

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Sica Hollow State Park near Sisseton is one of several hidden gems in the park system that are waiting to be discovered

## Spotlight on State Parks

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for you to discover  
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# Following 2021 with a very strong 2022

I can't believe that we are already well into 2022! The past couple of years have been an adventure in doing things differently due to the COVID 19 pandemic, but Lake Region has adapted well.

As you know, we closed the office initially and had people working from home in order to minimize contact. We changed a few procedures to help keep everyone safe and to assist with what they initially called "flattening the curve." I really don't know how much good any of this did, but I'm certain it didn't hurt.

Due to the surge in our area, we once again put a partition up at the office to help keep our employees and members healthy. Members are still able to come into the foyer for help paying their bill or to pick up parts, but we are trying to keep office traffic down.

Another new venture that we started in 2022 is with Power Systems Engineering (PSE), a full-service consulting firm for electric utilities, independent power producers, industrial facility owners, energy resource developers, and more. PSE provides industry-leading engineering, economic, and planning solutions to help guide us through an effective and efficient strategy for our 4-year work plan that will help us to ensure a more efficient electrical system.

This year we are continuing to work on replacing aging infrastructure to increase reliability and capacity so that we can meet the increasing electrical demands of our member-owners. The new four-year work plan also helps guide Lake Region through new funding regulations and working with our lenders to take advantage of historically low interest rates.

We finished last year strong, and we have been going great guns with the start of this new year. Our strong financial position reflects that the revenue is meeting current expenses. The last rate increase was in 2014 and Lake Region is not looking to increase rates this year, despite rising costs for nearly all goods and services.

We can attribute the strong financial position that we are in to your Board of Directors overseeing the cooperative in general. Management and staff at Lake Region make it a priority to be prudent with our member's money, and our employee base continues to work hard for the member-owners of our cooperative so that we can continue along this path of success.

**We make it a priority to be prudent with our member's money, and our employee base continues to work hard for the member-owners of our cooperative so that we can continue along this path of success.**

Our power and transmission providers, Basin Electric and East River continue to invest in renewable resources and expand our generation portfolio into areas such as wind, solar and nuclear energy in order to meet the increasing demands of our members. East River has also been upgrading our infrastructure to strengthen our transmission backbone.

Lake Region received Cost of Power Bill Credits from our G&T (Basin and East River) for 2021 that gave us an extra boost to keep us in a good financial position. This is a reflection of what being a part of a cooperative family is. There are a lot of moving parts to running an electrical distribution cooperative and it's nice to see everyone working toward the good of the cooperative cause.

I want to thank you, the member-owners of Lake Region Electric for investing in your electric cooperative. Because of our cooperative family, Lake Region remains financially strong, and I am looking forward to the future.

Thank You & God Bless,  
Timothy McIntyre



**Tim McIntyre**  
General Manager

**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES**

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## Four shocking electrical dangers in your home

Contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some cases, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

**1. Appliances.** Most shocks from household appliances occur during repairs. It's not enough to turn off an appliance before working on it - you need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of household electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent.

There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present. When the device detects an imbalance in the electric current, it turns off the power to minimize the potential for an electric shock.

**2. Ladders.** Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of household shocks are also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area - including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is 10 feet away and won't contact a power line if it falls in any direction.

**3. Power tools.** Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. According to OSHA, when you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.

**4. Electrical outlets and extension cords.** Inserting anything that doesn't belong - screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars, to name a few - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact.

Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots.

Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

## WE'VE GOT CO-OP COUNTRY COVERED



We know you love to read your local edition of Cooperative Connections magazine, but you'll get more great content when you visit our video companion, Cooperative Connections Plus. Scan the QR code or search YouTube for Cooperative Connections Plus and you'll be treating yourself to an intriguing repository of videos on interesting events going on around our state. There's walleye fishing, rodeos, electric vehicles, curling, Christmas at the Capitol, the State Fair and much more. Visit us today!



## Call 811 before digging

### Amelia Swift Hawk

Amelia Swift Hawk knows that it's wise to call 811 before digging into the ground. Amelia and her parents, Michael and Alyssa Swift Hawk, are members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.



