

Cooperative Connections



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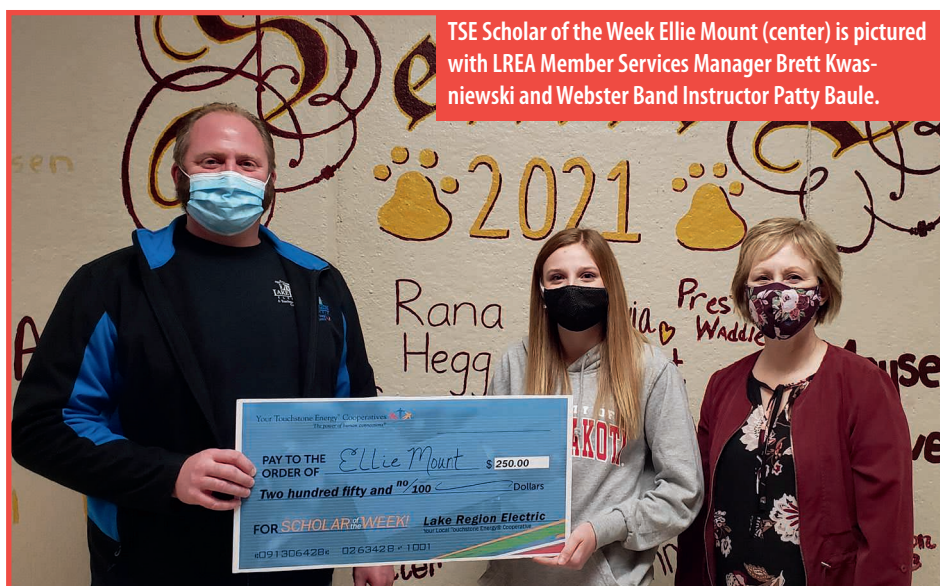
Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.

Webster Student Named Scholar of the Week

The Scholar of the Week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now and your local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that honors the region's accomplished high school students. Each weekly winner receives a cash award from their local Touchstone Energy Cooperative and is featured on Dakota News Now. All winners are also eligible to receive one of the three scholarships that are given away at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet. Nominations for the weekly awards are submitted by area school principals and faculty, whose selections are based on excellence in the classroom and service in the community.

Webster Area High School student Ellie Mount was chosen as Scholar of the Week for Jan. 17, 2021, and was featured on Dakota News Now during the 6:00 p.m. broadcast on Monday, Jan. 18 and again on the Dakota News Now morning broadcast on Tuesday, Jan. 19. Ellie is the daughter of Randy and Stacy Mount of Webster.

Ellie was nominated by her band instructor, Patty Baule. Baule noted, "Ellie is such a mature person and



TSE Scholar of the Week Ellie Mount (center) is pictured with LREA Member Services Manager Brett Kwasniewski and Webster Band Instructor Patty Baule.

talented musician. She is always helpful and supportive and works well with other students. She is a leader in helping other students and helping her section in band to rehearse. She has been in the NE SD Honor Band for the last three years. She has served as an aid in the elementary school and I know she is active at the Methodist Church. She knows how to persevere through challenges with patience. For example, last year Ellie and two other mallet players in the band learned a mallet trio for a contest; learning

mallet pieces takes a lot of patience."

Ellie actively participates in volleyball, basketball, track, FCCLA, band, and Key Club. She is also very active in Swim Team and her church. Ellie has received awards in many activities and has been listed on the Honor Roll. Ellie plans to attend either USD or Southeast Tech for nursing and intends to be a nurse midwife.

Congratulations Ellie! We look forward to your future accomplishments.



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

Subscription information: As part of their membership, Lake Region Electric members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. (USPS 018-904) Periodicals Postage Paid at Webster, SD 57274 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Lake Region Ripples Cooperative Connections
PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274
Telephone 605-345-3379;
Toll Free 1-800-657-5869; Fax 605-345-4442
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Continuing to Learn and Succeed



Tim McIntyre

General Manager
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I have been around the cooperative world for a long time, almost 34 years, in fact. The past 16 of those years have been spent working for you, right here at Lake Region Electric. When you're young and fresh out of school, you fall into the trap of feeling like you know everything. Boy, was I wrong! I have learned so much and am continuously learning new things and new ways of doing old things. I like to share stories of how I couldn't wait to get out of the house and show my dad how much smarter I was than him. If I could go back in time, I might have taken it a little easier.

