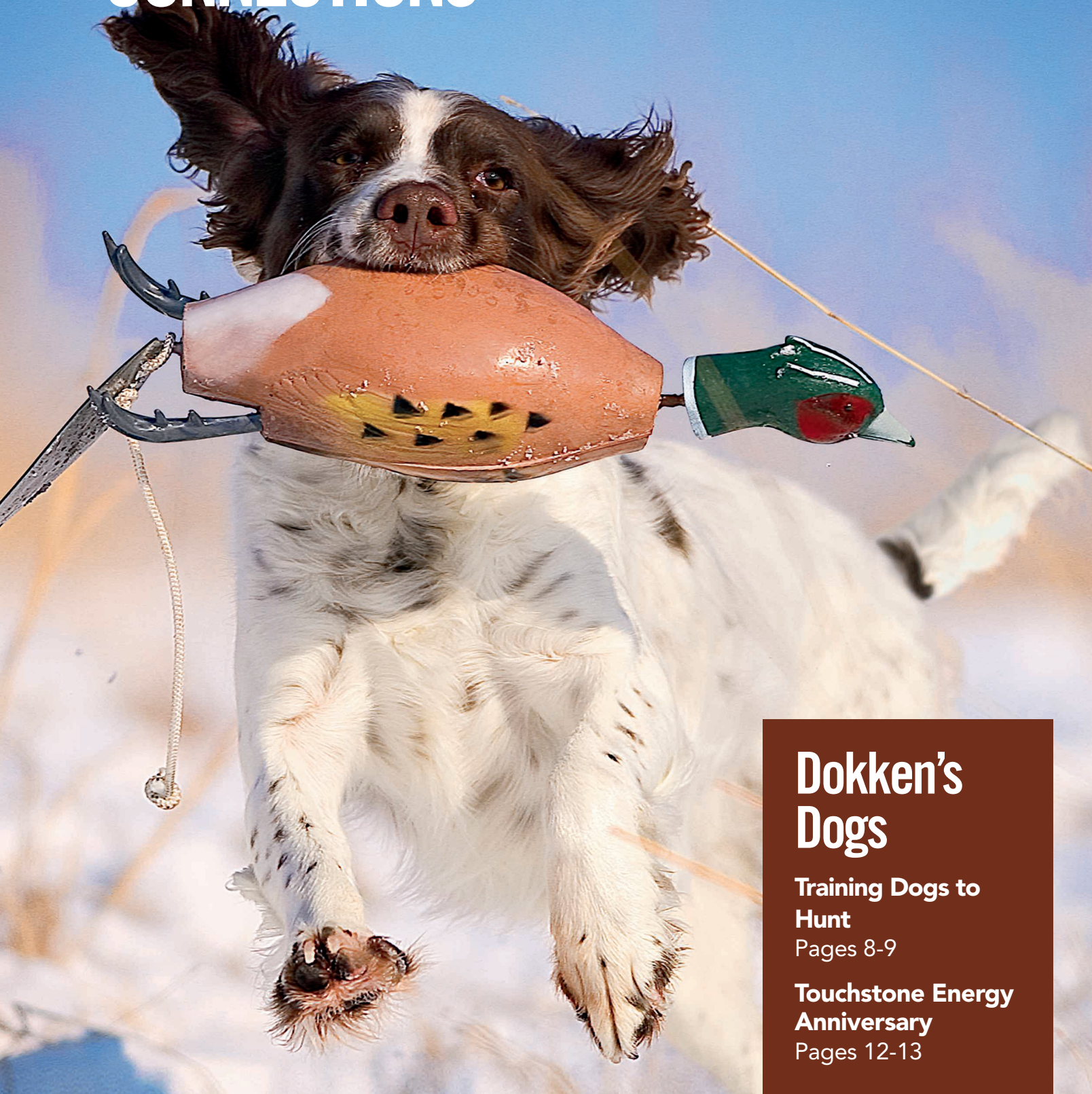


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Dokken's Dogs

**Training Dogs to
Hunt**

Pages 8-9

**Touchstone Energy
Anniversary**

Pages 12-13



Lake Region Attends Annual Meeting for Generation and Transmission Cooperative Basin

Several Lake Region Electric Directors along with CEO McIntyre attended the Basin Annual Meeting to learn about the current status and projected outlook of our G&T. LREA Board President Kermit Pearson, is the Vice President of the Basin Electric Board and feels that it is important for cooperative directors, staff, and employees to attend meetings and trainings in order to stay informed so they can effectively govern and manage our co-op.