# SAVORY SEAFOOD

## OYSTER STEW

Ingredients:  
 1 onion, chopped  
 6 T. butter  
 2 tsp. minced garlic  
 6 cup whole milk  
 1 pint (2 cans) oysters - do not drain  
 1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes  
 1/4 tsp. paprika  
 1 tsp. parsley  
 1/4 tsp. Tabasco sauce

### METHOD

Sauté onion and garlic in butter. Stir in undrained oysters. Cook at medium heat about 5 minutes until oysters curl at the edges. Stir in milk, red pepper flakes, paprika, parsley, and Tabasco sauce. Heat to serving temperature. Serve with oyster crackers.

Jane Ham, Rapid City

## GRILLED SALMON

Ingredients:  
 1 1/2 lbs. salmon fillet cut into 6 slices  
 2 tbsp. olive oil extra virgin  
 1 lemon or lime (juice of)  
 1 tsp. smoked paprika  
 1 tsp. garlic powder  
 1 tsp. onion powder  
 1 tsp. salt  
 Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

In a small bowl, add olive oil, lemon juice, smoked paprika, garlic and onion powders, salt, pepper. Whisk to combine. In a shallow flat dish with edges, lay salmon slices and brush with marinade. Marinate from 10 minutes to 24 hours. Longer marinating time, more flavorful salmon. Preheat grill to 450-500. Clean grill and oil grates with oil-soaked paper towel to avoid salmon sticking to the grill. Place salmon on the grill skin side up, close the lid and grill for 4-5 minutes. Check with spatula – if salmon has grill marks and comes off easy, flip it. Cook uncovered for another 3-4 minutes or until thermometer reads 125 degrees for medium rare or 140 for medium. Serve hot or cold on top of salad, mango salsa, guacamole, brown rice or quinoa. [ifoodreal.com](http://ifoodreal.com)

## SHRIMP AND SAUSAGE JAMBALAYA

Ingredients:  
 12 ozs. fully cooked andouille sausage, cut to 1/2-inch slices  
 12 ozs. uncooked shrimp (31-40 per lb.), peeled and deveined  
 1 med. green pepper, chopped  
 1 med. onion, chopped  
 2 celery ribs, chopped  
 3 garlic cloves, minced  
 2 tsps. Creole or Cajun seasoning (paprika, with cayenne pepper, oregano, dried sweet basil)  
 1 can (14-1/2 ozs.) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, drained  
 1 cup uncooked "instant" rice  
 1 can (8 ozs.) tomato sauce  
 1/2 cup chicken broth  
 3 green onion sprigs chopped

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 425°. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients. Divide mixture among six greased 18x12-inch pieces of heavy-duty foil. Fold foil around mixture and crimp edges to seal, forming packets; place on a baking sheet. Bake until shrimp turn pink and rice is tender, 20-25 minutes. Use caution when opening packets as they will be steamy. Consider adding jalapenos to taste and/or some chopped pineapple to cool the palate. Try serving for breakfast or brunch with sumptuous eggs and biscuits.

Shannon Collins/Taste of Home

Please send your favorite beverage 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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# Tracking and analyzing your energy usage with SmartHub

Laura London

Lake Region Electric

We often get calls regarding electric usage. While we cannot tell from our office what devices or appliances are using power at a member's place, we do have some tools that can help members determine how much power is being used at certain times.

We also can help members do an energy "audit" to assess what appliances may be pulling larger loads of electricity. Some basic examples are: in the winter months, the biggest culprits are space heaters. We see a lot of usage in the spring and summer by sump-pumps. It really depends on the individual, but there are just a few common things.

Other than having a representative come out and do an energy audit of your home or farm, or the office staff walking members through some basic things over the phone, Lake Region offers some great tools online.

Tracking and analyzing energy usage online is easy for members to do through some of the SmartHub features. The My Usage section provides several tools to analyze your past and current usage, as well as plan and conserve in the future. Compare your use and costs, set markers to monitor changes in your usage over periods of time, and get energy saving tips.

The Usage Explorer tool can help

members track their usage up until the day before; Usage Explorer gives you a detailed look at your past and current usage, all in one place. View your usage and weather trends by month, or by the day. This can be handy for members who have a lake cabin and are not there all the time to see what power is being



used. This is also important for members who are on vacation and concerned about power while they are gone; by using the Smart Hub app, a member can see if there was an abnormal usage the day prior. All the graphs and charts on SmartHub show the average temperature outside to help members compare their usage to the temperature, as heating and cooling typically draw the most energy. Keep in mind Lake Region cannot tell you what is using the power or what the temperature is in your home. There are smart thermostats and other devices you can buy to control and track those things.