This past year has been quite the learning experience. I have never lived through a pandemic, let alone try to lead an organization through one. But 2020

brought that unexpected challenge and we made it through with great success. I would like to reflect on some of the things we learned, or at least got a refresher course on.

We learned that if we work smart and plan appropriately, we will remain strong. While other cooperatives may be struggling, Lake Region remains strong. The economic impact of a pandemic reaches us here in Northeast South Dakota in ways differently than other parts of the country. We are still working. We are grateful to have jobs that are deemed essential. It is evident we are all reliant on electricity at the flip of a switch and we need everyone at our electric cooperative to keep us going. Our farming, ranching, manufacturing industry and small local businesses are necessary no matter what is happening around the world. Despite our hard work, we still see some impact from the pandemic. Costs of materials have gone up and will continue to increase. This pushes our budget just a bit. Through careful planning and budgeting, those increases will have no impact on our rates this year. The members of Lake Region Electric have been responsible and diligent in paying their bills, even through tough times, and this is what really keeps us financially strong.

We have learned to conduct business a little differently but effectively. Business meetings have been changed to virtual meetings or teleconference whenever possible. Face to face, in-person meetings still have to take place on occasion. When this is necessary, we are promoting social distancing and taking other precautions. We had our doors locked for a couple of weeks while we implemented precautions to help keep our employees and members as safe and healthy as possible. We even learned a few new ways to serve our members out in the field and in their homes.

While I don't want to sound boastful and say we are better than other cooperatives, I will say that we are doing better than many. I am proud to be part of Lake Region Electric and am impressed by how our members support their cooperative and each other. Through the diligence of our employees, Board of Directors and mostly that of you, the member-owners of Lake Region Electric Association, we continue to remain in a good financial position. Our rates will remain stable this year. Let's continue to be diligent, continue to learn, and mostly, continue to be kind and supportive of each other. Be open to new ways of doing things and respectful of the old ways. I am confident that we will continue to succeed as a cooperative.

Thank you & God bless,

Timothy McIntyre

Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"

Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, 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.

Recipes to Power Up Your Day

Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD

Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD

Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

culinary.net

Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite seafood 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Which Appliance Should I Upgrade?



Pat Keegan

Collaborative Efficiency

When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts.

Dear Pat and Brad: My husband and I just bought a home that was built in the 1970s. The kitchen appliances are so old that they may be originals, but we only have enough money for one appliance upgrade. Which appliance replacement will help reduce our energy bills the most? – Jessica

Dear Jessica: You're smart to consider energy use as you look at replacing appliances because most new appliances use much less energy than they did in the past. Manufacturers have found innovative ways to reduce appliance energy use without sacrificing performance. The federal government began tightening appliance standards in the 1980s and has continued as technological innovations became more cost-effective.

It may seem like the oldest appliance should go first. That may make sense if you want the looks and features of a newer oven or dishwasher. But with most appliances, the energy savings you get from a new one will take several years to pay for itself with the energy saved.

The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator. An older fridge can cost about \$20 to run every month. Replacing an old fridge with a new ENERGY STAR®-rated model can cut that down to less than \$5 a month. The ENERGY STAR® label certifies that the appliance saves energy. New refrigerators will include an additional label, the Energy Guide label, which shows how much energy it uses annually and compares that to the most and least efficient models available. It's also possible to measure how much energy your fridge is using with a kWh meter. Energy auditors use these meters to measure energy use for common household appliances. Sometimes the energy use of an older fridge can be reduced by replacing the seal around the door.



The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator.

When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts. A top-freezer setup is the most efficient, while a lower-freezer unit offers medium savings, and a side-by-side style is the least energy efficient.

If your goal is to save money on your energy bill, resist the urge to keep the old fridge in the basement or garage - that won't help you reduce your energy use. An old fridge in an uninsulated garage on a hot summer day can use a lot of energy. Maybe you just need more freezer space. If so, we recommend the most efficient freezer you can find. You can find recommendations on www.energystar.gov.

If your current fridge is in good condition, another appliance you may want to consider upgrading is the dishwasher. With most of us spending more time at home these days, chances are you're using your dishwasher more than you used to.

As with any major purchase, be sure to read customer reviews for any brands and models you're considering, and look for additional opportunities to save money, like an upcoming Presidents Day appliance sale.

