

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Local art teacher's mural
commemorates dedicated
Burke lineman.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Rural Murals

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Mural Art

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So Much to Be Thankful For



Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/GM

Hello, Lake Region Electric Members!

We are approaching Thanksgiving, which happens to be my favorite holiday. I am excited to gather with friends and family to give thanks while enjoying a great meal! Just as many of you do, I also look forward to taking in a couple of football games on TV, and maybe even sneaking out for a pheasant hunt. In my opinion, Thanksgiving is a hard act to follow for the rest of the holidays!

Topping the sense of joy I feel, the best part of Thanksgiving is the opportunity to take a moment and give thanks for everything we are so blessed with in our great country. So, in the spirit of Thanksgiving and the time of year, I would like to share a few things that I am especially grateful for this year.

I am thankful for our Veterans and their service to our country. Without you, we would not have the ability to live freely in this great country with the ability to enjoy the blessings of everyday life, especially the holidays. Thank you again to all veterans!

I am extremely thankful for the great staff at Lake Region Electric; the linemen and the rest of the office staff work hard to serve the membership. As a new member-owner of this co-op, I think you would all agree with me that these people working hard to keep our lights on is something to be thankful for!

I am thankful to the board of directors for their confidence in choosing me to be the next leader of this cooperative! I am also very thankful for outgoing manager Tim McIntyre for welcoming me and taking the time to hand over tons of information to help with a smooth transition. I would like to wish Tim and Kendra a very happy and long retirement!

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow member-owners of Lake Region electric for your welcoming attitude and continued support; I look forward to meeting all of you. Until then, we will keep the lights on!

Happy Thanksgiving,
Jeremy T. Lindemann

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

John & Kelly Forman
Kuecker Seed Farm
Kassy Anderson

Dan & Tania Henning
Sylvia Dargatz
Jeremy Lindemann

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

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HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

Rachel Dotson

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

It's the time of year when many families will be gathering around the dining room table savoring the flavors of their favorite holiday meals. Check out how to keep your holiday meals safe this season with a few tips from Land-grant University Extension Services.

Shopping Safely

Before shopping, check the ingredients you have at home and verify their expiration date. It is helpful to prepare a shopping list before going shopping. Make sure you have sufficient room in your refrigerator for all purchased food items. Cold foods that need refrigeration or freezing should be purchased last.

Oklahoma State University Extension advises while shopping, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart. Placing raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags can be a good method to separate them from other foods. Ask a cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

Safe Food Handling Practices

- When it comes to preparing meats, washing poultry and meats at home is no longer necessary and is not recommended by the USDA. University of Connecticut Extension recommends thawing meat in a refrigerator or in a cold-water bath.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator for approximately 24 hours, depending on size, or submerge meat in its original package in cold water and allow 30 minutes of thawing time for every pound.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt. Even wash prepackaged greens to minimize bacterial contamination.
- While preparing food, use two cutting boards: one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting fruits and vegetables, cooked food or preparing salads.
- Don't forget to also wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

Storing Leftovers

Bacteria grows when the food is left out for more than

two hours at room temperature. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension advises reheating cooked leftovers to 165 degrees. Use a food thermometer to measure temperature accurately. Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil. When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive.

Multistate Approach for Food Safety

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million Americans each year. Research and education have led to major advances in food safety; however, challenges remain. Many methods that use heat or chemicals to ensure food safety are not 100% effective and can damage food color, texture, flavor and nutrients.

Researchers at 32 Land-grant Universities are collaborating on innovative solutions for food safety and quality.

Their work is helping meet consumer demand for minimally processed, additive-free food items with longer shelf lives, higher nutrient content and less potential to cause food-borne illnesses.



Farm Safety "Always Be Alert"

Clyde Manas, Age 8

Clyde Manas warns farmers and ranchers to be careful with their equipment around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Clyde! Clyde's parents are Terry and Lacey Manas, members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric.

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.