Members can use the Usage Comparison tool to view charts and

information and compare certain months or years. Usage Comparison lets you compare two bills worth of usage history side by side. View the differences between this month last year, or other combinations to see how your bill varies. Usage comparison can help you analyze your usage and plan your budget.

The Average Usage tool shows what your typical or average usage is for your selected time period. For example, see your average usage on each day of the week (such as Tuesdays), over the course of a year. Or see your typical usage in each hour of the day over two weeks. This can help determine some of the high usage times and help discover when you can save the most on your bill.

Members who don't want to download the app to their smartphone or tablet, can access their account and track their usage through their web browser. It is simple to use, and members can sign up by visiting Lake Region Electric's website and clicking on the SmartHub button or by calling our office and asking our office to help you enroll.

SmartHub is a great way to view and pay your bill online, but it has a lot of really great features to help our members track their power usage. Visit our website for more information: [www.lakeregion.coop](http://www.lakeregion.coop) or call our office: 605-345-3379 or toll free 1-800-657-5869.

**Tracking and analyzing energy usage online is easy for members to do through some of the Smart Hub features.**

- Compare your use and costs
- Monitor changes in your usage over periods of time
- View your usage and weather trends by month, or by the day





At more than 115 years old, Tyndall Bakery has been named “Best in South Dakota” and is also mentioned in a book by Webster native Tom Brokaw. Owners Ed and Carol Radack intend to keep the legendary establishment going strong.

## Radacks keep Tyndall Bakery tradition alive

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The members of Danzig Baptist Church in Tyndall perk up when they see Ed and Carol Radack coming through the doors on Sunday morning.

They're grateful for all the faithful work the Radacks do for the congregation and the community. They appreciate the fact that Carol volunteers her time as a Sunday School teacher and Ed has served as a church trustee and always stays involved.

But they also know that when the Radacks come around, donuts can't be too far away.

For the past 15 years, Ed and Carol have been whipping up irresistible cakes and confections as owners of Tyndall Bakery. The establishment was opened by John Moser in downtown Tyndall in 1905 and has changed hands several times over the years. But during that time, the bakery has maintained its status as a go-to sweet shop. Two years ago, Taste of Home magazine proclaimed it “Best in South Dakota.”

The Radacks bought the business from Bob and Judy Rueb after Carol's employer, Chicago Rawhide, closed its doors. Looking for something different to do, Carol decided to go from building ball bearings to baking bismarcks. When it soon became clear Carol had her hands full with interminable shifts,

Ed left his job at the Department of Transportation to offer some help and the two have been baking shoulder-to-shoulder ever since.

While they learned the business on the fly, the couple remained committed to one thing: using the recipe that's been handed down for decades. And the regular customers make sure they stick with that plan.

“That's what keeps a lot of the old-timers coming back,” Carol said. “It's a good product, it's always home-made, and we always try to deliver the best service.”

On a recent Saturday morning there was standing room only as customers lined up for the apple fritters, long johns, kolaches, cinnamon twists and bismarcks. Most of them have called ahead to make sure their special orders are filled and they don't miss out on their favorite selections.

One of them was Mike Scheetz, owner of the bowling alley across the street. He got one armload of fresh-baked buns for his business and another armload for himself and his staff.

“They're the best around,” Scheetz said as he grabbed a bag of Bavarians. “They know what I like so they always have it ready for me.”

Scheetz turns to go get set up for local bowling league activities and the Radacks have slight smiles on their faces that seem to say, “Another satisfied customer.”



# HIDDEN TREASURES

Despite its legacy as the site of an epic battle over good and evil, Sica Hollow State Park near Sisseton is a source of family fun for those who want to get away and enjoy the great outdoors. *Photos by SD Tourism.*

## The State Park system has seen visitation increase with new programs in place to serve the public

**Billy Gibson**

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At first blush, Sica Hollow State Park might seem like someplace you'd want to avoid.

The area was named after a Dakota Sioux word used to describe something sinister and features a winding pathway called the Trail of the Spirits. There are maroon-colored bogs, sangria-tinged streams and brown foliage that reminded early tribes of the blood and flesh of their ancestors.

The undulating terrain is said to be the site of an ancient spiritual battle in which the land and the people were overcome by a malevolent force. Local legend has it that the restless souls of the dead manifest themselves as unexplained bursts of fire and light in the night, disturbing sounds of agonized wailing and the ominous beat of war drums in the distance.