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape. For additional energy tips and information on Collaborative Efficiency visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips

Legendary Performer Gary Mule Deer - and His Pompadour - are Still Going Strong

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Just like his trademark pompadour, Gary Mule Deer is still standing tall and proud after all these years. Thanks to the wondrous super holding power of Kenra 25, Mule Deer is still taking the stage with his skyscraper hairdo and delivering the sharp wit and old-school country music that have made him a South Dakota entertainment icon.

Going strong at 81, Mule Deer is one of the first to be amazed that he continues to have the stamina to do hundreds of shows a year (pre-pandemic) after six decades in the business. Not that he's prone to just let himself go. Despite some age-related medical issues, he works hard to keep his physical and spiritual energy up.

"I try to stay as fit as I can," Mule Deer said from his home in Spearfish. "I'm careful about what I eat, and I always pay attention to what I watch on TV or see on the internet. I try to keep things light and stay away from the dark. Tuning into the news any more than necessary can really bring your spirits down."

Mule Deer was part of a 40-show tour with Marty Stuart and The Steve Miller Band – including 24 scheduled appearances at the Grand Ole Opry – when the pandemic brought the tour to a halt. He managed to perform at the Opry last November and returned in January. But it wasn't anything like pre-pandemic days.

"A lot of the fun of doing the Opry is hanging out backstage," he said. "Now you can't just hang out. You have to wear a mask up to the microphone, then you can take it off. After you do your show you have to put the mask back on, go to your locker and grab your stuff and leave."

Mule Deer said he is happy to comply with the rules to help contain the virus. He recently lost one of his long-time friends and fellow country music stars, Charlie Pride, to the disease.

"Charlie was a real legend. We had just

done the Opry together last February. My wife Nita and I were great friends with him and his wife, Rozene. He could not have been a nicer guy and a true gentleman," Mule Deer said. "This disease is scary, but the scariest thing to me is that some people still think it's all a hoax."

Mule Deer also stays busy helping his son, Shawn Michael Bitz, promote the budding novelist's new book, *The Slim Chance*

"I always thought 'adult humor' wasn't very grown up," he said. "You can tell what kind of laughter comes out of people who respond to clean humor and 'blue' humor. When you're entertaining to make people happy and not just shock them, you can hear the difference. My type of humor brings a healthier kind of laughter. It comes from the gut and the spirit, where all the good stuff is."



Legendary performer Gary Mule Deer is still going strong entertaining audiences all over the country. Photo courtesy of Jill Jarrett.

Tour: *Stories in the Key of G-Whiz*. Bitz is also author of *Butterfly Pit Crew*. Both books are available on Amazon.

Apart from his 350 TV appearances and sharing the stage with every notable performer from Frank Sinatra to Willie Nelson, he said there are two things he is most proud of: working clean and working for charity.

Audiences can always count on a clean, upbeat show from Mule Deer.

He has also been a solid supporter of a great number of charities. Many of them have been projects also supported by fellow performers such as Pride, Vince Gill, Bing Crosby, and a long list of sports celebrities. The Make-A-Wish Foundation honored Mule Deer with a Walk of Fame star for his fundraising efforts.

Mule Deer signs off with a joke: "I saw a woman the other day riding a bike in Spearfish. I yelled out to her, 'Cow!' She flipped me off. Then she hit the cow."



Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

Billy Gibson

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Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

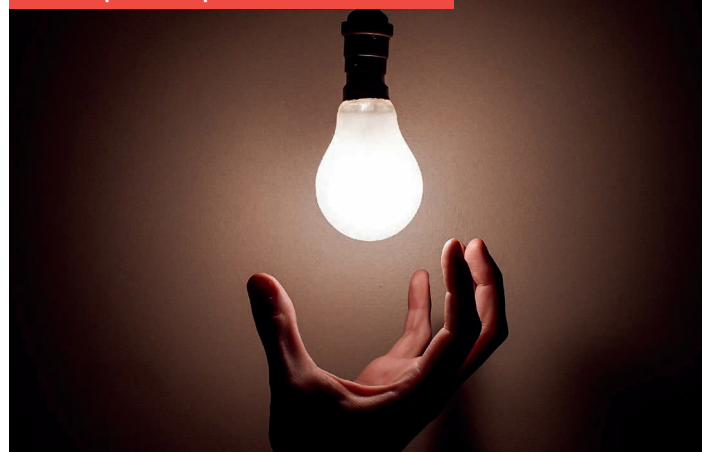
"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