Holiday DELIGHTS

EASY CRANBERRY SALAD

Ingredients:

12 oz. fresh cranberries
20 oz. crushed pineapple,
drained (reserve juice)
1/2 cup pineapple juice
(from reserved juice)
2 cups sugar
3 oz. pkg cranberry jello
(may also use cherry jello)
1/4 cup maraschino cherries,
finely chopped

Method

Boil cranberries with pineapple juice and sugar. When berries pop, remove from heat. Add dry jello, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate. Keeps for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CAKE BATTER DIP

Ingredients:

8 oz. softened cream cheese
8 oz. thawed cool whip
1/3-2/3 cup milk
1 box Funfetti cake mix
(unprepared)
Sprinkles

Method

Add whipped topping and cream cheese to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy.

Add cake mix and 1/3 cup milk and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Dip will be very thick, so add more milk, a little at a time, until you get to your desired consistency. I used about 2/3 cup for my dip.

Garnish with sprinkles and serve with whatever dippers you prefer (graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, pretzels, fresh fruit, etc.)

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

OPEN-FACED HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

Ingredients:

1 container (12 oz.) turkey
gravy
8 slices cooked turkey
1 loaf baguette bread,
(12 in. long)
1 cup fresh spinach leaves
1 cup prepared stuffing,
warmed
1/2 cup cranberry sauce

Method

Cook gravy and turkey slices in large skillet on medium-high heat until heated through.

Cut baguette in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half. Place bread, cut-side up, onto four serving plates.

Top bread evenly with spinach, turkey, stuffing, any remaining gravy and cranberry sauce.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite 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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

MANAGER NEWS

Q&A With The New GM

Jeremy Lindemann, General Manager/CEO of Lake Region Electric weighs in on being a member-owner of the cooperative where he works.

Q: You were a member-owner of Roseau Electric when you worked there and now you are an active member-owner of Lake Region Electric; what can you tell our members about your personal experience being a member-owner employee of a cooperative?

A: Really, it is the best of both worlds! As an employee, it's great to be a part of a company whose main focus is on people, not profit.

Q: How does this dynamic of member-owner/employee affect decision making?

A: Every decision starts with the question: "Is this in the best interest of the member?" From there, decisions should be made with the focus on helping our members succeed

by powering their homes and businesses with reliable and affordable electricity. I think it's important that we help all of our members succeed and problem solve. Whether they need help in their home with an energy audit or tips on streamlining their business processes, members should know that the co-op is here to help them be efficient and successful.

Q: Many people talk about the importance of separating work and home life; how does this come together for you?

A: I have lived the co-op lifestyle for more than 22 years. When my kids were little, they would see a Touchstone Energy ad or logo and they would know "That's my dad!" For me there is no separation between work and home. There is a saying that goes "I work for a co-op; we don't wear watches." This rings true for me. If you're living the co-op lifestyle, when someone sees you at the ball game or grocery store, they should feel comfortable coming up and talking to you about their electrical needs. Many times, I've had someone approach me at the store to tell me they bought a new energy efficient appliance, and I've congratulated them and asked them to get ahold of our office to discuss rebate information.

Q: How would you best sum up the cooperative difference on a personal level?

A: This is our co-op; it belongs to us, the members. Every decision made at the board and management levels is not about making a profit, it's about keeping our co-op moving forward so that we can continue to provide reliable electricity and great member service.

\$35 Meal Voucher 2024

Participating Restaurants:
Langford: Remedy's, Edin's, Club Eden, Snappers Dry Bean, Britton's, Hilltop Steakhouse, Pickering Lake Lodge, Bristol's
Webster: Webster's, The Galley, The New Frontier, Edin's, Club Eden, Snappers Dry Bean, Britton's, Hilltop Steakhouse, Pickering Lake Lodge, Bristol's

Must be Completed by Member: Member Name _____ LREA Account # _____
To Be Completed by Restaurant: Restaurant Name _____ Amount to be reimbursed \$ _____
Receipt MUST be attached to voucher for reimbursement. Date of purchase _____
This certificate entitles the bearer to Food and Non-alcoholic beverage UP to \$35. Any amount in excess must be paid by the member. Does NOT include gratuity; members should tip on their own accord. One-time, one-use certificate. No credit or refund for unused amount. NO change can be given.

