


## Cooperative Connections



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park is a main attraction in Sioux Falls that draws visitors from far and near each year.

**COVID-19 Can't  
Stop Christmas  
from Coming**

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**Upgrade  
Electronics to  
Save Money**

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## Grateful for the Opportunity to Serve



**Tim McIntyre**

General Manager  
tmcintyre@lakeregion.coop

**Recent events  
have made me  
pause and think  
about the role  
we play in our  
community.**

I would like to wrap up this year by thanking you, the member-owners of Lake Region Electric, for your continued support of your cooperative. As an electric cooperative, our top priority is always to provide reliable, affordable electricity to you, the members we serve. Because we are a co-op, part of our mission is to enrich the lives of our members and serve the long-term interests of our local community - and this mission has never been more critical than in recent months.

Recent events have made me pause and think about the role we play in our community. While our purpose is to provide safe and reliable electricity to our members, we have a greater mission - to be a catalyst for good. You often see Lake Region employees and board members volunteering and helping out at different events in the area. We have firefighters, councilmen, coaches, and others who volunteer their valuable time to serve on various boards and committees and community events.

We have had to make adjustments recently to how we give back, but we continue to do our best to support our membership and the communities we live in. Many employees of Lake Region are more than valuable employees, they are also member-owners of Lake Region Electric. This adds incredible value to our workforce and our cooperative as a whole. I can honestly say that there is great honor in working with such a valuable employee base and cooperative membership. As we prepare for next year, I look forward to the opportunity to serve you and the greater community.

I wish for you all to have a very merry Christmas season with the opportunity to serve one another as we serve you.

Merry Christmas and God Bless,

Timothy McIntyre



### **Welcome New LREA Members**

John Andersen  
Daniel Stelzer  
Michael Zirbel  
Jennifer Wegleitner  
Brian & Emily Andersen  
Judith Olah  
Shirley Naessig  
Mike & Jessica Hauck  
KC Jones  
Jay Habert  
Connard Ewalt

## Merry Christmas



**"Christmas is a time to enjoy family and to celebrate the birth of  
our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ."**  
*Timothy McIntyre & Family*

# Lake Region Electric Ripples

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS 018-904)

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 Manager of Member Services  
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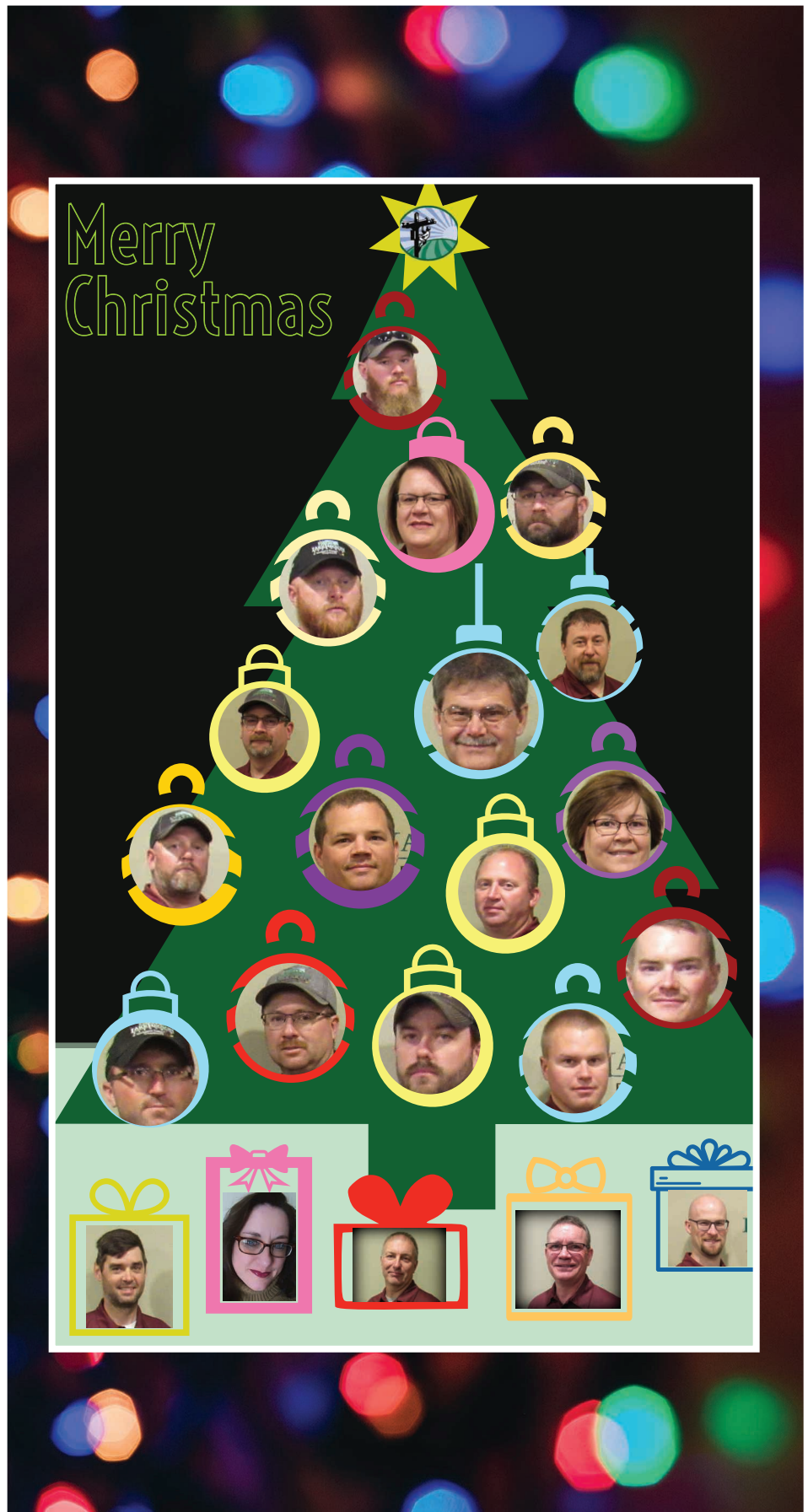
**Lake Region Electric Association Inc.**