BASIN ELECTRIC, MEMBERS DISCUSS STRENGTH OF THE COOPERATIVE AT 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

Nearly 900 member cooperative employees, directors, public officials, utility representatives, and guests attended Basin Electric's 2023 Annual Meeting of its membership on Aug. 16. The meeting focused on the many benefits of being part of the Basin Electric

cooperative family.

"Cooperative Strong" was chosen as the theme for Basin Electric's 62nd Annual Meeting to highlight that there is strength in numbers and every member is responsible for making the cooperative strong.

Basin Electric's focus is providing reliable, affordable, and responsible energy for its 141 members spanning nine states. The meeting's speakers reviewed Basin Electric's current operations, financial strength, and continued commitment to its members.

The cooperative's board President Wayne Peltier, representing Basin Electric member Minnesota Valley Cooperative Light and Power Association in Montevideo, Minnesota, talked about the cooperative's value to its members. "Our theme this year is Cooperative Strong. And we are strong," Peltier said. "Basin Electric's membership is growing – and thriving – largely thanks to the reliable

and affordable electricity we provide. The main goal of cooperative generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives like Basin Electric is to develop generation for rural America. That is something we have done since day one and continue to this day."

Basin Electric Interim General Manager and CEO Todd Brickhouse focused on the three cooperative-wide goals that have been developed to effectively serve its member-owners. "I can proudly say there is only one Basin Electric," Brickhouse said. "As the largest G&T in the country and one of the largest electric utilities, we have an obligation to ourselves, to our members, and to our industry to do things safely, reliably, and affordably." Brickhouse invited three of the cooperative's executives to the stage to address the three goals: safety, reliability, and affordability.

Miles McGrew, Basin Electric senior vice president and chief human

relations officer, addressed the safety goal. "The smartest people on earth and the best companies in the world all acknowledge the importance of safety in the workplace," he said. "It is and must always be a core value. Our safety metrics are well on their way to being numbers we can be proud of, but safety is about more than numbers and metrics. It's about people, and our true goal is to make sure our employees go home safely to their families at the end of every day."

Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric senior vice president and chief operating officer, addressed reliability and said, "The men and women who are on the front lines of our reliability efforts, and by that, I mean the people who operate and maintain your generation and transmission assets, work very, very hard to keep those assets online. That is our ultimate goal and my personal commitment to all of you – that we will do everything we can to keep reliability simple, so that when you flip the switch, the lights come on."

Katrina Wald, Basin Electric interim vice president and CFO, highlighted the strong year the cooperative had financially in 2022 and how that impacts affordable rates "Basin Electric creates value by investing in assets and in people, our most important asset," she said. "Basin Electric also creates value by mitigating risks and returning value to our members

through bill credits and the distribution of capital credits. All of these factors are important in maintaining stable and affordable rates."

To learn more, go to the Basin Electric website: www.basinelectric.com

Welcome to our new members!

Jerry Cook
Kennedy Johnson
Kullen Mueller
Daniel & Kathy Dellman
Michael & Corinna Christopherson
Jason & Richelle Hyatt
Lori Herrick
Jamestown Implement LLC
DBA Valley Plains Equipment
Theron & Susan Rolstad
Webster Area Development Corporation
Devin Koslowski



**GOT WATER?
DON'T WAIT
UNTIL IT
FREEZES OVER
CHECK YOUR
LIVESTOCK
WATERERS
NOW!**

Winter is fast approaching! Now is a good time to make sure livestock waterers are in perfect working condition. Verify that you have volatge and correctly operating elements and thermostats at each waterer.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

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October is Fire Safety Month

Is your workplace or home fireproof? Each year, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) celebrates National Fire Safety Month in October. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, there were 88 occupational fatalities as a result of workplace fires or explosions. This is down from 2015, in which there were 121. While the statistics show that the number of fatalities due to fires or explosions in the workplace is on a downward slope, any number other than 0 is unacceptable and demands the attention from management, safety professionals and employees in every company. Not only do fires present a severe life safety hazard, they also can be detrimental to business success due to the possible destruction of business equipment and facilities. This campaign serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of fire safety awareness in both the workplace and our home lives.

The safety reminders communicated in the workplace can be easily translated to fire safety in the home. Establish a family emergency action plan, discuss escape routes with family members, and locate fire extinguishers in your home. Additionally, conduct a mock fire drill with your family members to ensure you and your loved ones know how to get out safely. During this drill, outline meeting places that are at a safe distance from the home. Designate a neighbor to contact for help in the event of an emergency. Simple exercises such as the aforementioned could mean the difference maker in your family making it out alive in the event of a fire in your home.