Apart from the spooky stories and eerie lore, Sica Hollow turns out to be one of many "hidden gems" in the

State Park system that are found off the beaten paths.

Sica Hollow is located in the northeast corner of the state near Sisseton where you'll find rustic bridges, winding creeks, scenic waterfalls and seasonal wildflowers festooning the eight miles of hiking trails. The Trail of Spirits, which today is a self-guided interpretive foot trail, was designated as a National Recreation Trail in 1971. The park also contains the Old River Warren and Coteau des Prairies, which have been named National Natural Landmarks.

With more than 60 facilities in its fold, the State Park system has lots to offer and includes several lesser-known destinations for families to discover such as Sica Hollow, Spirit Mound and Adams Homestead in the eastern part of the state and Shadehill, Rocky Point and Llewellyn Johns out west.

The Shadehill Recreation Area near Lemmon is situated on the shores of Shadehill Reservoir, which is one of western South Dakota's few large lakes.

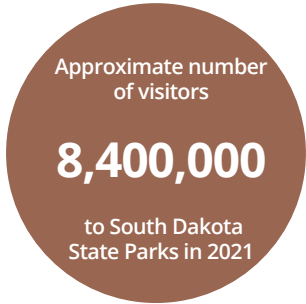


At Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area, visitors will find a monument to Hugh Glass, a hunter who survived a vicious attack by a grizzly bear in 1823.

There are 85 campsites with seven camping cabins, a group lodge, and facilities for boating, fishing, canoeing, biking, archery and more.

Nearby is the much smaller Llewellyn Johns Recreation Area with just 10 campsites and an opportunity to enjoy





a quieter and more secluded camping experience. There are points of historical interest close by as many historic figures have traveled through the area, including George Custer’s 1874 Expedition and Hugh Glass. According to first-hand accounts, in 1823 Glass was attacked by a grizzly bear, an event documented in the novel *Lord Grizzly* and recounted in the movie, *The Revenant*.

Nick Harrington, communications manager for Game, Fish and Parks, reports that the system is stronger and more popular than ever. Last year more than 8.4 million visitors passed through the parks, representing a 25 percent increase in visitation over the nine-year average. Custer State Park, the system’s most popular spot, saw a 3 percent increase in attendance with more than 2.3 million visitors.

Seventy-seven percent of visitors rated their camping experience as an A with 43 out of the 48 areas surveyed receiving the top rating.

To keep the momentum moving along, the State Park system has added 15 new facilities from a new Bison Center at Custer State Park to an improved boat ramp at West Whitlock Recreation Area.

And just in time for the spring and summer camping season there is a new and improved way of helping campers navigate the parks and outdoor facilities. Through [www.gooutdoorsouthdakota.com](http://www.gooutdoorsouthdakota.com), customers can secure a camping reservation or buy an annual park



Sica Hollow is one of the “hidden gems” in the state park system where visitors can commune with nature while learning about local lore.

entrance license while also purchasing hunting and fishing licenses all from the same transaction. A new mobile app provides 360 degree views of the more than 4,000 campsites in the system.

The Department of Tourism has also launched a free mobile pass called South Dakota Great Finds that helps users explore the state’s many attractions, including hidden treasures like Sica Hollow. The pass can be accessed at [travelsouthdakota.com](http://travelsouthdakota.com), and there is no app to download.

According to Department of Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen, “This mobile experience allows us to better highlight what truly makes up the great state of South Dakota. It showcases rural America, unexpected businesses and parks, and gets people off the beaten path to discover something new.”

Search for “Go Outdoors South Dakota” to find GFP’s official mobile app for iOS and Android.

## Top 10 most visited state parks in 2021

1. Custer State Park
2. Lewis & Clark Recreation Area
3. Spring Creek Recreation Area
4. Oahe Downstream Recreation Area
5. Cow Creek Recreation Area
6. Angostura Recreation Area
7. Roy Lake State Park
8. Farm Island Recreation Area
9. Springfield Recreation Area
10. Newton Hills State Park



# District 6 LREA Director Rodney Tobin: 'Reliability is a big deal'

Laura London

Lake Region Electric

Rodney Tobin became interested in the electric cooperative world when he was a teenager. He was a junior in high school when his father began serving on the Lake Region Electric Board and he's held an interest in serving since then. Tobin was elected to represent District 6 on the LREA Board in 1995. He currently serves as vice president. In addition to serving locally, he began representing LREA on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) Board in 2015.