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# Decorate Your Home Safely

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by Christmas and holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.



## Correction: Pheasant bag limit unchanged

A story on pheasant hunting in last month's issue incorrectly stated that the daily bag limit was increased from three to four birds. This proposed change was considered by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; however, the proposal was not approved.

## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



### "Do Not Shoot the Power Line!"

**Luke Welsh, 10 years old**

Luke is a resident of Oral, S.D., and is the son of Ryan and Rachel Welsh. He warns, "Do not shoot the power line. It might start a fire! Be safe."

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.



# Delicious Holiday Desserts

## Dorothy's Baked Carmel Corn

- |                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 c. butter            | 1/2 tsp. soda              |
| 2 c. brown sugar       | 1 tsp. vanilla             |
| 1/2 c. dark Karo syrup | 6 qts. (24 c.) popped corn |
| 1 tsp. salt            |                            |

Add butter, brown sugar, syrup and salt to a large pan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil 4 1/2 minutes without stirring. Remove from heat. Add soda and vanilla. Stir 1-2 minutes. Pour over popcorn and stir well. Divide into 2 cake pans. Bake 250 degrees 1 hour, mix every 15 minutes. Break up and store in tight container.

**Gloria Puetz, Salem, SD**

## Chocolate Kissed Macaroons

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 14 oz. pkg. sweetened angel flaked coconut | 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk |
| 3/4 c. flour                                 | 2 tsp. vanilla extract                |
| 1/4 c. salt                                  | 24 chocolate kisses, unwrapped        |
| 1 egg white, beaten til frothy               |                                       |

Line two baking sheets with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. In a medium bowl, mix together coconut, flour and salt. Add sweetened milk, beaten egg white and vanilla. Mix well. Mixture will be stiff. Use a cookie scoop, ice cream scoop or tbsp. to divide the dough dropping two inches apart on the baking sheet. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and gently press a candy kiss into the center. Remove to wire rack to cool.

**Colleen Wolfe, Hot Springs, SD.**

## Scoops Ah Caramel

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1/2 c. butter        | 1 can condensed milk |
| 1-1/2 c. brown sugar | 1 tsp. vanilla       |
| 3/4 c. white syrup   | 3 9-oz. bags Scoops  |

Bring the butter, brown and white sugar and condensed milk to a boil. Boil for 1 minute. Add vanilla. Stir. Put chips on a platter. Pour caramel over Scoops. May drizzle with hot fudge. Keep well refrigerated.

**Ginny Jensen, Volga, SD**

## Reindeer Pecan Brownies

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Nonstick cooking spray                      | 1/2 cup cocoa powder                  |
| 1 stick (1/2 c.) unsalted butter, melted    | 1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional) |
| 1 tablespoon pecan or canola oil            | 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt              |
| 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons, granulated sugar | 20 raw pecan halves, cut in half      |
| 2 large eggs                                | 40 candy eyeballs                     |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract                  | 20 red chocolate candies              |
| 1/2 cup all-purpose flour                   | 1/4 cup chocolate chips               |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In large bowl, whisk melted butter, oil and sugar until well combined. Add eggs and vanilla extract; beat until mixture is thick and pale in color, about 1 minute. Sift in flour and cocoa powder. Add espresso powder, if desired, and salt. Using rubber spatula, fold dry ingredients into butter mixture until just combined. Batter should be thick. Using 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, transfer batter to prepared mini muffin tin. Bake 13-15 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out mostly clean, with some lingering crumbs. Add chocolate chips to heat-proof bowl; microwave until smooth and melted. Pour melted chocolate into sandwich bag and cut off small portion of one corner to use as tip. Use melted chocolate to "glue" on pecan antlers, candy eyeballs and red candy noses to brownies. Allow chocolate to set before transferring brownies to airtight container. Note: Brownies will stay fresh for up to three days.