Meal Vouchers Expire November 30th

Please remember to use your 2024 LREA Annual Meeting Voucher at one of these local restaurants:
Webster: Perebooms, The Galley, The New Frontier Edin: Club Eden
Britton: Britton Country Club, Snappers Dry Bean, Baker's, Britton VFW,
Grenville: Hilltop Steakhouse, Pickering Lake Lodge Bristol: The Hot Spot

Extensions cannot be granted.

East River Awards Pearson for 35 Years of Service

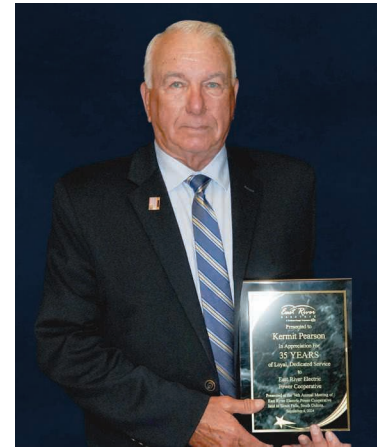
East River Electric Power Cooperative presented an award to Kermit Pearson in honor of his 35 years of service on the cooperative's board of directors during the organization's 74th annual meeting Sept. 4, 2024, in Sioux Falls.

As a member-owner of Lake Region Electric Cooperative, Pearson has served as the representative for Lake Region Electric on the East River board of directors since 1989. Altogether he has served electric co-ops for over 43 years. He serves as East River Electric's representative on the Basin Electric board of directors where he's also board vice president. He also serves on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association board of directors. A former Vo-Ag instructor and manager of the

South Dakota State Fair, he's also been a director on the North Central Livestock Association Board, and an elder at the First Presbyterian Church. His leadership, involvement, and influence earned him a spot in the South Dakota Co-op Hall of Fame in 2018.

"During Kermit's tenure on East River's board, our cooperative family has experienced immense load growth, has developed innovative programs and has maintained our legacy of providing safe, affordable and reliable electricity," said East River CEO and General Manager Bob Sahr. "East River offers its sincere thanks and appreciation for Kermit's continued leadership."

Kermit is a graduate of Britton High



Kermit Pearson accepts an award honoring his 35 years of service on East River Electric Power Cooperative's board of directors.

School and attended South Dakota State University. He and his wife Peggy live in Lake City on the farmstead his parents settled. They have four children.

Potential Rate Increases in 2025

Jeremy Lindemann

Lake Region Electric is anticipating a rate increase for the upcoming year as projected power costs from our suppliers have been on the rise. Here at Lake Region Electric, we take being a not-for-profit, member-owned, company seriously. We run tight margins and do not want to collect any more money from our members than necessary, returning excess margins back to our members in the form of capital credits.

The board of directors was presented with information indicating a rate increase is needed to cover the increasing cost of power from our suppliers due to investments in new infrastructure, inflation of materials, and upgrades to existing infrastructure. These necessary expenditures will help improve reliability and sustain load growth as the demand for power increases. We will continue to do everything we can here at LREA to keep our rates affordable for our members. Our focus is on providing

reliable electricity but that comes with a cost. It has been determined that the cost of investing in improvements to our infrastructure, such as the overhead to underground line conversion is worth the added reliability.

As your new manager at Lake Region Electric, and a fellow member-owner, increasing rates was pretty low on my list of things I want to do, but I agree with the board that this is in the best interest of the cooperative's financial strength and service to our members who depend on us to provide the ever growing need for reliable power. We are very lucky to have a financially conservative board at the helm of this co-op; they run a tight ship focused on efficiency and service to our members. We are uncertain at this time how much the rate increase will be. The board and staff are carefully monitoring the incoming figures from our power suppliers in addition to our fall kilowatt hour sales before

determining the amount necessary to keep our co-op in good financial standing long-term. One possible adjustment may be a \$10/month raise to the base charge and a slight increase to our energy charge.