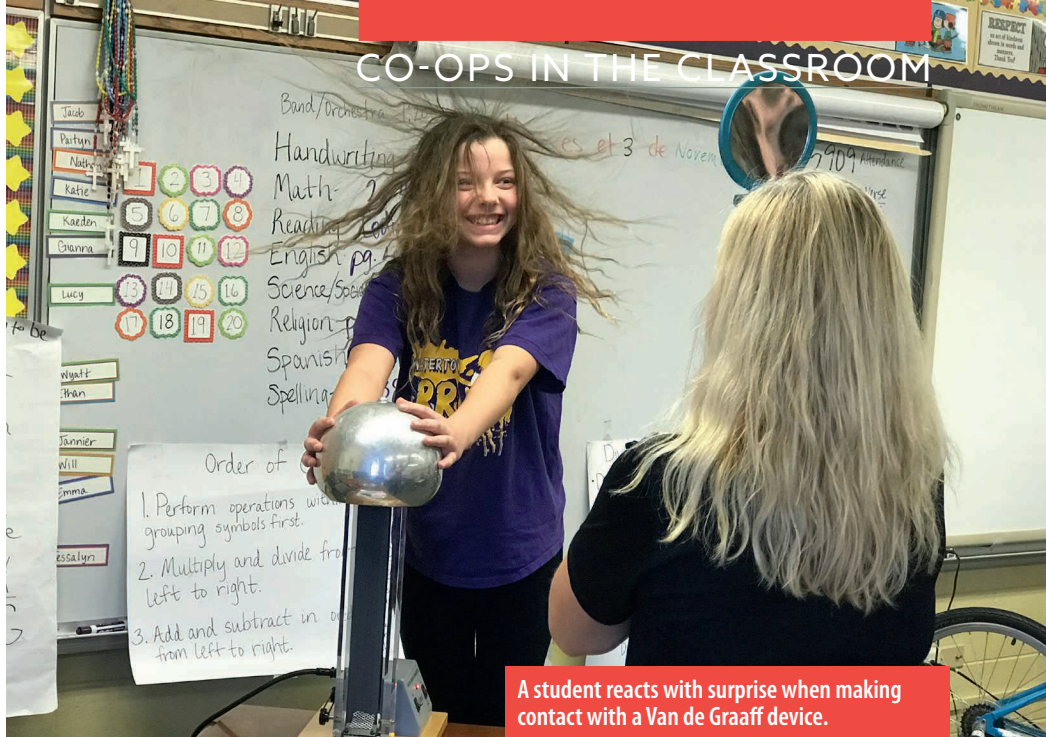
"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.



"These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

- Jennifer Gross



A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.

just provide electrical power. We're here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we're always here for them if they have questions about electricity."

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

"It's something that's always around them and they deal with all the time," Heinrich

said. "It's good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents' cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, 'So, this is a bad idea.' It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices."

South Dakota's electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unharmed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s.

Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country's rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite's economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: "Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call 'Neon Leon,' and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, 'I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year's demonstration, my husband is alive.' That really shows how important it is."



Science is at the center of learning about how electricity is generated and used.



SNOLF Tournament at Buster's Resort Attracts Foul Weather Competitors

Laura London

Administrative Assistant

Buster's Resort is a local little place on the shores of Waubay Lake, tucked away off Hwy. 25 between Webster and Grenville. It may not be what traditionally comes to mind when you picture a resort. There are no white sandy beaches, swimming pools or spas.

But there are amenities. Buster's is located on a nice lakefront with some prime fishing, pretty much year-round. There is a bar where you can get yourself some cold beverages and friendly service. In the past, Buster's sold live bait and there is some pressure from the patrons to bring this back. There are currently hook-ups for eight camp sites and plans to add 15 more. Even though he's pretty happy with life and the way things are, there's always room for improvement and lots of suggestions from visitors and patrons. The proprietor of this establishment is a local man, Eugene "Buster" Sichmeller, who has taken pride in serving his friends and customers for the past two decades.