**AmericanPecan.com**

Please send your favorite holiday 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.




# Merry Christmas from Your Board of Directors



*Wishing you and your family all the beauty of the season!*

*~Amy Kuecker*

*The holiday season is a time for focusing on the true meaning of Christmas and being with family. It doesn't matter what we do; what matters is that I'm with the ones I love. It's a special time of joy, adventures, having fun, laughing, and experiencing something special together. I always look forward to creating happy memories to cherish for years to come.*

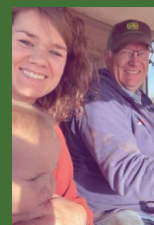


**THOMAS STEINER**

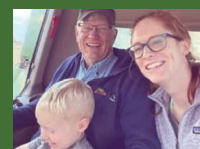
*The most important things about Christmas are Faith, Family and 24-hour marathons of "A Christmas Story" on TV!*



MERRY CHRISTMAS!  
I FIND THE MOST JOY IN MY FAMILY AND SPENDING TIME WITH ALL OF THEM.  
MY WISH WOULD BE FOR YOU ALL TO FIND JOY IN THE SIMPLE THINGS, LIKE TRYING TO FIND ROOM FOR EVERYONE IN THE TRACTOR CAB!



*Rodney Tobin*



**Roger Kulesa**



*Christmas is for making and sharing memories!*





*Merry Christmas from our family to yours!*  
*Kermit Pearson*

*Warm wishes  
this holiday  
season...*

**Mark Wismer**



*May you all experience the true  
joy of Christmas.*

*-Andrea Kilker*

I love the true joy that Christmas brings! Our family loves to gather and open our gifts...one by one! And we always rotate from youngest to oldest.

I cherish the time spent together and love the moments of pure bliss, like our granddaughter shown here. She loves that pedal car!







Storybook Island captures the imagination of the young and old alike both during the summer and the holiday season.

## CHRISTMAS IN SD

### COVID-19 Hasn't Stopped Christmas from Coming

**Billy Gibson**

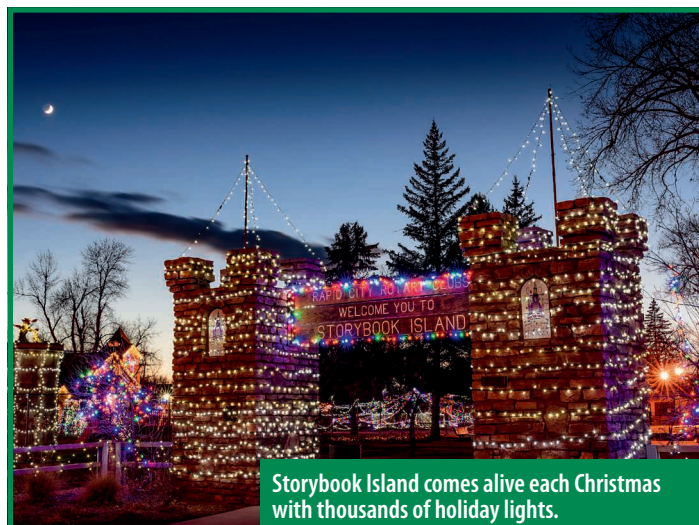
[billy.gibson@sarea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sarea.coop)

The coronavirus pandemic has certainly had a substantial “bah humbug” effect since it began sweeping across the globe last spring. And as the virus continues to pose a health risk going into the new year ahead, many familiar holiday festivals and events across the state have been canceled, curtailed or postponed until 2021.

But there are still a number of events across the state that are planning to proceed as scheduled, many of which have become annual holiday traditions for individuals and families looking to get into the Christmas spirit.

That’s the case for those who look forward every year to taking in the sights and sounds of the Winter Wonderland event held at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. For residents of the Sioux Falls area and thousands of out-of-town visitors each holiday season, the brilliant light display is a spectacle that not only sparks the Christmas spirit but also brings back memories of childhood wonder from previous seasons.

The Winter Wonderland exhibit includes 270 decorated trees and light poles and more than 25 miles of string lights throughout the complex that runs along the Big Sioux River. A five-story observation tower also gives park visitors a 360-degree bird’s eye view of the many eye-popping displays.



Storybook Island comes alive each Christmas with thousands of holiday lights.