Below are key components to ensuring your workplace and home are fireproof:

- **Eliminate Clutter** – Exercise good housekeeping. Clutter can easily become a fuel source in the event of a fire, allowing a fire to spread quickly. Furthermore, clutter can restrict access to emergency equipment and exit routes.
- **Fire Extinguishers** – Maintain the appropriate type and number of fire extinguishers. Conduct monthly and annual extinguisher inspections to ensure they are in good, working condition. Provide training for employees on the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- **Chemical Safety** – Use and store chemicals safely. Read hazard warning labels and safety data sheets

to determine flammability and other fire hazards. Ensure your chemical storage areas provide adequate ventilation for the storage of chemical or other hazardous substances.

- **Waste Control and Storage** – Limit the accumulation of flammable or combustible materials and residues as to prevent the risk for such materials contributing to a fire emergency.
- **Exits** – Ensure emergency exit route diagrams are posted and accessible in all areas of the facility for all employees to easily view. Additionally, ensure means of egress are well-lit with regulated exit signs and free from debris or clutter.

Remember it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive and it is best to alleviate hazards or hiccups in times of peace than in times of chaos. Utilize the above tips to reduce the risk for catastrophe or at least minimize the damage.

Source: Safety Resources, Inc.



Keep cords away from water!

Maddy Pannell, Age 12

Maddy Pannell advises people it's not safe to plug in appliances around water. Maddy is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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.

PASTA PERFECT

ITALIAN SPAGHETTI

Ingredients:

1-8 oz. can tomato sauce
1-6 oz. can tomato paste
1 1/2 paste cans water
1 small onion, chopped
2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. garlic salt
1/2 tsp. chili powder
3 shakes cayenne pepper
1/8 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. basil
1 tsp. oregano
1/2 to 1 lb. ground beef

METHOD

Combine all ingredients except ground beef. Cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Brown beef and add to sauce. Serve over cooked noodles. May add green peppers or mushrooms.

Gail Keating
Flandreau, S.D.

GARDEN HARVEST PASTA SHELLS

Ingredients:

2 tbsps. vegetable oil
2 medium zucchini, shredded
1/2 cup finely shredded carrots
2 cups chopped fresh broccoli
1 small onion, chopped
Salt and pepper
1 lb part-skim ricotta cheese
2 cups shredded mozzarella
1 egg, lightly beaten
1/4 cup grated parmesan
1 tbsp. dried basil
27.5 oz. jar pasta sauce
12 oz. pkg jumbo pasta shells, cooked and drained

METHOD

Heat oven to 350. In a large skillet heat oil, then saute broccoli, zucchini, carrots, and onions until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl, thoroughly combine ricotta, mozzarella, egg, parmesan, and basil. Add vegetables and stir to combine. Spread 1 cup of the pasta sauce evenly in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Fill pasta shells with the vegetable and cheese mixture and arrange in the baking dish. Spoon the remaining sauce over the shells. Cover and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake another 10 minutes or until bubbly.

Faye Chambliss
Murdo, S.D.

CREAMY CHICKEN AND BACON PASTA

Ingredients:

8 oz. spaghetti
1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
2 tbsps. flour
4 slices bacon
1 cup milk
4 oz. (1/2 package) cream cheese, at room temperature
1 1/2 tbsps. basil leaves
1 1/2 tbsps. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. coarse ground black pepper

METHOD

Cook spaghetti as directed on package. Drain well. Meanwhile, toss chicken with flour. Set aside. Cook bacon in large skillet on medium heat until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Set aside. Remove all but 1 tbsp drippings from skillet. Add chicken; cook and stir 4 minutes or until golden brown. Stir in milk, cream cheese and seasonings until well blended. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cut bacon into bite-size pieces. Add to skillet. Place spaghetti in serving bowl. Add chicken mixture; toss well. Serve immediately.

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Does Being A Cooperative Member Still Have Value?



Tim McIntyre
General Manager

I have talked about the value of cooperative membership several times before. I've asked and answered questions concerning the value of electricity. I've made comparisons between the electric cooperatives and the investor-owned utilities (IOU's) and how important it was for the founders of Lake Region Electric and other rural cooperatives to bring power to rural homes and farms when others basically blew them off

because they just couldn't make enough money from servicing the rural areas. This month, I'd like to take a deeper dive into the value of being a member of a cooperative for the original members of Lake Region Electric versus the value of being a cooperative member-owner today.