When I asked Buster how "Buster's Resort" came to be, he had a bit of a story. This is a good time to mention: If you are ever

in need of a story, you should take a drive and stop by Buster's, as far as I have heard, there is never a shortage of good stories at this place. You can decide for yourself how much truth there is in each tale or how much has been filled in by fantasy and false memory. The real story of how Buster's Resort started took place during a fishing trip to Canada. Buster was sitting around the campfire with some buddies, enjoying a few beers, when one of the guys piped up and said, "I can just see it now, a big sign on the hill that says Buster's Resort!" Buster laughed it off "Yeah, right!" because at that time he was trying to raise five kids on a daily wage. Nonetheless, a little seed was planted in the back of his head.

A couple of years after that fishing trip, Buster's mother passed away. He inherited some of the homestead, which he then sold to his brothers who sold him some of the property by the lake that was too wet to farm. Well, you can't just have 20 acres of property there, "things get complicated." He then acquired another 20 acres. Basically, there are 17 acres of land that are not under water. Around this same time, the highway department was raising the grade on Rush Lake and there was a building that needed to be moved.



Buster Sichmeller has served customers and friends for more than two decades.

Buster made payments on that building and moved it to his lake property. For a while, the building was set on blocks. Then the basement was dug, and things started progressing. Buster's Resort officially opened for business Jan. 1, 2000. Technically, Buster's is now old enough to drink. There was never a big open house or

SNOLF Tournament is a Big Hit, *continued*



anything, but people started coming and they have continued to show up over the years. There is an addition now that was enclosed a year or so ago that allows for more people to get more space when they visit.

This little seed that was planted on a fishing trip up north grew into a big dream that became a reality. Buster admits that there have been some nightmarish setbacks along the way. At one point he was moving some trailer homes in to rent out. Then the big windstorm of 2008 destroyed that plan. He had nine trailers out there and they were ruined, leaving quite a mess. A business like Buster's depends on a lot of uncontrollable factors, mostly weather. Like many businesses in this area, if you don't have snow or rain it can be a problem. If you have too much rain or snow, it can be a bigger problem. Buster just goes with the flow.

Even though Buster has regular customers from far and wide, he remarks "Some local people still don't even know I have a place out here!"

SNOLF at Buster's

Along with the fishing, camping and storytelling over a cold one, Buster's offers a golf course, of sorts, at least for one weekend a year. The second weekend in March, there

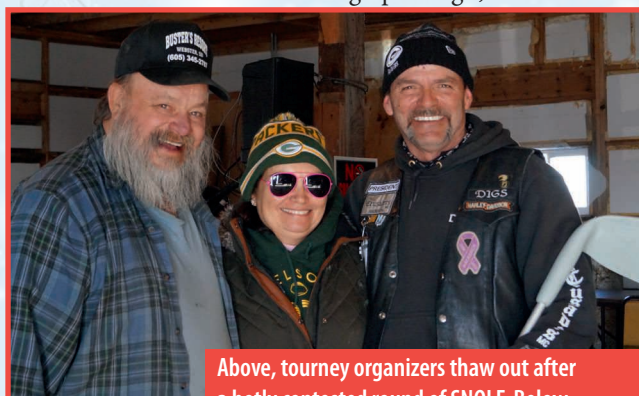
is a course set up on the lake. It's a SNOLF course; that's short for snow-golf. For the past 19 years, Buster's has hosted a SNOLF tournament. I have never participated in, or witnessed, this event myself. It seems that I may have gotten into an agreement to at least attend this year.

According to Buster, the local SNOLF Tournament can be "blamed" on Scott Lindquist. Scott and a couple of fellows from Watertown were out one day and Scott started talking about an Ice-Golf tournament he had played in. The tournament Scott had played in was more like a traditional golf game, using a variety of clubs and real golf balls. Buster and the crew started talking it over and decided using tennis balls would be better, as it is really easy to lose a little golf ball out there on the ice! Buster had never been around golf much, so he rounded up some helpers and the party was on! The first year of the tournament they had around 20 teams and only played nine holes. They increased the course size and have played 18 holes ever since. The tournament consists of teams of two players. Each player gets to use one club of their choosing, a putter is a good choice on a windy day, so each team should have one of those just in case. Teams pay an entry fee that is given back in prizes, after the amount for the meal and other expenses are taken out. The course only takes around two hours to play. There are porta-potties set out on the ice and a warming shack to take a break if players need it.

Players are mostly from the area but there are a few dedicated teams from Brookings, Sioux Falls, Minnesota, and even Iowa. The average number of teams registered is around 40. Last year they were down a

bit and only 32 teams showed up. Buster thinks a few from out of the area canceled due to COVID-19. They have had as many as 70 teams one year but that was just too many people, so a 40-50 team tournament is a good number.