The 29th Annual Parade of Lights will officially kick off the downtown Sioux Falls holiday season with festive music and a dazzling float parade along historic Phillips Avenue from 13th Street to 5th Street. But due to the pandemic this year, officials have announced there will be a twist: instead of the floats moving past the spectators, the spectators will walk along in front of the floats. The floats will remain stationary for the duration of the event and the public is invited to casually walk along the route and view the parked floats up close.

The “stationary parade” begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 27.





Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer shares the holiday spirit by decorating a bucket truck each year.

Everyone is encouraged to stay for an after-party and awards ceremony where there will be live musical entertainment and other activities. Admission is free.

Storybook Island, a popular attraction in the Rapid City area during the summer months, will hold its annual Christmas Nights of Lights display this season. The park boasts 16 miles of colorful lights, including dioramas, popular children's fictional characters and a variety of additional holiday-related themes. The event takes place Dec. 4-6, 11-23 and 26-31, from 5:30 to 8:30 each night at 1301 Sheridan Lake Rd. Admission is \$3 per person.

In Custer, the Annual Parade of Lights will take place downtown on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The annual event signals the kick-off of the holiday season in the Southern Hills area. After the parade, Santa and Mrs. Claus will make an appearance at Way Park for the Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. The parade begins at 8th and Mt. Rushmore Road and will end at Way Park on 4th and Mt. Rushmore Road.

The residents of Spearfish will celebrate the start of the season with the annual Holidazzle Light Parade and Christmas Stroll sponsored by the Downtown Business Association. The event will take place along Main Street on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning in the morning and lasting all day.

The Christmas Stroll will take place immediately after the parade and will feature special sales and discounts at downtown merchants and business establishments. To add to the holiday mood, carolers will perform from 2 to 4 p.m., and there will be a



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park offers a unique light display along the Big Sioux River.

Community Chili Feed at Common Grounds at 5 p.m.

In Pierre, revelers will ring in the holiday season with the 20th Annual Parade of Lights on Monday, Nov. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place entries and there will also be a Mayor's Choice Award as well as a Griswold Award for gaudiest float.

Also in Pierre, the highly anticipated "Christmas at the Capitol" event will take place once again this year from Nov. 25 through Dec. 26. The rotunda and the hallways of the Capitol Building will be filled with the sounds of carolers and musicians as well as the scent of mountain pine and the soft glow emanating from nearly 100 lighted Christmas trees. The trees are decorated by cities, businesses, non-profit groups and other civic organizations.

Popular displays inside the Capitol include a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments and a wooden nativity scene believed to be nearly 125 years old located on the second floor.

Before scheduling a visit, check for the most recent updates at [www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol](https://www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol).



The Pumpkin Carriage is a popular attraction at Storybook Island.



# Wrapping Up and Putting a Bow on 2020



**Laura London**

Administrative Assistant  
llondon@lakeregion.coop

I have heard and seen a lot of negativity about 2020 in the past few months. Quite honestly, I have made a few comments myself about where 2020 can go. It has been quite a trip around the sun! While it hasn't been all bad, I think we can all agree it's time to wrap this year up.

## Strategic Planning

The Board of Directors and management of Lake Region Electric Association met near the end of January to think strategically about the cooperative's future. The goals of the session were to achieve consensus on the strategic goals Lake Region will focus on during the next three years and develop an implementation plan for the strategic goals. Some of the goals discussed were to continue to enhance and emphasize the culture of safety, to develop a plan to replace the aging assets of the cooperative, enhance communication and member engagement, create an employee workforce plan to address succession planning, ongoing employee training and education. Another area of focus is to develop a technology plan with emphasis on cybersecurity while also addressing the cooperative's need to implement next-generation metering technology and to capture and best utilize data for the benefit of the cooperative and our members. All of these plans and goals must, of course, coincide with plans to maintain the financial strength of the cooperative as a whole. Since the Strategic Planning Session, management has been evaluating and developing plans and communicating

their progress to the Board of Directors.

