me more about how the battery system and charging works in an electric vehicle? – Ava



**Pat Keegan**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency

Dear Ava: We've been hearing more buzz about electric vehicles (EVs) in rural America, so it's a good time to know more about EV batteries and charging options.

Batteries, like the vehicles they power, come in different sizes that provide different mileage ranges. Most people charge their EVs at home, but if you take a cross-country trip, you can charge your EV at one of the rapidly growing number of charging stations around the country. The Department of Energy estimates there are currently 50,000 EV charging sites in the U.S.

Electric vehicles will tell you how many miles are remaining before a charge is needed, and many models offer in-car navigation to the next charger. For EVs without this feature, there are many smart phone apps available to help you navigate to the next charging site.

We often refer to three levels of electric vehicle charging. A new EV comes equipped for Level 1 (L1) charging, which simply plugs into a regular electrical outlet. This is the slowest option for charging, but if you don't travel many miles per day or your EV is a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) with a small battery, L1 charging will likely meet your needs. L1 requires less than 1.5 kilowatts, which is about the same as a hair dryer, and will give the battery three to five miles of range per hour of charging. If you drive your car 40 miles or less during the day and can charge it for 10 hours every night, this method should work for your daily driving needs. But if you have an all-electric EV with a 60-kWh battery, it would take more than 40 hours to fully charge with L1.

Level 2 (L2) is the most common type

of charging because it operates on 240-volt power, which nearly every home has. L2 can supply roughly 6 to 19 kW of power, depending on what your vehicle can accept and your electric circuit's amperage. L2 can provide 100 miles of charge in several hours, and fully charge a large battery in eight to 10 hours. You may need to install a new circuit if there isn't a 240-volt circuit near the area you park. L2 is the most common type of charging at public sites, like grocery stores, libraries and workplaces.

Level 3 (L3) chargers, often called DC Fast Chargers (DCFC), require much more current and are not installed in homes. L3 chargers are typically seen at specific EV charging sites and some gas stations. These chargers have power levels from 50 kW to 350 kW, depending on the charging station. Some new EVs can accept 250 kW or more and charge a battery from 10 percent to 80 percent in less than 20 minutes. Some older EV models may take an hour or more to achieve 80 percent at 50 kW. When selecting an EV, the charge time from 10 to 80 percent can be an important factor if you regularly head out on road trips.

"Vehicle to home" is an exciting new technology that enables EVs to power a home or shop during a power outage. Ford's upcoming F-150 Lightning Pro (2022), Hyundai's Ioniq5 and Kia's EV6 crossovers, and the 2022 Volkswagens are slated to offer this option.

Another important decision is when to charge your EV. Your local electric co-op may offer special rates if you charge your EV at night when energy demand is lower, which can help keep electricity costs down. Electric co-ops around the country are working on programs to prepare for more EV home charging, so reach out to your co-op if you have questions about EVs, charging or specific programs and rates.

EV charging infrastructure is currently being built across the country, including the Upper Midwest. You may not see them in your area yet, but they're coming, so get charged up about electric vehicles.



**Brad Thiessen**  
Collaborative  
Efficiency



A volunteer distributes food to the needy at the Feeding South Dakota facility in Pierre.

# FEEDING SOUTH DAKOTA

## Hunger relief program takes on the task of making sure families have food on the table

**Billy Gibson**

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

Putting an end to hunger in the state of South Dakota is a very tall order. But it's one that leaves Lori Dykstra decidedly undaunted.

Dykstra is CEO of Feeding South Dakota, a non-profit hunger relief organization with outposts all across the state dedicated to providing access to nutritious meals for those in need.

She and her team are driven not only to deliver quality meals to the young and old alike but in a broader sense to contribute to the economic, social and emotional health of families and the communities they call home.

Each week, Feeding South Dakota uses its network of agencies and partners to distribute roughly 200,000 meals, including 5,000 packages of food provided to children through the organization's Backpack program and 2,700 food boxes for seniors.

While it may not be readily apparent to some, Dykstra points out that South Dakota has four of the 10 poorest

counties in the country, and the rural nature of the state causes the creation of food deserts where grocery stores, markets and other resources can be separated by many miles. Nearly 15 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty line and more than 40 percent of school-aged children qualify for free and reduced meals.

Dykstra believes no family should face the decision of buying food or buying medication or paying rent.

"I'm excited to work toward meeting the needs of those who face hunger in South Dakota and grateful for the opportunity to share my passion for community service," she said.