I am letting you know of this potential increase now because I believe that communicating with our members is important and early communication can lead to a clearer understanding of the need for a rate increase. We will do our best to keep rates as low as possible, but the bottom line is the cost of power is increasing for Basin and East River and those costs will flow down to us. Please look to your cooperative newsletter and website to keep up-to-date. Once again, thank you for your understanding and for supporting your cooperative. We will keep the lights on for you!



Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lemmon

Visitors from all over the map flock to Lemmon each year to explore the town's plethora of fascinating exhibits, from the Petrified Wood Park to the life-size steampunk-style sculptures by local artist John Lopez.

But of all the town's unique offerings, there's one stand-out exhibit that ties everything together: Boss Cowman Square.

Lopez's lifesize metal sculpture of cowboy legend George Edward Lemmon is the focal point of the square. The Boss Cowman clutches the reins of his steampunk stallion, his eyes fixed on the horizon watching for stray cattle.

"Dad Lemmon," as the town's founder is so fondly known among locals, settled the town in 1906 between the Grand River and North Dakota border. It would soon be a stop along the incoming Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which Dad Lemmon had been recruited to platte westward.

The sculpture is accompanied by a background mural depicting a scene far away from the bustling saloons and general stores of early Lemmon. In the scene, saddled-up cowboys under the careful

watch of the Boss Cowman sculpture guide a meandering herd hundreds of heads long across a river – no problem for Dad Lemmon, whose roundup skills and knowledge of the land were legendary across the West.

In 2015, as Lopez dreamt of what would one day be Boss Cowman Square, he recruited the help of two Nigerian artists, Dotun Popoola and Jonathan Imafidor, to help bring the vision to life.

"We studied a few materials and made sure all the elements were well captured, like the kinds of trees, the way the river looks and the butte in the background," Imafidor recalled about the 2016 project.

One obstacle that posed a challenge for the traveling artists – beside the shock of South Dakota's cold spring weather – was the slight differences between the cattle they knew in Nigeria and the cattle of the American West.

"We are representational artists and we've done a lot of drawings of cows, so we kind of had an idea of what the cattle should look like," Imafidor explained. "But in Lemmon, the kind of cattle that are found in the region are a little different than what we have in Nigeria. I remember when we started painting the cattle ... John Lopez told us, 'I don't think you can find those here.' Then he brought some material for

Cowboys keep a herd of longhorns moving at the bank of the Missouri River. Visitors will notice the sculpture of Dad Lemmon turned around to keep an eye on the progress. *Photo provided by John Lopez.*

us so we were able to see the difference and then we made the corrections."

After about a month of work, the mural was completed and the Boss Cowman Square was unveiled to the public in July 2016.

Burke

In Burke, K-12 art teacher Kate Witt isn't shy about brightening up her community. The mom of four has designed and painted four murals around town, including one depicting the town's beloved utility worker, Rich Bailey.

Rich's wife, Margaret Ann Bailey, commissioned the mural after Rich's passing in 2023. The mural shows the lineman hanging onto a utility pole as he works on the power lines.

"When we came here in 1970, there wasn't a bucket truck or anything," recalled Margaret Ann. "So he climbed everything, whether it was blizzarding or lightning, and he made sure people had electricity."

The mural also features emergency vehicles, as Rich served for decades as a volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. Parked beneath the lines, the rusted white pickup truck Rich drove around town that over the years became synonymous with himself.

"With this mural specifically, I felt I had

a big important job,” Witt said. “This is a man who the town really loves, and I had a big job to make something beautiful that [Margaret Ann] was going to be proud of.”

Witt incorporated her own signature styles into the mural; her white outlines make the lineman’s silhouette stand out against the more geometrically designed Missouri River bluffs and cloudy sunset in the background.

“That’s where I have a little fun, putting in the modern twist and bold colors,” Witt continued. “I put this white line around everything which made some elements almost look like they’re stickers on a wall.”

Since Witt completed the mural last August, it’s become a point of pride for Margaret Ann who says it’s a testament to her husband’s years of dedication to his community.