Nearly 83 years ago, the founders of Lake Region got together to fulfill a need, that need was to get power to their homes and farms so that their lives would be easier, and their farms be more efficient. I think they were getting tired of having to milk cows by hand under dimly lit barn lights, powered by windmills and battery storage, if they were fortunate enough to even have that. Technology was starting to advance, and farmers started to get frustrated. Why should they continue to operate like this when opportunity for growth and wealth were passing by? Wealthy power companies didn't outright refuse to bring them electricity they needed; but they didn't make it attainable for the majority. Some farms were close to main highways and roads, where they could look out their doors and see the lines and poles from central power passing by their place but the investor-owned companies, who were focused on making money for their stockholders, made it so that getting electricity was unaffordable for most. Like many rural Americans, the people of Lake Region territory saw value in having affordable, reliable power brought to their homes and farms. They got together to form a cooperative that would work for them. That same cooperative is still working for you today, governed by a board of directors who are democratically elected.

We are more reliant on electricity now than we have ever been before, making the need for reliable power even greater than it was in the 1940s. Almost every aspect of our homes and farms involves technology of one form or another, and today's technology requires more and more electricity. Advances in technology are also allowing people to work from home and manage their homes and businesses remotely when they are away. Lake Region offers a way to track your usage through

SmartHub. Using up to date technology to retrieve and track data not only helps the cooperative plan for our power needs, but it also helps individual members manage their power usage and budget.

The value in having local governance and being able to maintain autonomy and independence in today's world goes far beyond what most people think about on a day-to-day basis. The board members of Lake Region Electric are all member-owners of this cooperative who also depend on affordable, reliable electricity to efficiently run their farms and businesses.

Cooperatives really were formed with a perfect business model for success; owned and governed by members. Local governance provides thorough oversight of the financials and helps keep things in balance so that we are able to provide affordable electricity for all of our members. Despite trends and panic in the markets, Lake Region has been able to keep rates stable and affordable thanks to the strong oversight of the financials by the staff and directors.

Affordability remains one of the main focuses of this cooperative, just as it was at the beginning. The main reason that the investor-owned utilities would not bring power to rural areas throughout the country was because they thought it cost too much and would cut into their profit. The founders of Lake Region focused on bringing power to northeast South Dakota and keeping it affordable and member focused, not for the profit of investors and stockholders from far away.

Electric cooperatives bring value to your communities. Lake Region supports local businesses, schools and community organizations. In addition to monetary support, Lake Region employees go out to schools and other community events to educate youth about electricity. Twenty-two people work at Lake Region and live in the communities we serve. One-third of Lake Region employees are member-owners of Lake Region, working tirelessly to make sure all members of Lake Region have reliable power.

Things sure have changed in the last 83 years and the value of your electric cooperative has only increased. We need reliable electricity at an affordable rate in order to continue the quality of life that our forefathers fought for. People prosper based on the reliability of electricity!

Thank you for being a member-owner of Lake Region Electric.

Thank you & God Bless,
Timothy McIntyre

CO-OPS GROW

CO-OPS
GROW



LEGACIES



Original Board of Directors

From left to right, front row: Carl Naessig, Merle Moeckley, Ben Tvinnereim, Clarence Gronseth, Art Jones
back row: Howard Jones, Manager Hilding Wilson, John Smith, Frank Bohn, C.P. Hyde and Attorney L.A. Melby



Current Board of Directors

From left to right, front row: Amy Kuecker, Kermit Pearson, Andrea Kuecker
back row: Rodney Tobin, Tom Steiner, Mark Wismer, Cody Paszek



FOR THE LOVE OF HUNTING DOGS

Source: Travel South Dakota

A Successful Hunt May Depend on Your Dog

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

With numerous television appearances and A-list clients under his belt, Day County resident and Lake Region Electric Cooperative member Tom Dokken has become one of the premiere hunting dog trainers of our time.

But you won't hear the modest pro brag about himself. Instead, Dokken gives credit to the hard work and the innate capabilities of the dogs themselves.

The 70-year-old Minnesota native has been professionally working with dogs over the last 50 years at his training facility, Dokken Oak Ridge Kennels, Inc. in Northfield, Minnesota.

It's one of the largest gun dog training kennels in the region.

His love for hunting alongside a canine

companion harkens back to his teenage years when he'd tag along to go hunting throughout the country with his friend and his friend's Labrador Retriever, Charlie.

"We were probably 16 years old when we started hunting together. He had a lab and I didn't have one. We hunted with that dog just about every weekend."