The program began in 1975 when the Sioux Falls Ministerial Association formed a community food pantry. Eight years later, the Black Hills Regional Food Bank, Inc., was created.

Eventually, in 2004 an inevitable joining of forces took place when the two separate organizations merged and became the Community Food Banks of South Dakota, Inc., bringing together 45 years of experience in



Lori Dykstra

providing hunger relief.

The program is continuing to look for new ways to meet its mission. In July, Feeding South Dakota launched Heroes for the Hungry: A Campaign for Monthly Giving, as an effort to re-energize the spirit of giving after the height of the pandemic and encourage regular monthly donations.

The United Methodist Church Dakotas Conference pitched in with a Miracle Offering in which the first 120 monthly donations would be matched up to a total of \$12,000.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen our foundation of sustaining gifts that allow us to do our important work," Dykstra said.



# A PLACE TO REST

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery located northeast of Sioux Falls provides a new resting place for U.S. military veterans and their families. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls opens new options for military families

**Billy Gibson**

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

A dozen distraught family members surrounded the casket conspicuously draped with a bright, crisp American flag. The brilliant hues of red, white and blue stood in stark contrast to the slate gray sky hanging overhead and the slight chill that filled the air.

As the gathered mourners paid their last respects and turned back toward the administration building at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery, the clouds suddenly burst open and a heavy rain began to fall.

“Well, your daddy was a rancher,” the grieving widow said to her son as they made their way down the hillside. “A good rain is exactly what he would have wanted. This would have made him smile.”

Erin Brown is director of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery (SDVC) located northeast of Sioux Falls and she often hears stories that family members share about their loved ones who arrive at their final resting

place there. A military veteran herself, Brown said those stories bring added meaning and significance to her work.

“The veterans – and their families – are very important to us,” she said. “When I hear those kinds of stories and hear them describe a lifetime of memories and all the good times they had together, it reinforces the idea that there’s real value in what we’re doing here at the cemetery.”

The SDVC is the first federally funded, state-owned and operated veterans cemetery in the state, although there is no residency requirement for military veterans to be interred there. The Black Hills National Cemetery is located a few miles east of Sturgis.

The facility is located on 60 acres donated by the City of Sioux Falls and ultimately will have enough space for over 28,000 casket grave sites, cremation grave sites, a columbarium for cremated remains and a scattering garden. More than 600 in-ground crypts have already been installed. The facility was made possible by more

than \$7 million in federal money, state funds and private donations.

Since the ribbon-cutting ceremony last Memorial Day, the cemetery has seen a steady stream of burials. There were four on a recent Friday.

SDVC staff works with the families to arrange details of the burial services which typically include a final pre-service consultation with the families, a processional to the committal shelter, a 15-20 minute service, folding and presentation of the flag, and a rifle salute and Taps presented by local military-related volunteer organizations.







Members of the grounds crew are all veterans and can relate to military families in their time of grief.

Clarence Kooistra is one of those volunteers who donates his time to make sure veterans receive a proper burial and their families receive the proper respect. He's a member of the VFW Post 628 Honor Guard based in Sioux Falls.

"I just feel it's very important that these men and women are treated with the respect they deserve for the sacrifices they've made to preserve our freedoms and democracy in our country," Kooistra said. "It's a privilege for me to come out here and do this for the families."

While construction commenced on the cemetery two years ago, it took several years to bring the project to fruition. At the time the first federal grant application was submitted in 2017, Brown was serving as a veterans program manager in the State Department of Veteran's Affairs helping veterans navigate through the federal bureaucracy to receive their rightful benefits. She often found, however, that some of the former soldiers would balk at the benefits "so that someone they felt needed it more than them could get it."

When the cemetery director position opened up, she jumped at the chance to find another way to help veterans.

In performing her job, Brown

calls on her own military experience, which includes joining the Minnesota National Guard in high school and receiving advanced individual training at Fort Lee in Virginia. She returned and attended college for three years before getting deployed to Iraq for nearly two years.

She worked in supply management at a Marine base between Ramadi and Fallujah and eventually left the service as an E-5.

When she and her staff are interacting with veterans and their families, they have little difficulty relating to them on a personal basis.

"The military is the kind of experience that you don't know you want or need until you have it," she said. "All of those experiences have put me into one of the most rewarding jobs I've been able to do. Without it, I wouldn't be able to relate to the families and get the help they need and have earned. Once they realize I'm also a veteran, things change and they see me differently."