“There was an older gal here in town, and she called him at 2 o’clock in the morning and said ‘my air conditioner isn’t working and it’s darn hot in my house,’” Margaret Ann recalled.

She said her husband explained that his job was to fix power lines, not air conditioners. Still, he went to flip the breaker on the woman’s fuse box anyway before going back to sleep.

“That’s the kind of guy he was, and I’m proud,” Margaret Ann said.

Tabor

Where in South Dakota can you find roses, ears of corn, a cardinal and Czech kolaches all in one mural?

Only in Tabor, probably.

Commissioned for the town’s 150th anniversary in 2022, the colorful mural on the sidewall of the local library meanders through the community’s history. From the heavy Czech influence of the earliest settlers represented by pastries and roses to the school’s original mascot, the cardinals, Robbie Jelsma worked very intentionally to portray the town in a way only a knowledgeable local artist could.

Growing up in nearby Springfield, Jelsma is no stranger to Tabor and its famous Czech Days, which draws thousands of people from across the country for the three-day celebration.

“I wanted to represent Czech Days and the Czech culture, so I did my own

research,” Jelsma said.

He incorporated roses, which are the national flower of the Czech Republic, as well as the fluffy pastries with fruit in the middle called kolaches.

He also incorporated local history—Tabor’s school mascot was the cardinal before merging with Springfield and Tyndall to form Bon Homme School District.

When he’s not painting murals, Jelsma is a highly sought-after tattoo artist specializing in more realistic styles. For him, the highlights of the Tabor mural is the level of depth and realism he achieved in his roses and clouds.

The hardest part of painting the mural is working with the elements, as there’s a laundry list of work that needs to be done on the surface before any real painting can begin: washing; smoothing; primer.

On top of that, unpredictable Midwestern weather requires a careful eye on the weather radar for any outdoor painting projects, Jelsma said.

“We started about early October so the fall was just getting started, and you never know in South Dakota if the weather is going to hold out or if you’ll get an early snow or strong wind,” he recalled about his three and a half weeks working on the project.

For Jelsma, the finished mural is as big of a point of pride for him, having been selected and commissioned for the work, as it is for the people of Tabor who get to show it off every summer during Czech Days.

“It’s cool I was thought of for the project,” Jelsma said. “It’s an art project that I think just lights everybody up a little bit when you drive down main street and you see something like that in a small town.”



Artist Robbie Jelsma puts the finishing touches on his mural ahead of the 2022 unveiling.
Photo provided by Robbie Jelsma.

Heating Season



Laura London

We are transitioning to one of our favorite times of year in Lake Region territory. The main topics that come up around the office this time of year are harvest and hunting. Many conversations are had with our member-owners, employees, board members regarding their success, or lack thereof in one field or another. Whether it's crops, birds, or deer, we hope your harvest is bountiful this year!

Another important conversation that needs to be had this time of year concerns the third, and most important "H" of the season: HEATING. The amount of electricity we use on a daily basis continues to rise and in this area of the country the highest usage tends to be in the winter months. Basin Electric experienced a new all-time high member billing peak in January 2024. Elizabeth Erhardt, Basin Electric manager of Member Rates, said the peak demand of 5,130 MW

surpassed the previous winter season peak of 4,679 MW set in December 2022. Usage is forecasted to increase even more this year; thus we anticipate higher usage by our members also. Higher usage means higher bills, something we have come to expect in this economy. Our main goal is to provide you with reliable and affordable power. There are many factors that we cannot control that cause costs to increase; however, there are some things that our members can do to help themselves and to keep your bills more affordable.

Tips for decreasing your usage and your bill:

MAINTENANCE: No matter what type of heating system you have in your home or business, it can be very costly, especially if not maintained properly. We remind our members to practice regular maintenance on their heating systems, one of the most important and the easiest way of maintaining efficiency of your heating unit is to change the filters regularly.

