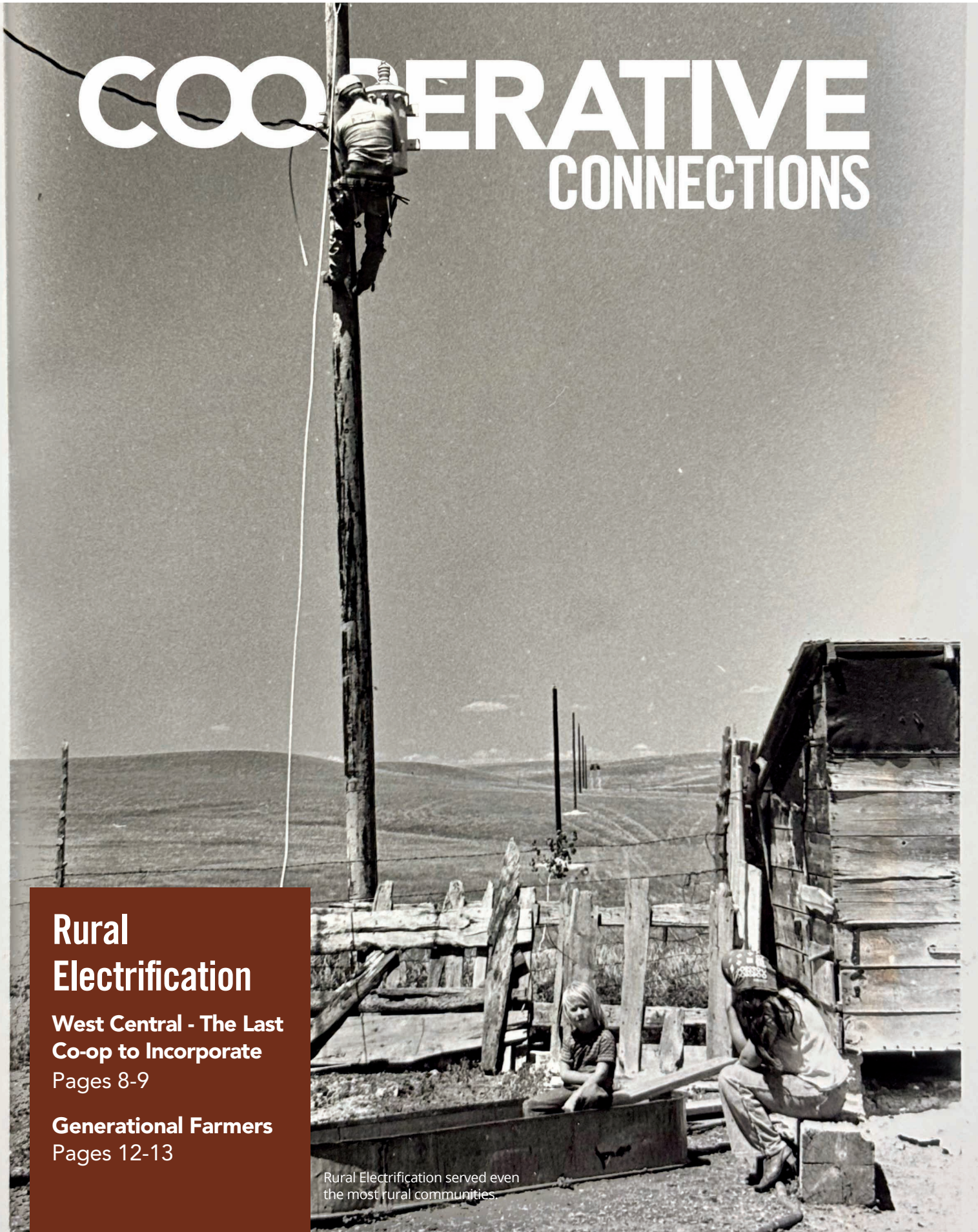
LAKE REGION ELECTRIC
OCTOBER 2025 VOL. 26 NO. 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Rural Electrification

West Central - The Last Co-op to Incorporate
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Generational Farmers
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Rural Electrification served even the most rural communities.

Planned Power Outage Q&A

Dan Williams
Line Foreman

What is a planned power outage?

A planned power outage is when we purposely de-energize a line, or turn the power off, to our members.

Why do we have planned outages?

Safety of our employees is one of the main reasons we turn power off. Whenever we can, we work on lines while they are energized, this is called "hot line" work, but that is not always possible, so we have to turn the power off.