Brown and her staff - all of whom are veterans themselves - have

developed personal relationships with the families whose loved ones are interred at the facility. During their visits to the cemetery, family members often express their gratitude to the staff for their work in keeping the facility well maintained and give updates on how the family is faring and if they have any further needs.

Brown said she is looking toward the future with optimism for the



The Committal Shelter is the site of many outdoor funeral services for veterans.

cemetery and its mission, especially after the South Dakota Veterans Council last summer announced a \$2.1 million donation from philanthropist T. Denny Sanford, PREMIER Bankcard CEO Miles Beacom and his wife Lisa.

For more information, visit <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranscemetery/>.



# Solar Powered Fun

## Cool gadgets and gizmos put the fun in solar technology

Maria Kanevsky

The sun has an incredible amount of energy - more than we could ever fully harness. Fortunately, there's an array of solar-powered gadgets and devices available to help you take advantage of this free source of energy.

When you want to bring your music outdoors, solar-powered Bluetooth speakers are the perfect solution. Many Bluetooth speakers can be recharged with a USB port and electrical outlet, but solar-powered speakers are easily recharged by sunlight. As long as the sun is shining, the speaker will never run out of power. Most solar-powered speakers include a backup battery that allows the speaker to run long after the sun goes down.

For an easy, low-maintenance approach to light up your lawn and walkways, solar pathway lights (and other solar décor) are a great addition. Outdoor solar lights come in a variety of styles and can be used to decorate your outdoor space in different ways.

They can be used as an alternative to traditional lights and offer several benefits. Once installed, solar lights run on their own and work relatively maintenance-free. Solar lights are powered by batteries that can run all night if the panels receive enough sunlight during the day. Solar lights are wireless, so there's no need to search for an electrical outlet.

If you're looking to engage your children, there are several DIY kits available for kids to learn more about solar. These kits typically include a small solar panel, connecting wires and the end-use device which varies depending on the kit. From powering a small fan, to lighting a light bulb, these interactive kits provide an educational opportunity for kids to learn more about solar.

As an alternative to a charcoal or gas-powered grill, the solar-powered grill is another great way to cook meals outdoors. One of the most popular solar-powered grills is by GoSun, which uses a solar vacuum tube to absorb light while also providing insulation.

Using solar heat, the parabolic reflectors focus sunlight onto the vacuum tube. The tube can then convert about 80 percent of the solar energy into heat. The internal temperature can typically reach up to 550 degrees, while the insulation makes it cool to the touch on the outside - an important safety feature. Prices for solar-powered grills range from \$150 to \$300, making them comparable to gas-powered grills.

A gadget to help you keep track of time is the solar-powered watch. A small cell beneath the dial converts solar energy into electrical energy, with excess energy stored into the rechargeable battery. As long as the watch receives a moderate amount of sunlight, the battery can last up to 10 years, which is much more convenient than replacing the battery roughly every year for conventional watches. Solar-powered watches can cost anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000 depending on their design.

The sun provides an endless amount of energy, and these gadgets are a great way to power everyday devices. As more solar-powered technologies are developed, you may find yourself considering a solar-powered gadget for your next purchase.





## CHARGING STATIONS DON'T STEM GROWTH OF EV MARKET

Paul Wesslund

What electric cars need to become a top choice for American drivers is a nationwide network of charging stations to overcome fears of running out of juice on long trips.

Or maybe that's not true at all.

There are already nearly one-third as many charging sites in the U.S. as there are gas stations. And that doesn't count the "refueling stations" found in the electric outlets of every home in America.

Plus, the range of electric cars already exceeds how far most people drive in a day. Ninety percent of Americans drive less than 45 miles a day, and the average range for electric vehicles is 250 miles.

The ballyhoo over charging stations has created a conventional wisdom that they're a necessary step toward overcoming the "range anxiety" about getting stranded in the middle of nowhere. President Biden's American

Jobs Plan proposes a national network of 500,000 charging stations by 2030, up from the Department of Energy's current count of 50,000.

But the conventional wisdom masks a different road ahead.

Range anxiety may be the least of the reasons there aren't more electric vehicles on the road, says Brian Sloboda, director of consumer solutions for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"Let's say your electric vehicle is only used for commuting and you're just driving it from your home to the grocery store to work," says Sloboda. "It is very likely you would never even use public charging stations because you can charge your EV at home for a very reasonable price."