HEAT METERS & REBATES: Make sure your breaker is on for your heat meter. If you don't have a heat meter, let Lake Region Electric help ease the strain of the heating season by installing one. Energy used for heating purposes is eligible for our current electric heat rate, which is about half the cost of our regular kWh charge during the heating season. Sub-metering that records actual power usage of most heating equipment can be installed for a small fee. Lake Region also offers rebates on the purchase and installation of qualifying heat pumps. Call Brett or visit our website for more information.

THERMOSTATS: Adjusting the thermostat just a few degrees so the heater has a longer rest cycle can make a big difference in your electric bill. Install a Smart thermostat to help control heating; keeping the temperature more comfortable when you are home, with the added ability to monitor and adjust the

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temp when you are away.

MONITOR USAGE: You don't have to wait until you get your monthly bill to see how much electricity you are using. You can monitor your daily, even hourly, usage through SmartHub. Using this free service is easy and has saved members hundreds of dollars. Click on the SmartHub tab on our website or call our office to sign up.

Heating Assistance

Lake Region Electric does not offer heating assistance, but we do work with many agencies who aid those who qualify. One of the most widely used forms of assistance in our area is the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) which helps eligible South Dakotans pay for home heating costs. Energy assistance may not pay for all your home heating costs but it will help ease the strain of the heating season.

Eligibility for the program is based on:


- The number of people in the household
- The gross income of everyone in the household
- The type of heating for the home
- Geographic area you live in.

Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) through SD DSS provides assistance to households with an energy crisis. To qualify for ECIP assistance, the household must be income eligible and in crisis, such as:

- A current disconnection notice for the primary heat source;
- Required to provide cash-on-delivery, or delivery refusal with less than 20% in tank;
- Received an eviction notice for non-payment if heat is included in rent or paid in addition to rent.

They also offer a Weatherization Assistance Program designed to help low income South Dakota households overcome the high cost of energy by making their homes more energy efficient.

For more information about these programs or to complete an application visit dss.sd.gov and click on the Economic Assistance tab or call 1-800-233-8503 to have an application mailed to you.

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PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER

Jacob Boyko

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As we near the frigid winter months of South Dakota, it's important for you and loved ones to stay ready for an emergency.

Even though power outages are rare, a loss of electricity can affect modern lives in critical ways; In an instant, you may no longer be able to heat your home, prepare food or access critical information.

It's crucial to prepare for power outages and other general emergencies by keeping supplies in both your home and vehicles as well as making sure you and your loved ones have a plan in place.

Brad Reiners, director of communications for the state Department of Public Safety, encourages South Dakotans to stock

up on essentials like food, water and batteries prior to the winter months.

"Make sure you have enough food and water for at least three days, and each person in the household should have one gallon of water per day," Reiners said.

State DPS recommends keeping non-perishable food items like pasta, canned goods and nutritious snacks that don't require refrigeration and don't need to be heated or cooked before consumption.

"Never use gas powered generators, grills or portable stoves indoors, as they can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide," Reiner added.

As you prepare, remember to be proactive about your health. Have your medical prescriptions refilled in advance of a severe storm and keep a battery bank charged so you can power your cell phone in case you need to

access telehealth services, emergency services or access critical information.

In your car, keep warm blankets, winter clothes, snacks, a shovel, flashlight and a set of jumper cables in case you get stranded.

"It's also advisable to check your tires for proper inflation and tread, and make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition with freeze-resistant washer fluid," Reiners added.



Bottles of water and shelf-stable dry foods are perfect long-lasting emergency supplies to keep around.
Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.

If you plan to rely on a generator or wood burning stove for heat if the power goes out, check beforehand that your equipment is in safe working order, and you have enough fuel to last several days.

Keeping warm clothes, blankets and sleeping bags at the ready can be lifesaving if you're unable to heat your home.

Meals on Wheels here to help with Blizzard Bags

For senior citizens, some of this advice is easier said than done. Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota understands that better than anyone, and they have come up with a solution.

"Blizzard Bags" have been a part of the organization's lineup for over 20 years now and include some of the essentials seniors need when hunkering down for severe weather.