Outages are planned for new construction so we can connect and energize new lines or do work and make repairs that we can't do safely while energized. After storm damage, our main goal is to just get the power back on as quickly as possible. We document damages that will need to be permanently repaired after things have calmed down, that's why we sometimes have planned outages after a storm. There is system maintenance that we have to do to reinforce reliability, that requires the power to be turned off.

How do you turn the power off?

That all depends on what type of powerline we are working on. When it is overhead, we usually have to open the line up on the pole. On underground we have to disconnect the lines in the green boxes. In rare instances we work with our power provider East River to de-energize the substation or a single circuit inside the substation.

How long does a planned outage last?

We get the power turned back on as soon as safely possible, but we try to plan for worst case scenario when we determine the amount of time we think we will need. Most planned outages, I would say, take anywhere from 1-3 hours. Occasionally, we have jobs where we need to turn the power off for 15 minutes or less, we refer to these as "blinks."

How do you decide whose power to shut off?

We use our maps to identify the area that we can isolate in order to have the least number of consumers out of power for the shortest amount of time possible.

When do we notify consumers?

We try to let affected members know 24-48 hours in advance. If it is a major planned outage, we may let them know even sooner than that. We try to make 2 or 3 attempts when possible.

How do we notify consumers?

We use our members' information from their accounts to send out notification calls, texts and emails. This works for the most part, but if people's information isn't up to date, then they will not get the information. We also post outage information on Facebook, and we have a Live Outage Map through our website that anyone can access.

Before all this technology, we used to use the FM radio stations and mail out cards, or one of the office personnel would have to call every member. Now with the touch of a button we can notify every person on a substation in the matter of minutes.

How can members prepare for a planned outage?

The most important thing is to make sure we have your correct contact information! Follow our Facebook for updates. Sign up for SmartHub to get notifications. Have a backup generator, especially if you work from home or have medical equipment.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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LAKE REGION RIPPLES COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Lake Region Electric Association, Inc., PO Box 341, 1212 N Main St., Webster, SD 57274. Lake Region Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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WELCOME
TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Shelly Marie
Jonothan R Snaza
MikRix Investments LLC
Thomas & Corliss Vergeldt
Steven Lust

Do We Have Your CURRENT Contact Information?

What is the best way to reach you with outage or account information?

Best Phone Number _____

Alternate Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Mailing Address _____
_____

Let us know you have changes to your contact info by
Calling our office: 605-345-3379
E-mailing: lakeregion@lakeregion.coop
Mailing this form to PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274
... or send your updates in with your payment!

Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest

Anne Prince
NRECA

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used.

Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

"Don't play with outlets!"

Kinzlee Klomp, Age 12

Kinzlee warns readers not to play with power outlets. Great advice, Kinzlee! Kinzlee's parents are Kaitlin and Austin Klomp from Box Elder, S.D.

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.

Fresh BREADS

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Ingredients:

3 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup oil
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
3 cups zucchini (shredded)

Method

Cream together eggs, sugar and oil. Then add the vanilla. Mix together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and add to the egg mixture. Stir in zucchini. Pour into two loaf pans. Bake at 325°F for approximately one hour.

Kimberly Grimm
Southeastern Electric

GLUTEN FREE OATMEAL PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups oats
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
3/4 cup applesauce
3 tbsps. maple syrup
2 tsps. apple cider vinegar
2 tsps. vanilla

Method

Grind 2 1/2 cups oats in blender until turned into flour. In large bowl, whisk together oats, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Form a bowl in center, add eggs and whisk them. Then, add milk, applesauce, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar and vanilla. Stir to combine. Wait five minutes to thicken batter. Cook in oiled pan.

Jean Beauchamp
Southeastern Electric

KUNSI' FRY BREAD

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. yeast (quick rise)
2 tbsps. sugar
1 qt. warm water
1 tbsp. oil/melted butter
1/2 tsp. salt
6 cups all-purpose flour
2 tbsps. powdered dry milk
4 cups oil for frying

Method

Mix yeast, sugar, salt, warm water, oil/melted butter and let proof for 15 minutes. Mix flour and powdered dry milk. Make a well in the flour mixture and add yeast mixture. Gradually add warm water until dough comes together and is no longer sticky. Cover and let rise until doubled in size. Heat oil to fry dough. Separate dough into 10 to 12 baseball-size dough balls (or smaller if you want smaller pieces). Stretch dough balls and shape into oval discs or round discs approximately 1/4 inch thick. Test the oil to see if it's hot enough by dropping a small pea size piece of the dough in the oil. If it floats it's ready. Flatten the disc between your hands and stretch it again. Fry the bread until both sides are golden brown. Transfer to paper towel lined plate to drain. Continue until all the dough is fried. Enjoy with soup or a Spam and egg sandwich or taco toppings.