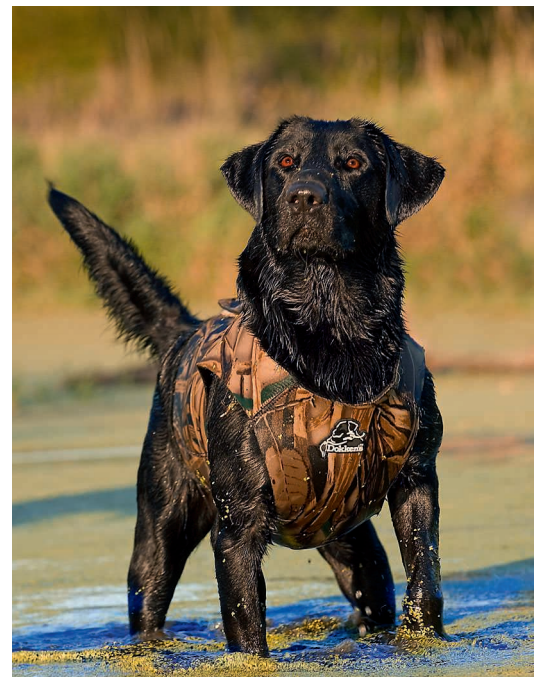
After a few years, Dokken decided it was time to get his own dog.

And to that dog goes all the credit, in Dokken's eyes.

"I started training her then I started running field trials. I did really well, not because of me, but I had a good dog who did

really well on a national level," he recalled.

After that, Dokken was hooked and knew training dogs was what he wanted to do for a living. He's since established



An adult black lab out hunting

himself as one of the top hunting dog trainers in the world, even bolstering a line of dog training products – Dokken Dog Supply – which is carried in sporting good stores across the country.

“That’s just as a result developing products we wanted for training themselves,” Dokken said of his supply company.

Some of the dogs Dokken has trained have hunted under some big names, including President George W. Bush and country music legend Hank Williams, Jr., along with many major professional athletes.

But it takes some prying to get that kind of info out of the humble Dokken, and he’s quick to emphasize that everyone that he does business with is treated the same, no matter what.

“Every customer is important. One person doesn’t get treated different than the other,” Dokken said.

His facility employs four full-time trainers, as well as office staff.

When Dokken isn’t training one of the 350 hunting dogs that come to his Minnesota training facility each year, he’s at home with his wife, Tina, in Day County.

“My wife and I live north of Webster. That’s our connection with the area. I’ve hunted down in the Lily area for years. We’ve had our place here 18 years or better,” Dokken explained.

“My mom’s family homestead is down in the Selby area, so as kids we’d be back on the farm for a good portion of the summer,” he added.

Dokken said his business trains pretty much any of the sporting, pointing and flushing breeds. But in the Upper Midwest, the more popular breed tends to be the Labrador Retriever.

Dokken has a special place in his heart for labs, which he described as a hardy breed able to withstand the punishing winter conditions known to challenge hunters in South Dakota during pheasant season.

And in South Dakota, pheasants are

king, according to Dokken.

“As far as population of pheasant – up in our area the weather sometimes knocks them back a little bit. Last year we had rain in December, which is a little bit of a factor when it comes to pheasant numbers,” Dokken said.

“The further south and west you get, the population changes too. Regardless, South Dakota numbers will always be top in the U.S.”

Hunters who have a dog in their arsenal have a much greater advantage over those who do not. For one, they can flush birds out of thick cover and, unlike the average human, have an absolute blast doing so.

“Without a dog – if you’re a pheasant hunter – you’re not going to have the ability to get the birds up and get them out of higher and denser cover. Finding birds that you’ve shot is going to be a real challenge as well. A dog is a great conservation tool as well,” Dokken said.

From a training standpoint, Dokken advises dog owners to start teaching their hunting partners good habits when they’re really young.

The earlier the training begins, the more success you’re setting the dog up for down the line.



Dokken with two adult labs

“Try to buy the best bloodlines that you can because if you do, in most cases your success rate just gets higher.”

Dokken says it boils down to three things: teaching, repetition and reinforcement. For the human, practicing patience is crucial.

“A majority the time the dog is not in the wrong, it’s that the dog can’t understand what you want,” he said.

The entire job is a dream for Dokken and his team, and one he hopes to continue for decades more to come.

“It’s what we do,” he said. “It’s a labor of love.”



Source: Travel South Dakota



Back Forty Beef Is An Amazing Adventure

Laura London

Lake Region Electric

Who's ready to beef up their fall with an amazing, or shall we say "a-maize-ing" adventure? Clint and Kelly Brandlee of rural Pierpont have asked themselves that question, maybe in a less corny fashion, several times.