Sloboda is quick to list the advantages of electric vehicles, from how they affect the environment to their lower maintenance costs to the fact that you can wake up every morning with a full tank of "gas." But he sees bigger issues than a lack of charging stations standing in the way of greater acceptance.

He says, "You have limited model availability, limited body styles, limited manufacturers, high prices and many don't understand the technology."

But Sloboda sees those problems as

solvable. Right now, you'll pay about \$10,000 extra for an electric model. But those costs are coming down as batteries get cheaper and more powerful.

And competition is heating up. Every major car manufacturer has high-profile plans for electric models - Ford has announced an electric model of its popular F-150 pickup. Although electric vehicles make up less than 4 percent of the auto market, that's doubled from just one year ago.

Even if charging stations are not the most important determiner of the future of electric vehicles, they are a growing part of the landscape. To find the nearest charging station, a variety of apps will guide you.

While trends point to growth for electric vehicles, forecasting the future of charging stations is trickier. It's not as easy as comparing the number of charging stations to gas stations.

For one thing, people don't have a gasoline pump in their garage, which is essentially the case with an electric. And while an internal combustion engine might take four minutes for a fill, it could take more than an hour to recharge an electric vehicle.

"It's something that everyone across the country is wrestling with," says Sloboda.

# THE FIRST TO ACT



The state's emergency medical services workforce declined 30 percent last year, though some are still eager to serve.

## Though rural South Dakota is experiencing a shortage of first responders, some are still eager to bear the responsibility

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The early morning fog had already settled in heavy and thick as a damp blanket when Joey Denison pulled out of his driveway in Lake Norden. He was headed to Lake Preston for his job as an electric lineman and just happened to be fresh off earning his paramedic license in his spare time.

Within just a few minutes of driving along Hwy. 81, the blurry image of a wrecked semi came into view through the haze. The rig was overturned and rested across the roadway. At first blush, the scene appeared to be a one-vehicle accident, but Denison soon saw the small pickup that was crushed beneath the trailer.

When he got close enough to peer inside the vehicle, he saw a young woman who had clearly sustained severe damage to her skull. His four years of training through EMT and paramedic school kicked into high gear.

"There were cars still running into the semi from the other side so I positioned

my truck where no one could run into her car," Denison recalled. "Then I pulled her car out from underneath the trailer with my truck. I could see her head was shattered and someone had already called 911 to report that she was dead. Eventually, we were able to get her out with the Jaws of Life and transport her to the hospital in Madison."

The young lady made a full recovery and she and Denison still stay in contact three years later.

Denison doesn't characterize his actions as heroic; he sees his response as something that neighbors and citizens simply do for one another. Spurred on by his passion for helping others, Denison began his EMT training seven years ago and now volunteers his services in Lake Norden and the surrounding area.

"I always kind of regretted not going into the military, so this is my way of being a community servant," he said.

These days he teaches classes in emergency training and notes a shortage of qualified volunteers to staff rural first responder operations.

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, over the past year the active EMS workforce has declined 30 percent.

Denison said assumptions sometimes depart from reality when it comes to EMS work, and he encourages those who have a penchant for serving others to consider first responder training.



Joey Denison says emergency response work is both challenging and rewarding.

"The physical act of rendering first aid is a lot of repetitive training and muscle memory, but people think it's too complex. If you can catch a baseball, you can put your hand over a cut. It's not that hard," he said. "We can't be afraid to help someone in need in an emergency situation. Someday it could be you who needs the help."



# A LIFETIME OF CO-OP SERVICE TO MEMBERS

*Co-op leaders recognized at SDAC Hall of Fame banquet*

**Billy Gibson**

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Harry Thomas still remembers turning on the “power switch” for the first time at his home when he was a youngster.

That was made possible by his local electric cooperative, and for Thomas it was a life lesson about the great things that can happen through co-op organizations. He went on to serve for nearly four decades on the board of Venture Communications and was one of four recent inductees into the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives Hall of Fame.

Thomas and Paul Symens were recognized as 2021 inductees at the ceremony held in Watertown Sept. 22, while Chuck Birkholt and Dan Lindblom were honored as 2020 inductees. Last year’s banquet was canceled due to the pandemic.

“I’ve been around cooperative systems all my life,” Thomas said. “I remember when the co-op brought power to the farm and when Sully Buttes built the first telephone line out there. Those things would not have happened if not for cooperatives. The Bell companies built in the towns, but they had no

interest in going into the country.”