Sheila Ironheart
Whetstone Valley Electric

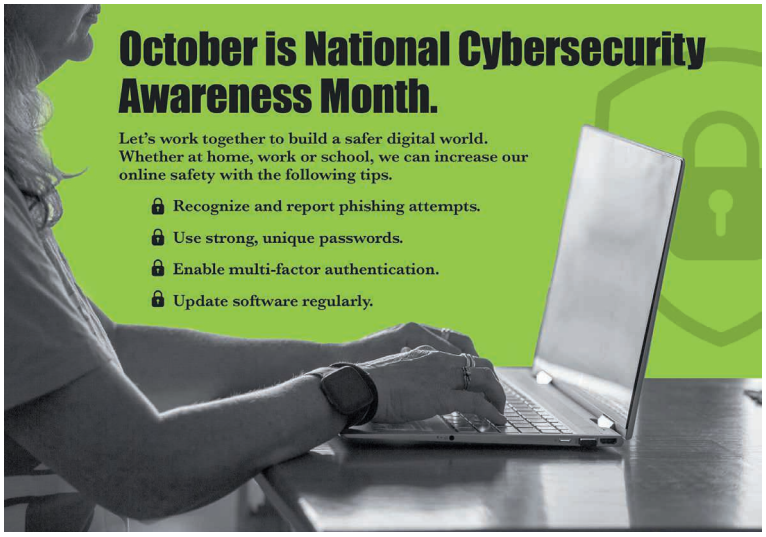
Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

OCTOBER IS CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS MONTH

Tim Gaikowski
IT Manager

Cybersecurity is the practice of protecting digital systems, networks, and data from unauthorized access, damage, or theft. As our lives become increasingly intertwined with technology – from banking and shopping to communication and healthcare, the need to safeguard sensitive information has never been more critical. Cybersecurity involves a range of tools and strategies, including firewalls, encryption, antivirus software, and user education, all designed to prevent malicious attacks and ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data.

Scams, on the other hand, are deceptive schemes often carried out online to trick individuals into giving away personal or financial information. These scams can take many forms, such as phishing emails that mimic legitimate institutions, fake job offers, fraudulent lottery winnings, or spoofed websites that steal login credentials. Online fraud has reached record levels with reported losses exceeding $16 billion in 2024. Scammers exploit human psychology, urgency, fear, or greed to manipulate victims into making hasty decisions.



While cybersecurity tools can block many threats, human awareness is equally vital. Recognizing red flags like unsolicited messages asking for sensitive data, poor grammar in emails, or offers that seem too good to be true can help prevent falling victim to scams. As cybercriminals evolve their tactics using AI and deep-fake technologies, staying informed and cautious is one of the most powerful defenses we have.

Protecting yourself from online scams starts with cultivating a healthy dose of skepticism and digital awareness. Be cautious of unsolicited messages whether via email, text, or social media that ask for personal or financial information. Scammers often impersonate trusted institutions like your utility provider, computer manufacturers, banks or government agencies and use urgency to pressure you into acting quickly. If a message feels off, don't click any links or download attachments. Instead, verify the sender through official channels like a company's website or customer service number. Don't ever give money to people without verifying their identity.

Strengthening your digital defenses is equally important. Use strong, unique passwords for each account and enable two-factor authentication (2FA) wherever possible. Keep your devices and software updated to patch vulnerabilities that scammers might exploit. Limit the personal information you share online, especially on social media as scammers often use these details to craft convincing attacks.

If you suspect you've been targeted, act fast. Stop all communication with the scammer, document any evidence, and report the incident to your bank and local authorities.

Remember: Lake Region, or any other utility provider or bank, will not ask for your bank information over the phone or email.