"We deliver shelf-stable meals for seniors who, especially in rural areas, may not have access to food for a while if their electricity goes out," said Jennifer Paschke, regional manager for Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota. "We provide five meals in those bags they can use during a loss of power or being stranded in their homes due to weather."

The food supplied is generally items that don't require a heat source, like packages of tuna salad and crackers, protein bars or cans with a pop-top seal so no can opener is required, Paschke said.

The bags also include water and other donated supplies like batteries and flashlights from local businesses, including some rural electric cooperatives.

"The biggest success story I know in

my area is a couple of years ago when they had tornados in Philip," Paschke remembered. "The water we provided [in the blizzard bags] were some of the only sources of water some of those people had. Just having that food and water can be a godsend for some people."

Blizzard Bags are available to seniors age 60 and up who are a part of the Meals on Wheels program. The bags cost roughly \$20 to put together, according to Paschke, and are funded in part by community donors. The organization provides home deliveries for seniors living in both cities and rural areas.

Anyone interested in getting service or helping with the cause can contact Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota at (605) 394-6002.



Meals On Wheels of Western South Dakota provides blizzard bags to seniors in case weather conditions affect normal delivery. Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.



Youth Tour participants Mallory Gant, left, and Madison Robertson pose for a photo at the FDR Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Photo by Frank Turner.

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

The Impact of Local Electric Cooperative Youth Programs

Frank Turner

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It is a core tenet of rural electric cooperatives to inform the public – particularly young people – about the nature and benefits of cooperation. Electric cooperatives have a long history of engaging youth in South Dakota through cooperative-sponsored youth

experiences, including trips like the annual Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., Youth Excursion in North Dakota, and Youth Leadership Conference at the annual NRECA PowerXchange conference.

These opportunities provide many South Dakota students with their first travel experiences outside the state. For

many, it's their first time flying on an airplane. Students not only gain valuable insights into rural electric cooperatives and energy, but they also learn basic life skills, such as how to navigate a city or use public transportation.

Former SDREA communications director Brenda Kleinjan, now a communications specialist with Sioux Valley Energy, was the driving force behind many of these programs through her 20 years of youth engagement for South Dakota cooperatives. From 2000 to 2019, Kleinjan coordinated and facilitated the many youth trips sponsored by electric cooperatives, leading hundreds of students to explore the impact of rural electricity on Capitol Hill and energy generation in North

Dakota over the course of her career.

According to Kleinjan, many alumni of the electric cooperative youth programs have gone on to achieve great things.

“These trips are an investment that our co-ops are making for not only our youth and their families, but our state and regions’ future,” Kleinjan said. “We are tapping into the drive of our most energetic teenagers with the idea of encouraging them to explore their world, their communities and their future.”

Youth Tour

Since 1963, South Dakota electric cooperatives have sponsored youth trips to Washington, D.C., each June for the annual Youth Tour. This year, Mallory Gant was one of 36 students from South Dakota who participated in a weeklong exploration of the nation’s capital, learning about the cooperative network and rural electrification. Sponsored by Charles Mix Electric, Gant visited the many memorials and monuments of the capital city and met South Dakota’s congressmen in the U.S. Capitol to ask questions.

Gant, who lives on farm and ranch outside Platte, made the most of her time by making new friends while experiencing the history of sites like Ford’s Theater, Mount Vernon and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

“It was definitely an eye-opening experience – to be able to fly on a plane and visit these huge cities,” Gant said. “A big part of the trip for me was meeting the friends I made along the way. Since the trip, I’ve seen them at volleyball and FFA events. When you go on the trip, you are out there with people you don’t know, so you are forced to get out of your comfort zone and meet new people. I think it sparked a lot of friendships for me.”

Youth Leadership Council

In addition to Youth Tour, Gant was selected as this year’s South Dakota representative for the annual Youth

Leadership Council. As the state’s sole representative, Gant will join 43 other young leaders at the NRECA PowerXchange Conference in Atlanta from March 7-12 next spring.