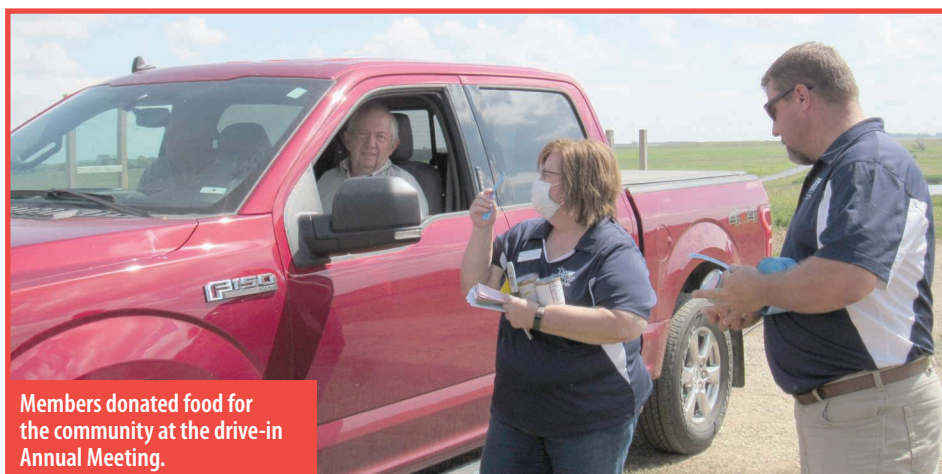
## COVID-19

While COVID-19 got a bit of a late start in the Lake Region service territory, it certainly did arrive and cause problems for some. We have had employees and their families who have become ill or had to be quarantined for one reason or another. Adjustments were made so that the work can get done while we continue to provide the best service to our members, keeping everyone as safe as possible. Our doors were temporarily locked while we made plans to promote social distancing as healthy habits. Members can now enter the foyer, one at a time, to get help as needed.

We have had some members financially

## Scholarships

The 2020 graduating students faced challenges this past spring, mostly due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19. Ceremonies, celebrations, and activities were postponed or canceled. Preparing for college came with a new set of challenges. Two area students were awarded scholarships through LREA to help relieve some of the stress that comes with rising costs of secondary education. Webster Area student Brian Mork was awarded the Basin Electric/Lake Region Scholarship, funded by LREA's energy partner, Basin Electric. Brian is the son of LREA members Rita and Jerry Mork of rural Pierpont. He is attending the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Brooke Vogl was the recipient of



Members donated food for the community at the drive-in Annual Meeting.

affected by the pandemic and we have worked to connect them to different resources in order to get their bills paid.

Staying connected while social distancing became the underlying theme of our annual meeting this year. The meeting was postponed while decisions and planning could be done to host a meeting. It was decided that a drive-in style meeting would be held. Members were invited to Fort Sisseton State Park where attendees received snacks and cold water and vouchers to participating local restaurants. The weather was close to perfect for the approximately 150 members & guests who attended the meeting while listening to the meeting by tuning in on their car radio.

the Duane Snaza Memorial Scholarship. Brooke is the daughter of LREA member-owners Dan and Rose Vogl. She is attending North Dakota State University.

## Volunteering & Giving

This year, with all of its craziness, didn't slow down the generosity of Lake Region Electric Association. Volunteer and giving opportunities presented themselves a bit differently. As a reflection of our caring communities many stepped up to help our neighbors in need. Employees of LREA donated to food drives, school supplies and spent time volunteering at events such as the Food Box Program. Members who attended the drive-in Annual Meeting dropped off food donations that were then taken to the food pantry. Members and



# Wrapping Up 2020, continued

employees of Lake Region set aside their own needs to help fulfill planting and harvesting needs of a few members who had fallen ill.

Lake Region Electric Association regularly supports local organizations when called upon for donations. This year LREA donated approximately \$17,000 to area organizations. CoBank's Sharing Success program provided matching funds for those donations, up to \$10,000, to local non-profit organizations, which nearly doubled Lake Region's charitable contributions to our communities!

## Government Legislation & Elections

Lake Region had two Director seats up for election. Both incumbents ran unopposed. District 2 Director Mark Wismer began serving on the board in 2017. District 4 Representative Thomas Steiner has served on the board since 2003.

Congress passed the 2020 spending package that contained the RURAL Act, the SECURE Act, and other key provisions for electric cooperatives and their consumer-members. The bill was then signed by President Trump. Lake Region Electric Association worked with other electric cooperatives across the country to pass the Rural Act. The bill's passage fixed a problem created in 2017 when Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which redefined government grants to co-ops as income rather than capital. The Spending Package also included the SECURE Act, which will lower the premiums that electric co-ops in the RS Plan pay for low risk defined benefit pension plans. This provision alone will save electric co-ops over \$30 million annually.

South Dakota House Bill 1262 was introduced to protect cooperative territory boundaries. This bill was a compromise intended to force municipal utilities to give notice up to one year prior to taking service territory from another utility, giving co-ops a chance to negotiate for a better deal, and to give co-ops the option to challenge the taking in court. Co-ops see the legislation as necessary to level the playing field and protect their most vulnerable and remote customers from



## Drive-thru Picnic 2020

paying excessively high electricity rate.

## Work and Even A Little Fun

Construction and conversion of overhead to underground lines continued throughout 2020. Planned construction near Andover and north of Webster were completed. The underground lines on the west side of Pickerel lake and south of Clear Lake were installed and energized. Contracted crews are in the process of



**Brian Mork and Brooke Vogl received scholarships in 2020.**

retiring the old overhead lines in these areas. Construction will continue into the next year in the area northwest of Britton. Along with construction and repairs, the operations department stayed busy with increasing calls for new services and growth around the lakes.