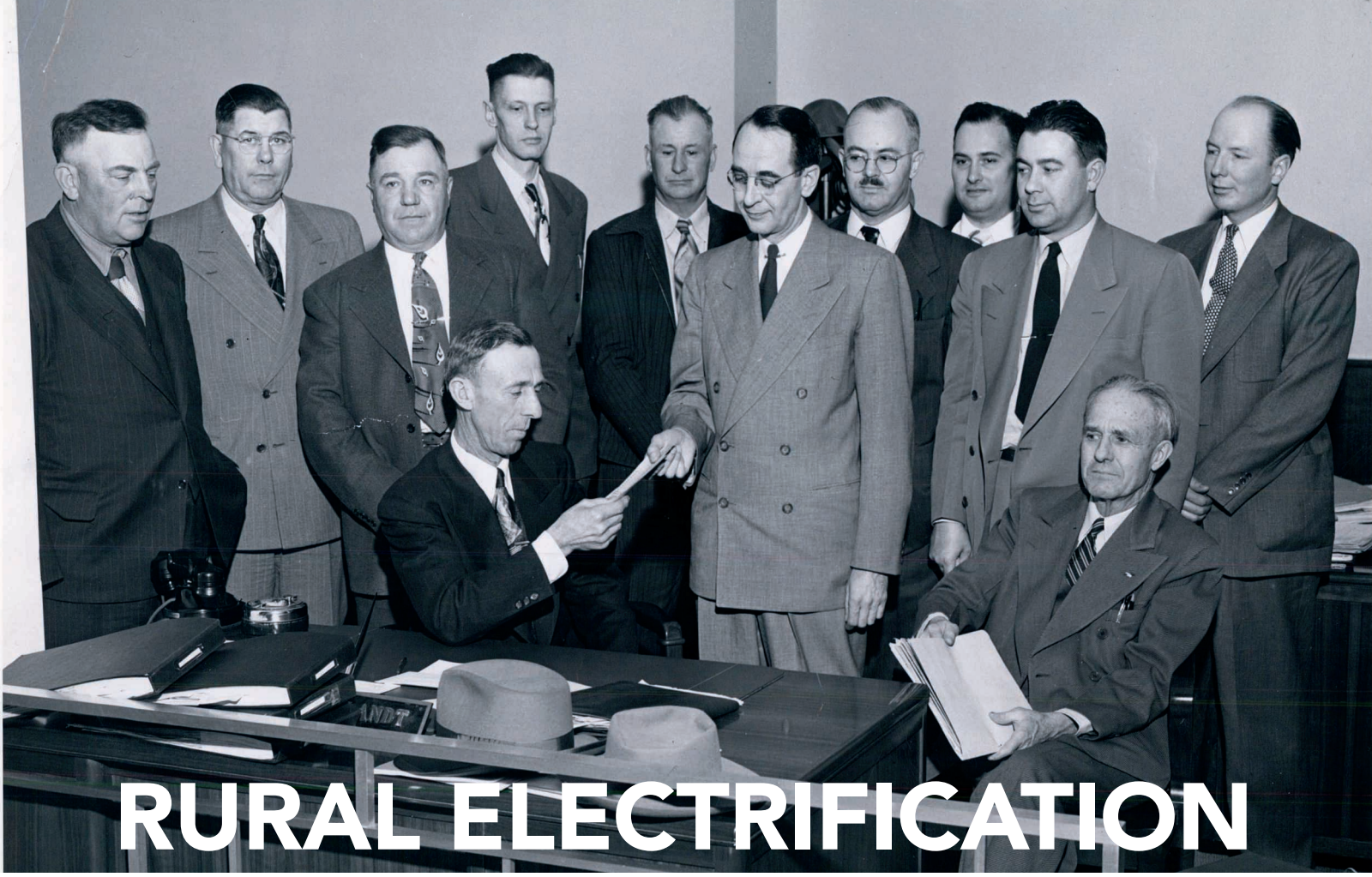
Circuit Learning Lights Up Day County 4-H

Members of Day County 4-H joined Lake Region's Member Services Department in August to learn about electricity. Manager of Member Services Brett Kwasniewski really enjoys teaching the kids different things about electricity, "We are giving them information that is useful to everyone, but we get to teach these kids in a fun way so they retain the information."

The group of 16 children, along with a few parents, learned about circuits with the opportunity to build a simple series circuit and a simple parallel circuit. In a series circuit, components, such as resistors and loads, are connected in a single path, or loop, and the electric current must go through every component starting from the positive terminal going out the negative terminal in a continuous pattern. While series circuits only have one path, parallel circuits have "branches." Think of it as a string of Christmas lights. In a simple circuit, if one bulb goes out, this opens up the circuit and electricity stops traveling to the rest of the string. If the lights are on a parallel circuit, only the bulb that is out stops working because the electricity is able to follow alternate paths to the negative terminal.

The kids learned these valuable lessons by putting together circuit kits and connecting components to make their lights turn on. Apprentice Electrician, Vinson Dargatz took the lesson a step further by demonstrating to the kids how to make their light stay on continuously.

"It's really fun to watch the kids play around with the different components and safely learn about electricity. Teaching them these skills is a rewarding way to help develop their minds and better our community now and in the future." stated Kwasniewski. Many of the students displayed their circuit projects during Achievement Days at the fair.



RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

WEST CENTRAL

Last to Incorporate, Lasting in Impact

West Central Electric board directors present a check to a representative of Central Electric and Gas in 1951, finalizing the cooperative's purchase of the private utility system. *Photo submitted by West Central Electric.*

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Before rural electrification, South Dakota's farmsteads ended the day in silence. There was no music from the radio playing in the living room or hum of an electric refrigerator in the kitchen. Over decades of work, power lines would stretch across the prairie through President Franklin Roosevelt's vision of rural electrification, carrying not only electricity but also a new way of life.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as part of his New Deal policies to revive a nation struggling through the Great Depression and bring electricity to America's rural communities, something that private and investor-owned utilities refused to do.

Clay-Union Electric was the first rural community in South Dakota to adopt the cooperative model in 1937, and West Central was the last in 1949. But as former West Central Electric CEO Steve Reed can attest, being the last to adopt the cooperative way didn't hinder their success. Once the path to forming a cooperative was established, the members of West Central benefitted from electricity's transformation from a luxury into a necessity with the rest of rural South Dakota.

"We couldn't rely on the power companies to come out to serve rural South Dakota," said Reed, a 42-year cooperative veteran who joined West Central Electric as a lineman and worked his way up to CEO. "They were never going to do it at price that was affordable, so rural electric has been great for not only the members of West Central but the entire country."

So why was West Central the last to form a cooperative? According to Reed, the rural communities that organized West Central Electric in 1949 had several hurdles to clear. The first was overcoming the sheer remoteness of the territory, which then had a system that averaged 1.5 members per mile of line constructed, even including towns and

cities. Because members were few and far between, the REA needed the towns in the proposed West Central territory to become members: from Philip to Hayes and Murdo to Kennebec, where West Central Electric was incorporated.

That led to the next problem: the towns and cities in the proposed West Central Electric's service territory were already being served by Central Electric and Gas, a private company based out of Philadelphia. This obstacle didn't stop the people who had a vision of what rural electrification could accomplish. Following lengthy discussion in 1951, West Central Electric purchased systems from Central Electric and Gas for $850,000 using low-interest REA federal funds.

Former West Central Electric Attorney John Larson outlined the discussions in his 50th Annual Meeting Speech: "There was no choice but to buy out the private supplier, Central Electric and Gas, and that was accomplished… (Former South Dakota Governor M. Q. Sharpe, who served as West Central Electric's attorney), showed up for the meeting that morning unshaven and unkempt, with a threadbare shirt and suit. For the entire morning, he listened with his head down and eyes shut to the Philadelphia lawyer types who represented the power company. After the dinner break, however, he showed up in a new suit, shaved, and took over the meeting by dictating exactly what West Central would do and what we would pay. During an afternoon break, one of the Philadelphia types was heard to mutter, 'You want to watch that old guy. When he's got his head down and eyes shut, he's not sleeping!'"

West Central Electric's 1951 purchase included all the electrical infrastructure within the town boundaries, as well as the diesel generation system extending west from Chamberlain. Shortly after, the evolution of West Central Electric progressed with the construction of distribution systems to farms and reconstructing the systems of various towns, including the installation of street lights.

Since that iconic moment, West Central has continued to grow with its membership, meeting more demand for electrical energy than had been previously thought possible, a reflection of just how integral electricity has become in day-to-day living for business owners, ag producers, and rural folk alike.

"That moment modernized us," said Reed. "It just did so much for everything – and without it, where would we be?"

(Top) A West Central Electric Annual Meeting.
(Bottom) A West Central Electric Board Meeting with the REA.
Photos submitted by West Central Electric

Lake Region Celebrates Co-op Month

Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/GM

Greetings Lake Region Members!

October is Co-op Month! I have worked for cooperatives for 28 years of my life. When I was in high school, I worked at our local ag co-op. I started at the gas station around the age of fourteen. I am old enough now where that starting number is a little fuzzy, but I do know that it was before I could drive because I vividly remember riding my bike to work after school and on weekends. At the coop-owned service station I swept the shop, pumped gas, and cleaned the bugs off the windshields of people's cars. (Yes, this was back in the days of a full-service station.) I eventually worked my way up to running the cash register. I got my driver's license when I turned 16, and it was not long after that I started working at the cooperative owned fertilizer plant. It was spring and I got the job of driving a tender truck. I felt like I was in the big time then. I can remember taking those checks straight to the bank and converting them into hunting and fishing gear! The long hours hauling fertilizer in a truck with no air conditioning inspired me that I should take a break from working at the Co-op after high school to pursue an education. Not long after college and working for a few electrical contractors, I made my way back to the cooperative life and I have not looked back since!

One of the things I love about working at a cooperative is that we have a set of Cooperative Principles to guide us. They are:

1: Open and Voluntary Membership:

Membership in a cooperative is open to all people who can reasonably use its services and stand willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic circumstances.