Tobin grew up in Lake Region territory near Pierpont. His parents shared stories of when they first got electricity. His grandparents, though they still had interest in the farming operation, retired early so that they could move into town and have electricity in their home.

The excitement Rodney expresses is contagious as he recounts the time his father told the story of getting electricity to the farm.

"He was on the far side of the section when they saw the 'REA man' pull into the yard. They rushed home because they were so excited to get electricity. It was a game-changer!" he recalled, explaining that the "REA man" had to



LREA Board Director Rodney Tobin is pictured at his home near Pierpont and below with his wife, Evelyn, in Nemo. His father also served on the Board, and Tobin believes reliability for members is "a big deal."



inspect the wiring before he could hook it up to the meter.

Tobin feels that our history is important. He doesn't know what it was like before having electricity, he only remembers the stories told by his parents and grandparents. He contends that the new generation, including his own children, don't have any idea what

it's like to not have electricity: "My kids, they flip the switch, they have power."

Since the younger generations have always had electricity to make life more convenient at their homes and farms, he feels they don't truly understand some of the struggles the pioneers of Lake Region Electric went through, making it difficult for them to fully appreciate the value of electricity. He said this lack of understanding and appreciation is sometimes reflected when LREA is trying to secure right-of-way easements to construct new lines.

"In the old days, people were tickled to give you an easement because it meant either you or your neighbor were going to get electricity," he said. "Today, it's a whole different mindset."

That mindset is just one of the things that not only the employees of Lake Region need to work through, but the Board needs to address as well.

Tobin said he enjoys carrying out his responsibilities on the Board. He

## Rodney Tobin, continued

serves with people he feels have similar interests as his own and they share the common goal of providing electricity to the co-op's member-owners. He remembers that when he first started serving on the Board his goal was to provide "reasonable, reliable power." But in the past few years, with the advent of electronics, he has changed his perspective and feels that the reliability aspect comes first.

"Lake Region Electric works very hard to ensure reliability of electricity for our members. We are trying to be the most up-to-date as possible in all aspects of our service to the consumer," he said.

Tobin feels it is important for the Board to inspire the younger generations to get involved in the co-op and to help them understand the value of the co-op system. He recounts how his father served on the Board and worked hard to keep the rates affordable.

"At that time, our system was only around 30 years old. We are now in our 81st year and the aging system needs continuous upgrades in order to have that reliability we all count on," he said. "Reliability is a big deal with all of the electronics. It wasn't such a big deal years ago if your light bulb dimmed a little, but now the computers shut down and everything re-boots!"

Tobin's advice to new members is, "Appreciate what your forefathers have done for you."

Expanding the amount of power LREA is able to distribute has been a priority for Tobin and his fellow directors. He recalls a time when a large dairy was looking to expand in the Veblen area: "One of the board members came unglued, asking how we could have economic development if we don't have enough power."

The directors at Lake Region continue to work to get improvements in order to enhance some of the economic



Rodney Tobin and his wife Evelyn are very involved with their children and grandchildren. He encourages younger members to get involved in their electric cooperative.

development in our territory.

Tobin reflects on how many smaller farms have turned into larger, consolidated operations that require a lot more electricity to operate. Even with all the upgrades and improvements, it is not always feasible to bring the amount of power needed, such as 3-phase power for large grain drying.

Tobin said he appreciates the support Lake Region gets from its members. He has heard a lot of positive feedback and support for, not only the linemen, but for the Service Department.

"A lot of electricians won't even touch drying systems. The co-op is built for service," he said.

Tobin takes his position on the Board seriously and personally. As a member-owner of LREA, "The decisions I make on the board are personal. Every time a bill is paid at Lake Region, I view it as spending my own money."

Tobin knows that as a member, he is an owner and so are his neighbors.



"Everything we do, we need to keep in mind that we are spending our own money. As board members we are the consumer. Whenever we raise rates, we are raising our own rates. Therefore, we take it personally!"

Tobin looks forward to continuing his service to the co-op and wants to inspire younger members to get involved. "I am very proud of how the system has operated in the past and I am optimistic young leaders will step up as time goes on and will keep things as modern as we have. We are financially in good shape, and we work hard for our members."

Tobin continues to farm near Pierpont. When he's not busy farming or learning how to operate a new piece of technology, he enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and going on adventures with his wife, Evelyn.





# REED FILLS THE NEED

Pictured at right, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power CEO DeeAnne Newville (left), presents a check to the local Community Center and Cougar Club daycare facility in Franklin, MN, through the electric cooperative REED Fund.