Member Services stayed busy answering calls to members needing various wiring installation and repairs. Generators have been a little tough to come by but those are getting installed as soon as they arrive. There is never a shortage of electrical work in our area!

The IT department spent a good portion of the year working on staking for our mapping. Bringing this in-house is a tremendous feat for Lake Region! Along with their regularly increasing workload, the IT department made some changes to our phone and computer systems to allow for more work-from-home opportunities for management and office services. This included changing our phone systems and incorporating laptops and virtual data connections (VPNs). More people working from home and increasing cyber crimes happening means there are continuous upgrades to our security systems.

Office Services learned to do a few things differently so that we could focus on providing excellent service to our members in challenging times. Keeping up with ever changing guidelines on top of learning to alternate working from home and the office became routine. We are still working on referring members impacted by COVID-19 to assistance programs.

It wasn't all work and no fun! In September, Lake Region Electric, along with Border States Electric, hosted a company drive-through picnic. Employees put in orders for their families then drove through the parking lot to pick up their meals so that they could have a night off from cooking and just enjoy a little family picnic.

Now it is time to wrap up 2020 and stick a bow on it. Have a Merry Christmas!



There are several popular electronics on the market that can help you use energy more efficiently.

# Cut Energy Consumption

## Upgrade Electronics for Energy Savings

Are you looking for easy ways to save more money on your monthly energy bills as the year comes to a close?

Beyond some of the more traditional energy efficiency measures, such as sealing air leaks or adding additional insulation, there are several popular electronics that can help you use energy more efficiently.

These devices are relatively easy to incorporate into your home, making them a simple way to help manage your energy use.

Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy at home. With smart thermostats, there's no longer a need to constantly adjust the temperature. They can be programmed to follow a pattern of heating and cooling throughout the day and year to maximize your comfort and energy use at the same time.

Some advanced smart thermostats out on the market today can even learn your habits and adjust the temperature in your home accordingly. Another great benefit is the ability to control a smart thermostat remotely from an app on your phone, allowing you to set the temperature to your liking before you even arrive home.

Lastly, some smart thermostats can be integrated with a more complete smart home hub, like Amazon Alexa or Google Home,

which are both hot sellers in the market. Smart thermostats can be pretty pricey upfront, but if it's time to upgrade your home's thermostat, you'll soon discover that smart options offer more convenience and savings that make them worth the initial investment.

If you're looking for ways to save energy while you and your family are on a budget, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs can be inserted into any standard electrical outlet and can help you manage the energy of the devices that are plugged in. With con-



Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy. Photo provided by Ecobee.



**If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal.**

trol of the smart plug, you can stop power-hungry devices from being on longer than necessary.

Some smart plug models have a scheduling option, allowing you to turn on lights or turn off the TV at certain times of the day, such as when you leave in the morning and when you anticipate returning home. Others offer a dimming function, allowing you to change the brightness of lights that are plugged into the smart plug. These features can be controlled through an app on your phone, and some models also have voice-controlled options when connected to a smart home hub.

Another useful gadget is the home energy monitor, which helps you monitor home energy use and set energy budgets. If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal. They are connected to your electric meter and provide a big picture on your home's energy use.

Additionally, some home energy monitors can show which appliances are using the most energy, giving you the knowledge on which devices to cut down on. There are also a few additional features among home energy monitors that provide several different benefits. Some models can show you real-time electricity use and costs, while some can help create a personalized plan for energy efficiency. Most home energy monitors can be connected through a smart phone app, which can send notifications, warn about abnormal energy use and provide tips for further energy savings.

These simple devices can help you save a little more energy each month. Considering what your needs are will help you choose a device with the appropriate features. As with any new product, do some homework first to determine which device suits your home best.

## Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Safety

During the holidays, many of us turn our attention to gift giving, and while the shiny, trendy and pricey may make a big splash when the unwrapping's done, practical gifts can leave lasting impressions. What's more, they can really make a difference by enhancing safety and improving security.

Here are a few practical gift ideas that can make a real difference in helping to reduce safety risks year-round.

**Smoke Detectors:** Most of us have at least one in our homes, but experts say that's not enough. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a working smoke detector be installed in every bedroom, on every level of a home, and in hallways outside of sleeping areas. And, if smoke detectors are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced.

**Carbon Monoxide Alarms:** Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless gas

created by incomplete consumption of fuels like gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane, oil, coal or methane. The gas is highly toxic, so having CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and on every level of a home improves safety. Local fire departments respond to about 80,000 non-fire CO incidents each year. Fuel-burning heating equipment and cooking appliances should be professionally inspected once a year to reduce the risks of malfunction and detect structural problems early.