In South Dakota we must conform to certain territorial boundaries but there are circumstances when members are able to choose their power provider, and Lake Region strives to be the power provider our members want.

2: Democratic Member Control:

Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Representatives (directors) are elected among the membership and are accountable to them. In primary cooperatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote); cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

Lake Region has seven directors who represent the voting districts. The members of Lake Region choose their directors during the election held at our annual meeting.

3: Member Economic Participation:

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital remains the common property of the cooperative.

Members allocate surpluses for any or all the following purposes: developing the cooperative; setting up reserves; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

Lake Region returns excess margins in the form of patronage known as Capital Credits.

4: Autonomy and Independence

Co-ops are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control as well as their unique identity.

Lake Region's Board of Directors govern the co-op in a responsible manner by setting policies, rates and approving a budget in line with the specific needs of this cooperative.

5: Education, Training and Information

Education and training for members, elected representatives (directors/trustees), CEOs, and employees help them effectively contribute to the development of their cooperatives. Communications about the nature and benefits of cooperatives, particularly with the general public and opinion leaders, help boost cooperative understanding.

Lake Region ensures that directors and employees have access to proper education and training in order to effectively operate our cooperative and educate our members and the communities we serve.

6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives

By working together through local, national, regional and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

Lake Region is a member of our Generation and Transmission partners East River Electric and Basin Electric as well as being members of SDREA, NRECA, Touchstone Energy and more.

7: Concern for Community

Cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies supported by the membership.

Of these seven cooperatives principles I am most proud of Lake Region for number 7, Concern for Community.

Lake Region donates to local organizations, charities, and fundraisers. We work with programs like CoBank, The REED Fund, Basin Electric and others to help provide funding opportunities that enrich the lives of the people we serve and our communities.

Possibly more important than funding is the time that Lake Region and our employees contribute to make this world a better place. Lake Region makes time through busy schedules for community projects such as helping with lighting at ballparks and fairgrounds. You may have even seen a Lake Region truck out helping hang a flag at the VFW on a holiday weekend after a storm.

Employees of Lake Region volunteer in the community as coaches, firefighters, local government, church organizations, and many other areas. You can bet that if there is an event happening in the community, you will see a Lake Region employee representing your co-op!

I am immensely proud of the employees at Lake Region. They are very dedicated to this cooperative and to the communities they live in. And they do an excellent job of keeping the lights on for you!

Until next time, we will keep the lights on for you!

Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/General Manager

Photo submitted by JT and Luann Weber.

GENERATIONAL FARMERS

Four Generations of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Members Ranch on Lake Benton-Area Land

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Nestled amongst the rolling green pastures of western Minnesota, there's a generations-old farm worked by one family for over three quarters of a century.

From their Lincoln County property, the Weber family watched rural electrification improve the prairie, connect neighbors and bring reliability to farmsteads. Now they watch precision agriculture guide planting, bovine genetics strengthen herds, and social media and the internet connect their business to the wider world.

It all started in 1947, when John and Marie Weber moved into the old three-bedroom farmhouse from nearby Elkton, S.D. Luckily, the move came six years after Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative energized lines in the area, so the Weber home enjoyed many of the modern amenities brought on by rural electrification, including electric lights, kitchen appliances and a washing machine.

"I know I had the best mom and dad in the world," said JT, one of John and Marie's eight children, who today helps run the ranch with his wife, Luann, their three sons and their families. "Dad was very community-oriented. He was on the school board, the elevator board and the rural water board. In fact, he was instrumental in starting rural water. He went from place to place, talking people into getting rural water."

JT was born on the farm in 1957 during a blizzard that left his parents unable to reach the hospital in town. As a boy, he remembers collecting rainwater in a cistern and using it for cooking, cleaning and baths. Even as rural electrification began to transform the countryside, life on the farm remained far different – and often harder – than life in town.

"When I grew up, back in the 60s and 70s, if you milked 40 cows that was quite a few," JT said. "We were milking about 100 cows – we were kind of ahead of our time. But we had a big family, and us boys, we got right in there."

He continued, "We were hauling silage, hauling manure, milking cows and doing chores. But Dad never told us to do anything. He always asked us if we wanted to, and there's a difference. You wanted to work for him. He made you want to work for him, and it was never a burden."

That was a quality JT kept in mind with his own seven children on that same

ranch where he grew up. Today, JT and Luann's sons Jake, Garret, and Matt all stay involved in the ranch, now Weber Bros. Cattle.

"Growing up, I kind of always had that bug to get in the tractor, chase cows, put up fence, and do what needs to be done," explained Jake, the oldest son.