Symens served on the board at Lake Region Electric in Webster before he was elected to the state Legislature in 1987 and again in 1996. He was a board member for Farmers Union Marketing and Processing for 36 years.

“I’ve put in a lot of time with cooperatives and I know how co-ops work. I was raised in co-ops and it has been a pleasure to be a part of that process. The magic of co-ops is people working together to help each other, and as long as board and management do their jobs, it’s going to be successful.”

Symens said his advice for the younger generation of co-op leaders would be to learn about the history of cooperatives, how they were founded and why they exist.

“Learning from history will teach you a lot and keep you from making mistakes,” he said.

Birkholt started his cooperative career

as a laborer at Cam Wal Electric in Selby. He went to work “digging holes and setting poles” for 85 cents an hour until he discovered he could make more money as a lineman.

He worked at the co-op for 45 years, the last eight as general manager. He went on to serve on the board at Venture Communications for the past 21 years.

“I told my wife I always wanted to see



Inducted into the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives Hall of Fame were Harry Thomas, Chuck Birkholt and Paul Symens. Not shown is Dan Lindblom, who was unable to attend the induction ceremony in Watertown.



Hall of Fame inductee Chuck Birkholt addresses the audience at the Watertown Event Center.

what it was like on the other side of the board table,” he said. “But I think she just wanted me out of the house.”

Lindblom, a long-time board member at Black Hills Electric in Custer, was unable to attend the banquet.

# HUNTING FOR THE HUNGRY

Sportsmen Against Hunger is nearing one million pounds of game meat donated to food banks across the state since 1993.

## South Dakota hunters donate game meat for families in need through Sportsmen Against Hunger program

**Billy Gibson**

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

One million pounds of meat is an awful lot of protein...and a lot of goose burgers.

The organization Sportsmen Against Hunger is closing in on one million pounds of wild game donated to the needy since the program was founded in 1993 by Dr. Jeff Olson and Dr. Tom Kafka.

For nearly three decades, generous hunters throughout the state have given away a variety of game meat including deer, antelope, elk, pheasant, grouse and geese.

According to Olson, the goose meat has been quite a hit.

“Apparently, there are a lot of people who like to eat goose burgers,” he said. “It may not

sound too appetizing when you think about it, but it’s not bad and a lot of the people who receive our donations say it’s great. They’ve developed quite a taste for it.”

Olson recalls that even when he launched the program he was completely oblivious to how many people in the state were going to bed hungry every night.

“We’re reaching one million pounds of meat our hunters and processors have donated over the years, but there are so many who are food insecure in our state that we could use another several million and still not meet the need,” he said.

Olson is accustomed to working around a maze of regulations, restrictions and prohibitions, noting “there’s a new and different hurdle we have to jump every year.”

Presently, the program is facing the challenge of finding enough plants to process the donated animals. Just a few years ago, there were nearly 50 wild game processors on the list of licensed receiving plants. Today there are just 14.

Olson cites pandemic-related problems in the industry and a dearth of available workers. The plants have been forced to take domestic animals for production and push donated wild game to the back of the line.

Ron Fowler has served as field director for the program since 2005 when he retired from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as a game management specialist after 35 years. He works out the details of the operation, recruits processors and hunters to participate and sorts through the red tape of state and federal regulations, health precautions, quality control and the program’s certification system.

He explained that when a hunter





decides to donate a doe deer or antelope, they fill out a certificate and deliver it to any processor in the state that's on the prearranged receiving list. The certificate covers \$75 of the processing fee while the hunter is responsible for any balance, though some facilities will accept the certificate as full payment. In the case of bucks, the hunter is responsible for the entire balance, which could run to more than \$100. Processors collect the certificates



Ron Fowler, left, delivers a shipment of donated venison to a Feeding South Dakota warehouse facility.



Pictured at left, South Dakota fishermen donated 320 pounds of cleaned walleye in 2020. Above, Dr. Jeff Olson presents a plaque to Bruce Anderson, president of the Western Buffalo Company in Rapid City, for participating in the Sportsmen Against Hunger program. Shown far left is SAH Board Member Tom Weaver. Far right is SAH field director Ron Fowler.

and turn them in at the end of the season for payment.

Fowler said the policy is in place to help control and manage the state's deer population. He said some hunters will obtain more than one deer license, keep one for themselves and donate the others.

"When the program started, we had no funds to cover any of the hunter's cost, but then we created a foundation and now we can pay for does, plus we provide the casing for processors and pay for the cost of getting the meat to the food banks where it's distributed to those who need it."