**Extension Cords:** They are not all created equal; subject to wear; have specific use guidelines; and are never recommended for permanent use. Brittle and cracked plastic can indicate heat damage, and exposed wires or frayed connections increase risk of shock, shorts or fires. An extension cord that's warm or hot to the touch is a good indication it's not designed to safely do the job. Consider giving an assortment of extension cords designed for indoor or outdoor use. Before you buy, look for the label of a nationally recognized testing lab like Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA-International (CSA) or Intertek (ETL).

**Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters:** Arcing and sparking are indications that a home's electrical wiring needs service. Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) can help address fire hazards before they occur. Properly installed by a licensed electrician, AFCIs can often replace circuit breakers in the electrical panel box. This should be completed by a qualified electrician because the installation involves working inside the panel box, which carries current even when main circuit breakers are turned off.





## CO-OP SPIRIT OF GIVING



Black Hills Electric employees assist in clean-up efforts after the flood of 2019 in Custer. From left to right are Carlos Rodriguez, Danny Dooley, Scott Schramm, Beau Bradeen, Mark Svoboda and Rory Halverson.

## CO-OP SPIRIT OF GIVING

### The Cooperative Spirit of Giving is Alive Year-Around

**Billy Gibson**

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

For member-owned electric cooperatives, the spirit of giving associated with the Christmas holiday season is something that continues long after the presents have been opened and the egg nog container has been emptied.

Electric cooperatives are committed to serving their communities, a commitment - Concern for Community - that is part of the 7 Cooperative Principles that guide all member-owned cooperative organizations.

Across the state and across the country, for example, electric cooperatives participate in a program called Operation Round Up where members are encouraged to “round up” their bills to the next whole dollar amount. The funds are then used to support civic organizations, local charities and in some cases individuals or individual families who are in need.

There are many other examples. Cooperatives support education through scholarship programs and safety demonstrations, and also engage in youth development programs such as the annual Washington Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion. Employees regularly volunteer their time to participate in local fun runs, community clean-up days, and other projects organized to enhance the quality of life for all.

This commitment to serve is something that has been a hallmark

since the beginning of the rural electrification movement more than 80 years ago and continues unabated today.

Ed Anderson, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association based in Pierre, said the spirit of giving is an integral part of the fabric that unites all electric cooperatives, and it extends beyond the delivery of electric power.

“Electric cooperatives were created for one purpose only, and that’s to do everything we can to improve the quality of life for the people we serve, as well as everyone else in the community,” Anderson said. “It begins with the thing that everybody needs - electricity - but it also includes a solid commitment to be active, to be engaged and to be involved in those things that make our homes better places to live, work and raise our families.”

Anderson also noted that the commitment to serve also includes not just staff but also cooperative leaders such as upper and middle management and board members.

“Board directors are elected by the members to establish policies that set the future course of the cooperative,” Anderson said. “By definition, they are also members of the cooperative themselves and have a keen interest in supporting the community while also making the decisions that will lead to more reliable power and affordable rates.”



## Four Ways Santa Saves Energy in His Workshop

The holiday season is finally upon us, and Santa and his elves have been especially busy as they gear up for their biggest night of the year.

It's no secret that Santa is known for running an efficient workshop - how else could he make all those toys in time for Christmas Eve? Rumor has it that one way Santa ensures an efficient workspace is through energy-saving measures.

Here are four ways Santa saves energy in his workshop.

**1.** Santa leaves his decorations up year-round, so by using LED holiday light strands, he's able to save on his monthly energy bills. LED holiday strands can last up to 40 seasons, which make them a great option for any festive home.

**2.** Santa requires several power tools to make a year's worth of new toys. That's why he insists on using cordless power tools with the ENERGY STAR® rating. According to energystar.gov, if all power tools in the U.S. used ENERGY STAR®-rated battery chargers, 2 billion kWh hours of electricity could be saved - that's equivalent to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 1.7 million tons!

**3.** Mrs. Claus loves the comfort of a fire, and Santa knows one of the best tricks to ensure fireplace efficiency. While a fireplace can keep a small area of your home cozy and warm, it can also pull heated air from the room through the chimney. That's why Santa always closes the flue when a fire isn't burning.

**4.** Santa also saves energy by using power strips. Power strips are ideal for workshops, craft nooks, game rooms and other spaces in your home. With one simple switch, you can conveniently control several devices and electronics that are plugged into the power strip.



Last year, Sioux Valley Energy employees volunteered to wrap Christmas presents at the Sioux Empire Mall to raise money for the Children's Home Society. Pictured from left to right: Sarina Hanson, Kim Hansen, Kara LeBrun, Lori George and Chinelle Christensen.