Today, they specialize in raising purebred Angus bulls and Simmental-Angus crosses, while also producing corn silage and alfalfa to help sustain the operation. While the operation may be old, it's not at all low-tech.

"Our main thing is our bull program," Jake said. "We sell about 50 registered Angus and Simmental bulls by private treaty every spring, and we also develop 50 replacement and bred heifers, and market a portion of them. We do a lot of artificial insemination and embryo transfer. Some of the more elite donor cows we can get our hands on by buying females and buying embryos. We're just trying to make good cows."

Jake, like his dad, graduated from South Dakota State University with an animal science degree, and was excited to return to the ranch to incorporate some of his new skills into the operation.

"When I got back from school, we really amped up our embryo transfer program with different ideas and stuff I learned about genetics from contacts and producers we've met over the years," Jake continued. "We went from selling 10 bulls per year to selling close to 50 bulls."

Jake's younger brother and fellow SDSU animal science graduate, Garret, keeps involved on the family's ranch as well. Though he works full time as swine genetic company Hypor's US Sales Manager, he helps out with the operation and finds the time to run Weber Bros. Cattle's social media pages, which he says has successfully expanded their presence in the market.

"Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or our company website, we're able to hit such a broad spectrum of people, and it's a great way to tell the story of our operation, what we're doing year-in and year-out and advertise the genetics of the cattle that we're showing and selling," Garret explained. "We're able to have a much greater touch point of individuals that we can reach out to and market our livestock."

JT and Luann Weber with their adult children, Jake, Garret, Matt and Sara Weber, Liz Mergen, and Maria Opheim, and families.

Back, from left: Garret Weber, Levi Weber, Kailey Weber, Jake Weber, Amanda Weber, Sara Weber, Cade Opheim, Maria Opheim, Tawnee Opheim, JT Weber, Luann Weber, Brent Mergen, Liz Mergen, Davie Fiedler Matt Weber, Racheal Krog.
Front, from left: Adam Weber, Chisum Weber, Abeline Weber, Vidalia Fiedler.
Not pictured: Talon Weber

JT, Jake and Garret all credit their spouses and families for supporting them as they work to grow the operation.

"It took a long time and a lot of support for us to get established and get to where we are today," JT said.

Looking toward the future – and the next generation, their goals are to make an already successful operation even better.

"We'll keep working with the cow herd, continue to make improvements and make better genetics every year." Jake said. "I want this opportunity to be available to my kids, so that if they want to be able to do this, they'll have the same chance we did."

Garret added, "It's something that I hope my sons can do someday if we're able to continue to grow the operation. I hope it's something they're going to be able to share and cherish with their own kids, because those are the memories that stick with you forever."

Photo submitted by JT and Luanne Weber.

A purebred Angus Heifer.
Photo by Garret Weber

PLUGGED IN:

Two Days Exploring Basin Electric's Energy System

Gregg Stewart
LREA Member

I recently had the opportunity to participate in Lake Region Electric Association's annual member tour of Basin Electric's generation and transmission facilities in central North Dakota. Every stop on the tour was fascinating, and while I could go on about all of them, I'd like to share a few insights that really stuck with me.

We began at Basin Electric's corporate headquarters in Bismarck, where we received a helpful overview of the cooperative's history and structure. We learned how it was formed by local co-ops joining forces to serve their members more effectively and how that shared ownership model continues to guide decisions today.

Our tour of the headquarters included a couple of noteworthy stops that provided a closer look at how the system is managed on a day-to-day basis. On the trading floor, we watched as energy marketers tracked power flows in real time, buying and selling electricity across the region to keep everything balanced and running smoothly. Just down the hall, the member services team was coordinating outage response and field operations with the kind of systems you'd expect from a modern 24/7 control center. Seeing both of these operations in action gave me a deeper appreciation for the coordination and care that go into keeping the system reliable and the people who run it safe.

We also visited the Great Plains Synfuels Plant. At this facility, North Dakota lignite is converted not only into synthetic natural gas but also into a wide array of valuable byproducts, including fertilizers, industrial chemicals, and captured carbon dioxide. What impressed me most was how efficient and self-contained the process is: many byproducts are reused within the plant itself, helping clean the gas stream and improve performance. Others are refined and sold,

Erin Laverdure, Project Coordinator at Basin Electric, guides members to Wilton Wind Farm.

Basin Tour

Roger & Lauri Sonstegard

We really enjoyed the event. It was very well planned out with not a minute of wasted time. Brett and Jeremy were outstanding hosts.