The weather does not seem to be a problem for those who participate in the tournament. One year, the temperature hit a high of maybe 10 degrees with winds of 20 miles per hour. Buster thought they were going to have to cancel. People started showing up though, and Buster



Above, tourney organizers thaw out after a hotly contested round of SNOLF. Below, SNOLFers engage in some ice-cold competition.



thought "What in the world? These people are crazy!" Around 22 teams showed up that day, with a three-way tie that wasn't even broken by sudden death. Buster recalls that "In the end, it was settled by a card draw." Two years ago it was very cold and snowing like crazy; according to Buster, you couldn't even see the people on the other side, but they were out there playing and having a good time.

Sometimes in this area, we do what we can to bring people together and break up the monotony of a long, cold South Dakota winter. So why not SNOLF?



Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

The People Behind the Power

Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

Billy Gibson

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With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power

of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

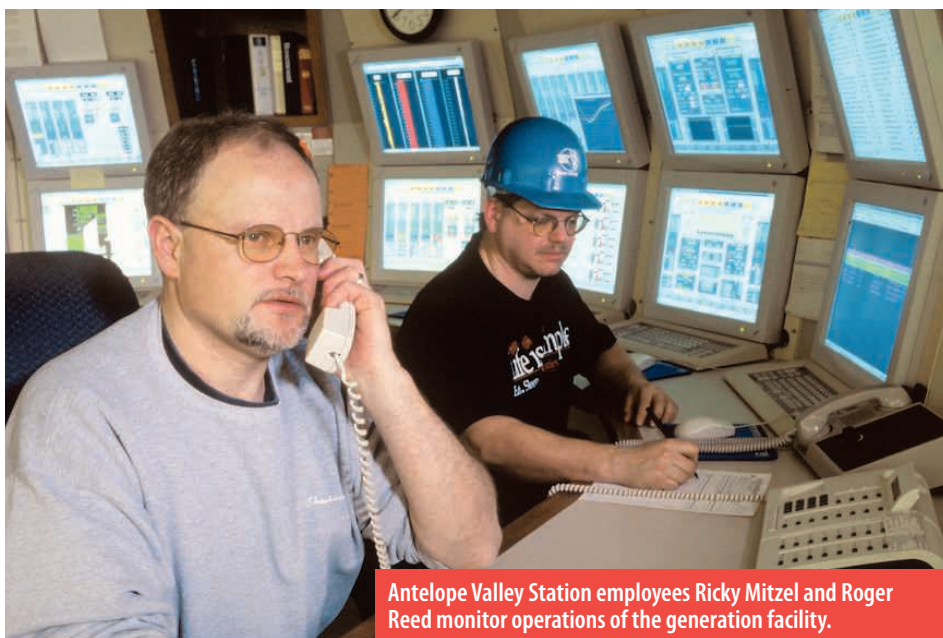
"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."



Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

DE-STRESSING

Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

Billy Gibson

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Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."

Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration
- down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.
- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

"When you achieve food freedom, you don't have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet," Ching said. "Stress can

lead to overeating. If you're under stress, don't reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion."

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

"Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere," she said. "I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!"

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes.

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.

January 18-25

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD
605-717-9294

January 21-24

Elf The Musical, Area
Community Theatre,
Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

January 23

Treasured Lives Presents:
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
1-800-468-6463

January 29-30

Pro Snocross Races, Days
of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

January 29-February 6

Black Hills Stock Show &
Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-335-3861

January 29-31

Winterfest, Lead, SD
605-335-3861

February 5-6

Mardi Gras Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

February 10-13

Watertown Winter Farm
Show, Codington County
Extension Complex,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

February 12-13

SD High School State
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

February 18

The Q's High Line to
Deadwood – A 130-year
Retrospective, Homestake
Adams Research and Cultural
Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills
Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20-27

SD State High School
Wrestling Tournament,
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood
Live: Neighbor Day,
Washington Pavilion, Sioux
Falls, SD
605-367-6000

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate
& IE Tournament, Central
High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride
and Tour, Spearfish Canyon
Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration,
Knights of Columbus Hall,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun
Show, American Legion Hall,
Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

Annual Schmeckfest,
Freeman Academy,
Freeman, SD
605-925-4237

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center Fine Arts
Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead
Hills, Homestake Adams
Research and Cultural Center,
Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

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.