The Brandlee family and their farm are the epitome of rural cooperatives. Kelly works for Northern Electric Cooperative in Bath, in addition to farming and running an ever-expanding business with her husband Clint. Kelly grew up on a farm near Salem with her heart and mind set on a future centered around the agricultural industry. Clint is a fifth-generation farmer on the land that his family homesteaded in 1886. That's roughly two generations before Lake Region Electric would be able to provide

them with the power they are becoming increasingly reliant on. Clint grew up on the land that he and Kelly are now growing their family and business on, alongside Clint's parents Mark and Deb. Their daughters Jaycee and Kylie are already little farmers, helping with chores and animal care to become the 6th generation to raise crops and cattle on this land.

This family seems to have a lot on their plate, but the main thing they focus on is beef. The same cattle that they raise for market they raise to feed their family, so they make sure the cattle are well cared for, with proper nutrition and vetting. Clint and Kelly had discussed selling their beef direct several times but got the final nudge in 2020. Pandemic restrictions were forcing many people to stay home, and even when folks were able to get out, grocery shelves were



often bare. Back Forty Beef was born in an effort to provide people with locally sourced, quality beef. They started out at local farmer's markets, and now the Brandlees ship Back Forty Beef products nation-wide. Clint says, "It's an honor to raise beef to sell to people and feeding families."

Now, in addition to offering beef to feed families, they are offering an a-maize-ing adventure. This year, the

couple came up with something sure to satisfy everyone's spirit of adventure, no matter how ambitious or tranquil that spirit is. The Brandlees created a corn maze and adventure farm on their place near Pierpont. This isn't an ordinary, just walking through a partially cut field corn maze. This is an interactive beefed-up adventure that was created using the latest technology and a precision planter. Clint and Kelly felt that there was a lack of activities in the area that suited adventurers of all ages that were also family friendly. Kelly says that "Clint is very much an idea guy, when he gets an idea in his head, he runs with it!" Kelly is a bit more analytical so after some conversation, careful consideration, and a little research, they partnered with the South Dakota Beef Industry Council to bring the first ever Back Forty Beef Corn Maze and Adventure Farm to Northeast South Dakota. This is a family friendly environment, encompassing 12 acres of the Brandlee's farmland. The maze was designed by a company who designs corn mazes nationwide. According to Kelly, "We shared with them our idea and they made it happen. They then sent us the design and Clint was able to program it into his planter. Using precision planting, he drove in a straight line at half the speed of what he normally plants. The planter would then place each seed where it was needed." As you can see this method was very effective and turned out exactly as they had pictured.

Adventurers can choose the path they think will work best for them through the maze created by ten-foot-tall corn stalk walls. Guests just wanting a taste of the maze can choose the short path that is just over a quarter mile walk. The medium path journeys 2.7 miles around the momma cow. If you are interested in a more extensive hike, choose the long path that winds its way through the form of a calf and beef check-off sign, totaling 3.4 miles! Regardless of the amount of time and energy you want to spend, each path is full of twisting,

turning adventure! Kelly said that guests can turn back at any point in the maze; no judgment will be had! Because of the precision planting process, the walking paths are smooth; it's not like walking through a partially cut corn field, stumbling over ruts and stubble. Families with young ones in strollers shouldn't have trouble navigating the paths. There are checkpoints along each path that are sponsored by local businesses featuring facts about South Dakota beef production, as well as offers from the sponsoring local business. Even though part of the fun of a maze is to "get lost," don't worry the Brandlees have you covered; there is a QR code you can scan at the beginning of the maze to help guide you, as well as good old-fashioned, paper maps for those who are choosing to leave technology behind to just get lost making memories. Just remember, you will probably want to take photos.

Wait, wait, there's more! While at the farm, guests can get up close with farm animals, play family-friendly games, jump into the corn box, crawl through the hay tunnel, and have unique picture-

taking opportunities. You will surely work up an appetite with all of this activity so the adventure farm will host a variety of local food trucks throughout the season. After all the playing is done, guests will want to stop by the farm shop on the way out to purchase homegrown Back Forty beef, pumpkins and gourds from local farms Liberty Gardens and Waldner Farms, Stensland Ice-cream, and so much more from other local vendors!

The Corn Maze and Adventure farm is open most weekends in September and October. For more information on hours, pricing and special events, or if you'd like to learn more about their homegrown beef products, follow Back Forty Beef on Facebook or check out their website: <https://www.backfortybeef.com> You can head on out to the farm most Saturday and Sundays during September and October, located at: 42242 134th St, Pierpont, S.D. The Brandlee family is excited to see everyone and we are excited to see what they come up with next!