One highlight was the Basin updates at their general office where we learned about future plans for new generation and Basin's plans to stay on the cutting edge using the best technology available. Erin (Basin's communications dept) was an encyclopedia of knowledge able to answer all questions.

The second highlight for us was the Freedom Mine tour (conducted by Cherie, Freedom Mine's comm dept) where the bus was allowed to drive thru the site to get a feel for the whole operation – from planning the mining strategy of breaking first ground to reclaimed property that is returned to its original state. Driving up close to the mining equipment gave us a real sense of the size of the dragline, shovels and trucks used in the mining process.

The DGC history of how it started to where it is now is nothing short of amazing.

The whole tour was great. Thank you for hosting the event.

including CO_2, which is compressed and piped to Canada for use in enhanced oil recovery. The whole system is practical, efficient, and designed to minimize waste at every step.

At the nearby Freedom Mine, we saw land stewardship in action. Before any coal is extracted, topsoil is carefully removed and preserved. After mining, the land is regraded to match its original contours, and croplands, pastures, and wetlands are restored to full productivity. One moment that stood out to me was gazing at a culturally significant site left untouched at the request of Native American communities that was directly adjacent to land that had been previously mined and then reclaimed. You couldn't tell the difference. That side-by-side view made it clear just how seriously the mine operators, and their partners take their responsibility to the land, the environment, and the communities that rely on both.

A short drive away, Antelope Valley Station ties these facilities together. Fueled directly by lignite from the Freedom Mine, it provides steady, around-the-clock electricity for the region. Sitting next to the Synfuels Plant, the three facilities form a highly integrated energy hub. Coal is mined and used for both power generation and synthetic gas production, with nearly every byproduct captured or repurposed. Waste heat and steam are shared between facilities, and CO_2 from the Synfuels plant is put to beneficial use rather than released into the atmosphere. It's a tightly connected, locally anchored ecosystem – built for reliability and sustainability.

I didn't fully appreciate just how complex the energy world is until I saw it firsthand. Cooperative leaders today are managing a rapidly changing mix of priorities, including carbon-neutral goals, evolving renewable mandates, and spiking data center demand, all while doing whatever it takes to keep affordable electricity flowing to member homes, farms, and businesses.

Of course, none of this would've made the same impact without the people who brought the experience to life. Brett, Jeremy, Carl (our excellent driver), and everyone else who hosted us were professional, approachable, and clearly proud of the work they do. They answered every question, shared their knowledge generously, and made us feel genuinely welcome. And just as memorable were the fellow tour members - curious, thoughtful, and fun to be around.

If you ever get the chance to join one of these tours, I highly recommend it. It's a rare opportunity to see where your power comes from and to meet the people who make it happen.

Tour members board the Lewis & Clark Riverboat.

OCT. 10-12
Black Hills Powwow
Rapid City, SD
605-341-0925

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. 3
DSU Architecture Walking Tour
3-4 p.m.
Lake County Museum
Madison, SD

OCT. 3-5
Black Hills Film Festival
Journey Museum
Rapid City, SD
605-574-9454

OCT. 4
Harvest Fest
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Redfield, SD
605-472-0965

OCT. 10-11
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show
Fri. 12.-6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,
Philip, SD
605-441-1060

OCT. 10
Lake Region Marching Band Festival
10 a.m.
Groton, SD

OCT. 11
A Celebration of Classic Hits
7 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

OCT. 11
Pumpkin Fest
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
City Park
Groton, SD

OCT. 18
Arts & Crafts Festival
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Faulkton, SD

OCT. 18
Northern Prairie Arts Barn Quilt Class
Highland Conference Center
Register by Oct. 6
Watertown, SD
605-882-1780

OCT. 18-19
Heartland Quilting Stars Show
Highland Conference Center
Mitchell, SD
605-770-1551

OCT. 19
Helping With Horsepower Year-End Horse Show
10 a.m.
Reclamation Ranch
Mitchell, SD

OCT. 24
Humor for Heroes Comedy Night Fundraiser
Comedians, Silent Auction
Tickets $15, two for $25
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

OCT. 25
8th Annual Ladies Day
Variety of Vendors
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
The Crossing Bar
Mina, SD
605-390-2939

OCT. 25
The Greats of Country
7 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

OCT. 31-NOV. 2
Haunted Trail at Reclamation Ranch
7-10 p.m.
Reclamation Ranch
Mitchell, SD

OCT. 31
Downtown Trick or Treat
4-6 p.m.
Groton, SD

NOV. 1
Reliance Christmas Carousel
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Reliance, SD
605-730-1462

NOV. 1
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Dakota Christian School
Corsica, SD
605-366-7940

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.