Fowler said these days most donated venison is coming from deer taken within, or close to, city limits. Several larger cities and towns have allowed deer to be taken in close proximity of their borders simply to hold the deer population down and keep them out of yards, gardens and streets. The cost of processing those animals is typically shared with the local government.

Sportsmen Against Hunger is also seeing more anglers getting in on the action. More than 300 lbs. of cleaned walleye has been donated in the past year. At this year's Governor's Cup Walleye Fishing Tournament, for instance, nearly 1,000 fish went to the needy.

Most of the cleaning is done by local volunteers and members of sportsmen clubs.

Thousands of pheasants are also donated each year, often by those who are visiting the state and can't take home their kill.

Fowler maintains a steady drum beat of encouraging hunters to donate their game even though he knows the incentives to do so are diminishing. He notes that in earlier times processors weren't hard to find, but now a hunter may have to drive some distance to the nearest facility.

"It used to be more convenient for hunters when you didn't have to drive across the state to find a processor, but people are still hungry," he said.

Fowler said his work can often be challenging, but he stays motivated by remembering that there's always a need.

"There are so many families in our state that struggle and they need help," he said. "It all comes down to a warm, fuzzy thing for me. The work is a little more than I first anticipated but I can't just ignore it when I see an opportunity to help someone who needs it. We get a lot of positive feedback from our processors and the people we help are very grateful."

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**Thanksgiving**  
November 25, 2021

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

#### **OCTOBER 22-23**

##### **Governor's South Dakota Showcase**

1201 N West Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-773-3301

#### **OCTOBER 22-24, 28-30**

##### **A Little Piece of Heaven**

Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, call 605-224-7826 to purchase tickets

#### **OCTOBER 23**

##### **Aberdeen Oktoberfest**

Aberdeen Civic Arena, Aberdeen, SD, 605-380-8448

#### **OCTOBER 29-30**

##### **Deadweird**

Various Locations, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

#### **OCTOBER 30**

##### **16th Holiday Shopping Extravaganza**

Davison County Fairgrounds, Mitchell, SD, call Cindy at 605-999-8563 for more info

#### **OCTOBER 30**

##### **Scare in the Square**

Main Street Square, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

#### **OCTOBER 30**

##### **Yankton's Harvest Halloween**

Downtown, Yankton, SD, email [mandi@bostonsyankton.com](mailto:mandi@bostonsyankton.com) for more info

#### **OCTOBER 31**

##### **Halloween Bash Weekend at Mazing Acres Pumpkin Patch**

30851 433rd Avenue, Yankton, SD, 605-760-2759

#### **NOVEMBER 4**

##### **Chris Young Famous Friends Tour**

Summit Arena, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

#### **NOVEMBER 6**

##### **Cyrus Steele Comedy Show**

Homestake Opera House, Lead, SD, visit <https://www.homestakeoperahouse.org/> for more info and tickets

#### **NOVEMBER 5-7, 12-14, 19-21**

##### **Julius Caesar**

Black Hills Playhouse, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.bhct.org/> for more info and tickets

#### **NOVEMBER 12-13**

##### **Sioux Empire Arts and Crafts Show**

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-6000

#### **NOVEMBER 13**

##### **Christmas at the Homestead**

Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve, North Sioux City, SD, 605-232-0873

#### **NOVEMBER 13**

##### **Deadwood's Big Whiskey Fest**

Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

#### **NOVEMBER 13**

##### **Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters Holiday Open House Extravaganza**

Sisseton, SD, call Beverly at 605-698-7425 for more info

#### **NOVEMBER 19-20**

##### **Holiday Arts Christmas Show**

Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

#### **NOVEMBER 20**

##### **Little Norge Fest: A Taste of Scandinavia**

Canyon Lake Activity Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-342-4226

#### **NOVEMBER 26**

##### **Parade of Lights**

Dakota Avenue, Huron, SD, 605-352-0000

#### **NOVEMBER 27**

##### **Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade**

Downtown, Rapid City, SD, 605-381-4204

#### **NOVEMBER 26-28**

##### **Beautiful - The Carole King Musical**

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/> for more info and tickets

#### **DECEMBER 2**

##### **Christmas on the Prairie**

526 North Broadway Avenue, Miller, SD, 605-853-3098

#### **DECEMBER 3**

##### **Handel's Messiah**

First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

#### **DECEMBER 4**

##### **Rapid City Garden Club's**

##### **Wreath & Centerpiece Sale**

Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

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