Santa paid a visit to Pipestone, MN, last year. The event was made possible through Sioux Valley Energy's Operation Round Up program, which provided a new suit and related items for Mr. Claus.

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for "Co-op Connections Plus" and you'll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."





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

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**November 20-21**

Holiday Arts Christmas Show, 112 E. 5th St. Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

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**November 21-22**

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S. Washington St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

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**November 24-December 26**

Christmas at the Capitol, Free Admission, Pierre, SD

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**November 27**

Hill City Olde Tyme Christmas Parade and Celebration Kick-Off, 5 p.m., Downtown Hill City, SD, 605-574-2368

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**November 27**

Black Friday Trap Shoot, Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League, 10:30 a.m., Lunch Available, 5000 North Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

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**November 27**

Annual Sioux Falls Parade of Lights, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Phillips Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 605-338-4009

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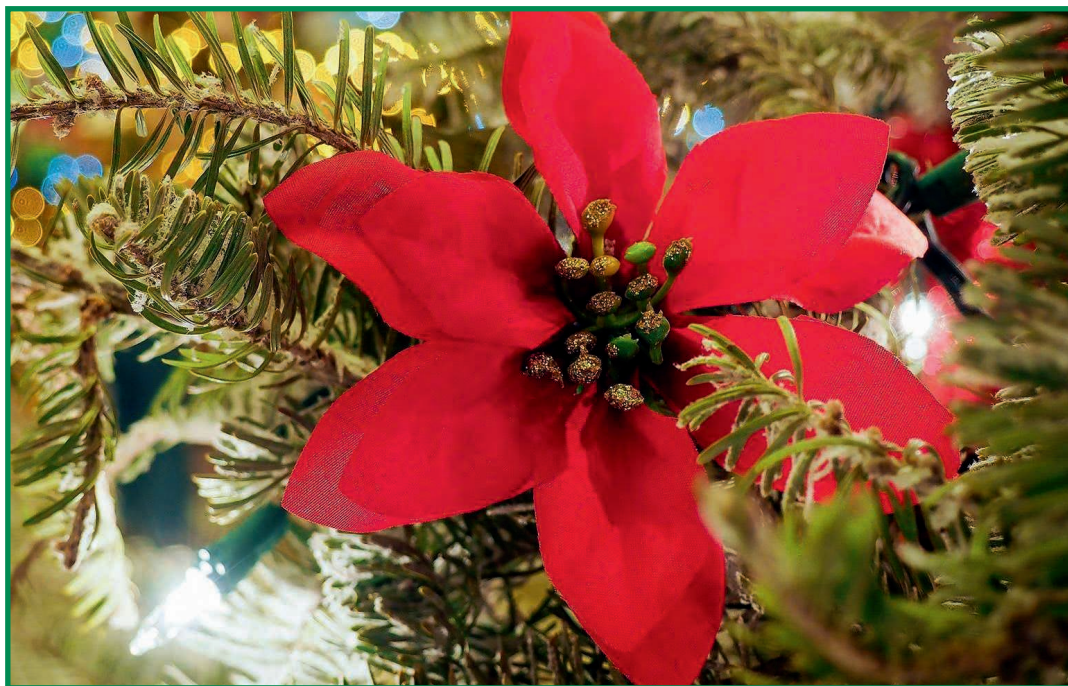
**November 28**

Holiday Celebration and Winter Market, 2 to 6 p.m., Free Admission, Main Street Square in Downtown Rapid City, SD

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**November 27-December 27**

Trees and Trains at the South Dakota Railroad Museum, Weekends, Contact the Museum for Days and Times. Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



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**December 4**

Christmas in the Hills Parade of Lights, 6 p.m., Downtown Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

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**December 4-5**

Creekside Crafters 13th Annual Bazaar, Snappers Club Building in City Campground, Friday 1 to 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Spearfish, SD

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**December 4-6 and 10-12**

Same Time, Next Year, Dramatic Comedy by Bernard Slade, Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, [www.pierreplayers.com](http://www.pierreplayers.com)

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**December 5**

Manager Medlodies Concert Christmas in the Hills, 7 to 9 p.m., Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

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**December 5**

Rapid City Garden Club's 59th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lions' and Bridger Buildings, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

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**December 5**

Custer Christmas Parade, 5:30 p.m., Downtown Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

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**December 5**

Festival of Trees, Newell City Hall, Newell, SD, Admission: Two Cans of Non-Perishable Food Items Per Person, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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**December 6, 20**

VFW Bingo, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD, 605-279-2663

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**December 12**

Christmas for Kids, Ages 0-10 visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, Custer High School, Preregistration is Required, Register via email [custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com](mailto:custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com), Custer, SD

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**December 12**

Frontier Christmas, 11907 434th Ave., Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

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.