“From the first moment of being a representative, I had to introduce myself to a room of almost 2,000 kids,” Gant said. “It really put me on the spot, but it was really cool to be able to know I was capable of doing that.”

Leading up to the event, Gant is working to complete a creative and engaging community project by setting up an agriculture-focused electric safety booth at the upcoming South Dakota 4-H Land and Range Judging Contest with Charles Mix Electric, her sponsoring electric cooperative.

Gant will also prepare and deliver a short speech at a Charles Mix Electric meeting for the opportunity to be chosen as the 2025 Youth Leadership Council National Spokesperson. If chosen, Gant will deliver a speech in Atlanta Georgia at the PowerXChange Conference.

“I think the whole experience has made me a more vocal and outgoing person,” Gant said.

Youth Excursion

Erica Fitzhugh is one of many alumni from the rural electric youth program whose life has been shaped by her experience traveling to North Dakota to learn about electricity generation.

In 2005, Northern Electric sponsored Fitzhugh, then a high school junior, on a trip to tour energy infrastructure in Beulah, North Dakota.

Fitzhugh vividly recalls visiting Basin Electric Power Cooperative’s complex, where electricity is generated and transmitted to homes and businesses, as well as the Freedom Mine, the nation’s largest lignite coal mine by deliveries.

“I remember standing in the bucket of the dragline for a photo and thinking it was an amazing experience,” Fitzhugh said.

Her connection to the local electric cooperative continued after the trip. As a member of 4-H, Fitzhugh attended monthly meetings hosted at Northern Electric’s office. Each year, she would write thank-you letters to Jim Moore, Northern Electric’s CEO at the time, for supporting their program and hosting their meetings.

Years later, Northern Electric awarded Fitzhugh The Northern Electric Scholarship when she was a high school senior. That investment paid off when Moore later hired Fitzhugh as the Northern Electric director of communications.

“Jim Moore was the person who hired me, and I had handwritten him thank you letters in high school for the 4-H club,” said Fitzhugh, now a communications specialist for Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Interested in Local Youth Opportunities?

Whether it’s scholarships, Youth Tour or Youth Excursion, there are several youth events and opportunities catered to young electric co-op members that continue to thrive. Please contact your local co-op to learn more about these ongoing youth opportunities.



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.

OCT. 26
Mortimer's Monstrous Halloween
 3 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Oakwood Lakes State Park
 605-627-5441

NOV. 2
Wall Community Craft Show
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Wall, SD
 605-279-2665

NOV. 2
Fall Fling Craft Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD
 605-366-7940

NOV. 8-9
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show
 Friday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

NOV. 9
Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival
 4 p.m.-8 p.m.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD

NOV. 22-JAN.5
Winter Wonderland
 Nightly - 5 p.m.-12 a.m.
 Falls Park
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-275-6060

NOV. 9
Christmas at the Homestead
 12 p.m.-4 p.m.
 North Sioux City, SD
 605-232-0873

NOV. 9-10
Zonta Craft & Vendor Show
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Ramkota Hotel
 Pierre, SD
 605-280-1511

NOV. 16
Festival of Trees
 6 p.m.
 Lead, SD
 605-584-2067

NOV. 23-24
Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival
 Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Aberdeen, SD

NOV. 30
A Hometown Christmas Market
 2 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Main Street
 Elk Point, SD

NOV. 29-DEC. 29
Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum
 Hill City, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 1
A Christmas Carol
 2 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-624-2859

DEC. 5
Christmas on the Prairie
 4 p.m.
 Main Street
 Miller, SD

DEC. 5
Holiday Festival of Lights
 4 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Yankton, SD
 605-665-3636

DEC. 6-8, 13-15
A Sherlock Carol
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.
 Corson, SD
 mightycorson.com

DEC. 7
KJAM Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Madison, SD
 605-256-4514

DEC. 7
Santa Day
 2 p.m.
 Stockholm Buggy Museum
 Stockholm, SD
 605-467-3940

DEC. 7-31
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Brookings, SD
 605-688-6707

DEC. 14
Parade of Lights
 Wessington, SD
 605-359-2049

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