## Electric cooperative REED Fund helps meet many needs for communities in South Dakota and western Minnesota



### Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Leaders of the Garretson community northeast of Sioux Falls had the vision for a much-needed expansion of the small town's non-profit daycare center. Since cobbling together two older structures in 2019 and taking in more tykes, it was apparent that the current white-hot demand for childcare was going to necessitate yet another expansion.

So they set their jaws, put together a plan and mustered up the will to make it happen for the sake of local families and the greater good of the community.

Now, all they needed was a miracle.

That miracle came in the form of a random conversation that took place between Blue Dragon Academy Board Member Kris Frerk and Sioux Metro Growth Alliance CEO Jesse Fonkert.

Frerk was in full fret mode over a lack of funding for the project, but it turned

out Fonkert had a fail-safe solution.

Through his contacts Angie Neises at East River Electric and Jay Buchholz at Sioux Valley Energy, Fonkert was aware of the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund, or REED Fund. He knew it was a valuable financial resource made available by electric co-ops in South Dakota and western Minnesota just for this kind of project.

Bottom line: Blue Dragon Academy will begin work in April with plans to complete the 3,500-sq. ft. project in November. Best of all, nearly 40 more families in and around the town of Garretson will have access to quality child care services.

While Frerk doesn't recall any trumpets blaring or harps playing in the background, she contends that her off-hand discussion with Fonkert was delivered by divine intervention.

"It's a pure miracle," she said. "We had been putting feelers out for funding because we have a big need in this area.

When I got that information from Jesse, it was just like a miracle. We jumped on it, we got accepted by the REED Fund Board and now we're ready to get the work done."

Blue Dragon secured a low-interest REED loan for nearly \$700,000. The non-profit organization is required to match \$239,000. Now Frerk and her crew are heavy on the fund-raising trail and have already received tremendous support from many donors in the community, she said. The Blue Dragon Board hopes to pay the debt off early with plans to hire five or six more workers once the project is complete.

For East River Electric Economic Development Director Eric Fosheim, it was another day at the office. His job is to match the money with the need, and he says many recipients respond with the enthusiasm and gratitude Frerk expresses when they receive funds.

He does fall just short of uttering the "M" word, however.

“It’s extremely satisfying to be in a position to help people solve problems and overcome challenges in their communities,” Fosheim said. “We try to work together with folks to cut through the red tape and bureaucratic impediments and come up with clever ways to get projects across the finish line. This is all made possible through the electric cooperatives and the fact that they take their responsibilities and obligations to their communities very seriously.”

The REED Fund has backed scores of projects and loaned out more than \$100 million since it was established in 1996. Fosheim sees it as the perfect tool for promoting local economic growth, improving infrastructure, enhancing community facilities and contributing to job, business and wealth creation.

Funds have gone to retail and service businesses, industrial parks and office facilities, fire protection projects, manufacturing firms, housing projects, health care facilities and more.

Approximate amount of money  
**\$100 million**  
 loaned through the electric cooperative REED Fund

Chris Larson, general manager at Clay-Union Electric in Vermillion, and his board tapped REED funds to support the Wakonda Heritage Manor assisted living facility. They also worked with the business to secure a zero-interest loan through the USDA’s Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program.

“It’s truly an honor for us to have this tremendous resource available to help improve the lives of our members and the community at-large,” Larson said.

The real meaning of the REED program came to light when he and the board visited the place.

“We viewed the improvements they’d made, and heard from the people there about how it enhanced their quality of life. It really warms your heart to know you’re part of a co-op system that can have a positive impact on families and businesses. It just shows how much of a difference we can make when we all work together, pool our resources and get things done.”

East River cooperatives serving western Minnesota have also participated in the program. As with the Garretson community, parents in Franklin, MN, also had a need for a daycare center.

[www.reedfund.coop](http://www.reedfund.coop)

RURAL ELECTRIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

REED FUND



The Cougar Cub Child Care Center was launched with the help of REED funds obtained through Renville-Sibley Co-op Power after two of the town’s three daycare facilities closed.

Renville-Sibley CEO DeeAnne Neville said, “We were happy to help fill the gap. Concern for community is one of the seven cooperative principles. It’s an example of the city, school and economic development coming together for the good of the people in our rural communities.”

For more information about the REED Loan program, visit [www.reedfund.coop](http://www.reedfund.coop).