Touchstone Energy Celebrates 25 Years with Commercial Debut

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives is encouraging member electric cooperatives and their member-owners to pop some popcorn, settle in, and join them in celebrating the organization's 25th anniversary on Nov. 29, when they'll debut their

newest line of 2024 commercials.

The historic milestone will commemorate a quarter-century of Touchstone Energy's drive to establish a universal brand – seen on t-shirts, logos, and even soaring hot air balloons – for co-ops nationwide. Select commercials from the lineup, which will feature on the Touchstone Energy website, will highlight the local South

Dakota prairie landscape and local co-op employees with Sioux Valley Energy.

Touchstone Energy Board of Directors President and Sioux Valley CEO Tim McCarthy said he is glad to see South Dakota being represented on a national scope. "We are excited to be celebrating this historic milestone," said McCarthy. "Touchstone Energy continues to be an invaluable resource for co-ops in South Dakota and throughout our nationwide network."

Touchstone Energy's journey began 25 years ago when a group of movers and shakers recognized the need for an outward-facing organization that would connect the image of

co-ops across the nation. Although individually small, cooperatives from all around the nation believed a unified brand would broaden and strengthen their presence. Together, these co-ops owned and operated more distribution lines than any other sector in the electric utility industry and served more than half of the American landmass. On Nov. 26, 1998, 17 founding co-ops established Touchstone Energy, powering through a time of regulatory uncertainty.

“In the late ‘90s, there were some revolutionary things happening in the energy industry,” said Jana Adams, executive director of Touchstone Energy. “The cooperatives really wisely said: as individual entities we are small, but if we come together and create a recognizable brand, we will have a better opportunity to compete in this evolving energy landscape.”

From the start, Touchstone Energy was set on making an impression. By purchasing six iconic Touchstone Energy branded hot air balloons and sponsoring notable events such as the famous NASCAR Talladega 300 race, Touchstone Energy quickly transformed into a nationally recognizable brand.

To date, Touchstone Energy’s membership has grown to nearly 700 co-ops, which now reaches more than 30 million member-owners across 46 states. Along with this remarkable growth, Touchstone Energy has enhanced its services, including advertising, social media management, and web development, among others. Over time, Touchstone Energy’s wide range of services, said Adams, have become a crucial communication resource for their membership.

“Our first national ad was in the early 2000s, and to this day, we run advertisements in every single zip code served by a Touchstone Energy cooperative,” said Adams. “We are

constantly innovating and giving our cooperative members the opportunity to highlight the great work they do and the achievements they have.”

Looking back on the last quarter century, Adams said Touchstone Energy is thrilled to connect to its original roots and celebrate its longstanding service to co-ops across the country.



Touchstone Energy celebrates 25 years while producing new commercials in South Dakota.



“We encourage everybody to join us on Nov. 29 for our 2024 national ad premier and to celebrate the 25 years behind us, but more importantly the many years ahead of us where we continue to work together,” she said.





Mike Adolph, left, checks in with an employee during a break from construction on Aug. 22 in Watertown. Photo by Shannon Marvel

REED Fund Helps Finance Summit-Based Manufacturer

Shannon Marvel

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On the northwestern edge of Watertown, just east of Jefferson Elementary School, a sea of hard hats, brightly colored safety materials, utility trucks, commercial vans, and lumber piles spans across several blocks.

It's hard to differentiate between the houses under construction as most contractors rarely deviate from the methods they've relied on for years. Especially when framing a house.

But one construction crew's telehandler towers above the rest. The steel trusses and wall panels hoisted into the air are also not typically seen in residential construction, but using steel in lieu of timber is just as effective.

And thanks to financial assistance through the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund, Skyview Construction is able to provide steel

trusses and wall panels to the local home building industry.

Contractors usually use the platform framing method, which allows the use of dimensional lumber pieces instead of the larger, natural wood pieces which are harder to come by in the supply chain.

Lumber used in construction has become more difficult to secure and more expensive.

That's why the owners of Skyview Construction, LLC in Summit decided to manufacture trusses and beams out of steel themselves then use those

products to build homes.

But that required purchasing two very expensive pieces of equipment.

After visiting with American Bank and Trust about ways to finance the new venture, Skyview Construction owners Mike, Jackie, and Gerry Adolph reached out to Dave Eide, the general manager of Codington Clark Electric Cooperative to see if their business qualified for REED funding.

Eide was happy to help.



Gerry Adolph, Mike Adolph, and Jackie Adolph stand in the doorway of a townhome built with steel members that the family manufactured themselves.