# CUTTING CARBON, SAVING CASH



Owned by H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake, this Tesla Model 3 has been used during the legislative session to educate lawmakers about the emergence of EV technology and beneficial electrification. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

## Cooperatives promote the concept of beneficial electrification to help members cut carbon and save money

**Billy Gibson**

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

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

When that short snappy algorithm started appearing on the sides of shampoo bottles back in the 1950s, some said it simply encouraged people to practice good hygiene and do a more thorough job of scrubbing their tresses right down to the scalp.

More cynical observers took it as a thinly-veiled scam devised by some devious marketing firm to sell more shampoo and spin bathers into an endless cycle of washing their hair, breaking only long enough to go out and purchase more Prell.

Rare is the business that encourages customers to use less of its product. But that's the very approach that lies at the

heart of electric cooperatives and their guiding principles. Electric co-ops exist exclusively to deliver the power their members need, but they also go above and beyond by working to make sure their members don't pay a penny more than the cost of providing the service while helping them to better manage their consumption.

That basic formula has remained the same since the rural electric cooperative movement began back in the 1930s, even as new methods of generating, distributing and using electricity have evolved over the decades. Every step along the way, co-ops have stood at the forefront to help members make the best and most efficient use of whatever new development comes down the pike.

Enter the emergence of a concept

called beneficial electrification. This is a relatively new term that describes the pursuit of solutions that allow cooperatives to meet rising service demands while helping their consumers save money over time, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, fostering a more resilient electrical grid, protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for all.

Across the country, electric cooperatives are launching and embracing beneficial electrification programs and blazing pathways that lead to providing more value to members, their local communities and the environment.

Some of what falls under the heading "beneficial electrification" has been adopted by co-ops and their consumers for years, such as replacing older and inefficient gas furnaces and water heaters with more efficient electric heat pumps. More recently, cooperatives have implemented load management programs that enable the co-op to control devices in the home and help balance power supply and demand, resulting in more efficient consumption and potential savings for

the member. Or as it's known in more colloquial terms, a "double back scratch."

And even more recently, cooperatives have accelerated their adoption of renewable power and have gotten involved in programs to incentivize the use of electric vehicles and help build out a system of fast-charging stations across the state, region and nation.

All of these types of initiatives are called "beneficial" because they help members save money and also help protect the environment.

In his role as Manager of Beneficial Electrification at Sioux Valley Energy in Colman, Ben Pierson often works with members to give them what they've indicated through surveys that they want: more information about how they can use technology to reduce their energy consumption while saving money.

"As we get out in the community, we hear from our members all the time, especially as we discuss the benefit of EVs in particular," Pierson said. "We try to make it easier to integrate this emissions-reducing and money-saving technology by offering incentives for installing home chargers and a time-of-use plan that allows members to charge their cars overnight at a much lower cost."


Pierson said some members are taking advantage of the home-charger incentive even though they aren't yet among the nearly 500 South Dakotans who own an EV.

"They're just excited that we've made these programs available," he said. "They realize EVs are going to be a substantial part of our transportation future and they want to be ready to ease the transition for them and their families."

Robert Raker is manager of communications and public relations at West River Electric and works out of the co-op's Rapid City office. Raker sees a fertile field for promoting beneficial electrification as the Rapid City area experiences accelerated growth. Like Sioux Valley Energy and other co-ops around the state, West River Electric offers load management programs, rate structures and incentives


## SAVE MONEY

Electricity is becoming cleaner every day and can save consumers money on their energy costs over time.




**Did you know...**

Replacing your HVAC system with an electric heat pump can **save you nearly \$1,000 per year** on your heating and cooling bills.<sup>1</sup>



**Did you know...**

The average cost of **charging an electric car** is equivalent to **\$1.20 per gallon of gasoline**.<sup>2</sup>



**Did you know...**

Owning an electric vehicle can **save you over \$800** in annual maintenance.<sup>3</sup>

for electric appliances like water heaters and heat pumps.

He uses the cooperative's Nissan Leaf EV to demonstrate the advantages of this emerging technology and is also part of the effort to leverage government and private funds to build a reliable EV charging network.

As neighborhoods grow and businesses expand in his area, Raker collaborates with developers to promote beneficial electrification. He also sees value in encouraging residential members to make more beneficial use of electricity by converting lawn implements from gas to electric.

"We've seen a real shift in mentality toward carbon-free growth," he said. "Our job is to educate and inform our members about how they can continue to integrate technology into their everyday lives on any scale."