Photo by Shannon Marvel

The REED Fund worked with American Bank and Trust to help secure financing that offered Skyview Construction a loan with more amicable terms.

Codington-Clark Electric provides financing through REED to help business start-ups and expansions, create and retain jobs and assist communities with facilities, services and infrastructure needs.

The Adolfs were able to secure the funds through the REED Fund to purchase the machine that will form the steel members for the rafters, floor trusses, and walls, and the rotating telehandler that will be used to place the components on-site.

That was in January. Within the last month, the Adolfs and their crew of around nine men completed construction of four twin home units using the wall panels and trusses they manufactured right on their own property in Grant County.

Jackie and Mike reflected on their journey into the steel manufacturing and construction industries.

The couple wanted to start a construction business after going through the extensive process of building a group of townhomes and their own home a few years ago.

Mike's mother, Gerry Adolph, is also an owner of Skyview Construction.

The family has been in the seeding and erosion control and real estate investing business together for the last 18 years, and agreed to expand into the housing industry.

They had planned to build with wood, but the soonest the equipment and necessary supplies could be delivered was at least three years down the road. It also would've cost at least \$3 million.

"So how it went down, we were going down the wood side pretty hard. Like we were going to put

in a big fancy factory with robots and everything," Mike said. "And then the equipment cost so much and it would've put us three years out. I didn't want to wait three years. Then someone asked if we had looked into steel. So we looked into the steel and it made sense."

The program the Adolfs use to manufacture the steel wall panels and trusses maps out the design and provides a detailed view of the project.

"It labels each piece and even tells you how many nails or screws to put in each connection and where to put them for that design," Jackie explained.

Their existing employees would also work as laborers for the construction outside of the seeding and soil erosion season.

The software allows the workers to assemble components without any guess work.

"While we have an experienced building supervisor, the guys that are installing it, they really don't have much construction experience. They've never done this. But it's laid out so well by the software," Mike said.

"The biggest thing with steel is they can do this with minimal experience."

The steel parts are manufactured at the Adolph's shop in Grant County.

Once the structure's design has been completed within the software, steel is ran through a machine and manufactured into the proper stud or truss material.

"Our goal right now is to do a whole house in a week or two— print it, assemble the components in the shop, and then send it out to the jobsite and have it up in a couple of days," Jackie said.

"We're hoping when we get to the single-family homes, it's going to be a little bit quicker," Mike added.

Eide noted how the insulation used with steel framework is at a higher rating and uses a Zip system, creating a more energy efficient temperature control system.

"This is just a really cool project and the owners provide the market with a product that no one else had before," Eide said.

To learn more about the REED Fund, go to www.reedfund.coop.



Jackie Adolph points to a label on one of the steel components, which was generated by the design software to ensure the pieces are properly assembled. Photo by Shannon Marvel



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.

SEPT 22-23
Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair
 9 a.m.
 Davison County Fairgrounds
 Activity Center
 Mitchell SD
 605-359-2049

SEPT 22-24
Coal Springs Threshing Bee
 Meadow, SD
 605-788-2229

SEPT 23
German Fest
 Webster, SD
 605-380-0588

SEPT 23
Springfield Dakota Senior Meals Fall Festival
 9 a.m.
 Springfield Community Building
 Springfield, SD

SEPT 24
Annual Bazaar & Fall Fest
 4-7 p.m.
 St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
 Wagner, SD

SEPT 30
Day of Wellness
 10 a.m.
 Sturgis Armory
 Sturgis, SD

SEPT 30
Mission Quilt and Bake Sale
 Zoar Lutheran Church
 Revillo, SD

SEPT 29-30
Junkin' Market Days
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

OCT 6-7
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show
 Philip, SD
 605-441-1060

OCT 7
Spirit of Dakota Award
 Huron Event Center
 Huron, SD
 605-352-6073

OCT 12-19
"In Flanders Fields" Art Exhibition & Silent Auction
 Vermillion Public Library
 Vermillion, SD

OCT 14
Oktoberfest
Leo Lonney Polka Band
 6 p.m.
 Menno, SD
 605-660-1839

OCT 19-21
Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale
 Spearfish Senior Center
 Spearfish, SD
 605-642-2827

OCT 21
Fall Festival
 11 a.m.
 18473 U.S. HWY 83
 Onida, SD
 605-788-2229

OCT. 28-29
Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association
 Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-731-9155

NOV 11
Sisseton Area Merchants & Crafters Holiday Extravaganza
 Sisseton, SD
 605-698-7425

NOV 12
Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

NOV 24
Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Dakota Avenue
 Huron, SD
 605-788-2229

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