As spring and summer are just around the corner, he said, one way most residential members can help in the goal to curb carbon emissions is to convert lawn and garden equipment from gasoline to

electric/battery-powered.

Electric lawn care equipment options are becoming more popular than ever, offering consumers faster charging times, longer battery life and quieter, greener products.

There are several electric lawn mower brands that operate without a cord, unlike the first generation of electric mowers. Typically priced in the \$200-\$500 range, electric mowers are powerful, low maintenance, and work well for lawns that are a half-acre or less.

Electric trimmers and leaf blowers are also catching up to their gas-powered competitors in performance and reliability.

Raker encourages members to do their research before investing in electric lawn equipment, citing [consumerreports.org](http://consumerreports.org) as a trust source of information.

He and Pierson agree that beneficial electrification is the way of the future and there's no better time for members to engage in this environmentally-friendly approach than the present.





**March 12**  
**28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour**  
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD

*Photo by Travel South Dakota*

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.

**FEBRUARY 25-26**  
**Mardi Gras Weekend**  
 Main Street, Deadwood, SD,  
 605-578-1876

**FEBRUARY 25-27,**  
**MARCH 3-5**  
**Making God Laugh**  
 Grand Opera House, Pierre,  
 SD, 605-224-7826

**FEBRUARY 26**  
**The Music of John Williams**  
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 3-5**  
**Pro Snocross Races**  
 Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds,  
 Deadwood, SD, 800-344-8826

**MARCH 4-5, 10-13**  
**The 39 Steps**  
 Orpheum Theater Center,  
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 4-6**  
**Home & Garden Show**  
 Brown County Fairgrounds,  
 Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-2055

**MARCH 5**  
**I Hate Winter Cornhole**  
**Tournament**  
 Scherr Howe Arena,  
 Mobridge, SD, [www.mobridge.org/Corn-Hole-Tournament](http://www.mobridge.org/Corn-Hole-Tournament)

**MARCH 5**  
**Mountain West® Whiskey**  
**Festival**  
 Rushmore Hotel, Rapid City, SD,  
[www.mountainwestwhiskeyfestival.com](http://www.mountainwestwhiskeyfestival.com)

**MARCH 5**  
**Road 2 Destruction Tour**  
 The Monument Summit Arena,  
 Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

**MARCH 5-8**  
**2022 Summit League Men's**  
**and Women's Basketball**  
**Championships**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,  
 Sioux Falls, SD, [www.thesummitleague.org/tickets](http://www.thesummitleague.org/tickets)

**MARCH 10**  
**Singing in the Rain: Dinner**  
**& A Movie**  
 Goss Opera House, Watertown,  
 SD, 605-753-0200

**MARCH 10**  
**TobyMac Hits Deep Tour**  
 The Monument Summit Arena,  
 Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

**MARCH 10-13**  
**Annual Sioux Empire**  
**Sportsmen's Show**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,  
 Sioux Falls, SD, [www.siouxfalls.sportshow.com](http://www.siouxfalls.sportshow.com)

**MARCH 12**  
**28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride**  
**& Tour**  
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead,  
 SD, [www.28below.com](http://www.28below.com)

**MARCH 12**  
**Meraki Dance Competition**  
**& Convention**  
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 12-13**  
**Hill City's Antique and**  
**Railroad Show & Sale**  
 440 Main Street, Hill City, SD,  
 605-574-2821 or 605-877-6629

**MARCH 14**  
**Harlem Globetrotters**  
 The Monument, Rapid City,  
 SD, 605-394-4115

**MARCH 18-19**  
**St. Patrick's Day Weekend**  
 Main Street, Deadwood, SD,  
 605-578-1876

**MARCH 18-19**  
**Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts**  
**Show**  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, 605-332-6000

**MARCH 18-19, 25-26**  
**Schmeckfest**  
 748 S Main Street, Freeman,  
 SD, 605-925-4237

**MARCH 19**  
**Dakota Coffee Festival**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center,  
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**MARCH 19**  
**St. Patrick's Day Celebration**  
 Various Locations, Watertown,  
 SD, 605-886-5814

**MARCH 26**  
**Annual Ag Day**  
 Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
 Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 30**  
**Elton John Tribute Concert**  
 Performing Arts Center,  
 Mitchell, SD, 605-770-7813  
**Note: Please make sure to**  
**call ahead to verify the event**  
**is still being held.**