

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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# Thanks to all involved for making our Annual Meeting event a great success



**Tim McIntyre**  
General Manager

Wow! What a great Annual Meeting we had! A success that really speaks to who we are. We are a cooperative, working toward a common goal. Events like this don't just happen and they certainly don't go this smoothly without the cooperation of many dedicated individuals. It was wonderful to look at all of the vehicles lining up on Main Street in Langford. The final count was 156 attendees with 105 registered members.

I am thankful to be able to work for the wonderful member-owners of Lake Region Electric Association. We work hard to bring you electricity while keeping the costs low

## I want to extend an extra thank you to the members who came out to this year's annual meeting in Langford.

and the value high. The tremendous support that you show for our cooperative is greatly appreciated. I want to extend an extra thank you to the members who came out to this year's annual meeting in Langford. It was a hot day, but we cannot control the weather in South Dakota and it's much nicer to sit in the comfort of your car where you can control your own air conditioning!

Thank you to Mayor Orrie Jesz and the Town of Langford for allowing us all to come take over their Main Street for a couple of hours. I believe that Lake Region Electric has a special relationship with Langford, from mu-

tual aid to supporting community and school activities.

Thank you, Bob Gale from East River Electric, for setting up the audio and radio broadcast. Bob is an asset to all the cooperatives that make up East River Electric and he is always so helpful when it comes to our Annual Meeting.

Thank you to the local restaurants who were eager to participate in the Meal Voucher program so that we could give our members a variety of options for a meal of their choosing while supporting our local merchants!

Thank you to the Board of Directors for all of their hard work to continue to govern Lake Region Electric so that we can keep rates low and remain financially stable for our members.

Last, and certainly not least, a huge thank you to all of the employees and staff of Lake Region Electric for all of the hard work they do throughout the year. Their efforts to coordinate this annual meeting are greatly appreciated. Things went so smoothly from Registration to the smooth exit at the conclusion of the meeting! The coordination and cooperation that it takes to put this together are quite a big feat. We never know how many people will show up, so they have to make decisions and plan for the unknown and they always do a tremendous job.

I thank the Lord that He has blessed me with such a tremendous group of people to work with and work for. I am truly grateful.

Thank you & God Bless,  
Timothy McIntyre

**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

**LAKE REGION ELECTRIC  
RIPPLES**

(USPS 018-904)

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# Hayden Reints joins LREA



Hayden Reints, center, is welcomed to LREA by General Manager Tim McIntyre (left) and Manager of Operations Jim Grimes.

**Laura London**

Executive Assistant

Hayden Reints of Pierpont joined the Lake Region Electric team in mid-May. Hayden recently graduated from Langford High School. He plans on attending Mitchell Technical Institute to study Powerline Maintenance and Construction this fall. Hayden is a perfect fit at Lake Region Electric Association. He comes from a farming background where he was raised to have a strong work ethic. Hayden enjoys all sorts of outdoor activities, sports, hunting, fishing, weightlifting, and staying physically fit. All of this, and the fact that he is "not afraid of heights," should help Hayden achieve success here at

Lake Region as well as accomplish his future career goals.

Lake Region regularly hires high school and college students in the summer to help with day-to-day activities that increase as the construction season ramps up. This is a great opportunity for young people who may be thinking about a career in the electrical industry to get some experience and become familiar with the work and processes involved. You may see Hayden helping the linemen and electricians in the field, assisting with groundskeeping and other tasks around Lake Region properties and work zones. Welcome to Lake Region, Hayden!

**Lake Region Electric  
will be closed Monday,  
July 5. Have a Happy  
Fourth of July!**



**WELCOME TO OUR NEW LAKE  
REGION ELECTRIC MEMBERS!**

- Dwayne Sass
- Joe Steiner
- Carol Gaikowski
- Gerry D Block
- Janice and Gary Hanson
- Keven & Diane Wittmayer
- Terry Larson
- Howard Hvidsten
- Donna Etl

# Handling food safely when grilling outdoors

One of America's favorite summer pastimes is grilling, and safe grilling starts with proper food handling. Here are a few simple guidelines for grilling food safely:

- Wash away harmful bacteria. Avoid providing a hotbed for bacteria. Unwashed hands are a prime cause of foodborne illness, also known as food poisoning, as are unwashed perishable foods such as meat, seafood, and peeled or cut fruits and vegetables.

- Keep perishable foods cold. If you'll be meeting up with friends away from your backyard grill, it's best to transport all perishables in an insulated cooler kept cold with ice or frozen gel packs.

- Throw away any perishable leftovers that have been out of a refrigerator or cooler for more than two hours—one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees.

- Keep coolers out of direct sunlight and avoid opening them frequently, to keep the cold air inside.

- Marinate safely. Marinated meats should be stored immediately in a refrigerator or cooler, not on the kitchen counter or outside next to the grill. As long as a marinade is stored in a cool environment, it can remain there safely for several hours or days.

- Do not use marinade from a raw meat/marinade mixture as a sauce on cooked meat, unless you first cook the

sauce to a boil for at least three minutes to kill harmful bacteria.

- Use grilling shortcuts.

Pre-cooking food partially indoors before putting it on a preheated grill will give you quick results when your friends are hungry or your grill is slow or small. Conversely, flame-grill meat for a smoky, charbroiled flavor, then bake in an oven until it's cooked properly.

- Cook thoroughly and use a meat thermometer. It's best to cook food to the safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. On the grill, meat and poultry will brown quickly, but the inside might only be cooked partially. To be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature, use a meat thermometer.

Here are some safe minimum internal temperatures:

- Chicken: 165 degrees
- Beef hamburgers: 160 degrees
- Beef, veal and lamb (steaks, roasts and chops): medium-rare 145 degrees, medium 160 degrees
- Pork: 165 degrees

With proper refrigeration and thorough cooking, your backyard barbecue will be a tasty success.

**AVOID UTILITY SCAMS**

Scammers will threaten you with everything from shutting off power to your home to legal action. Don't fall victim to these types of scams.

- Our employees will never show up at your door to demand payment.
- Never give personal information to an unknown caller or visitor. Our representatives have access

- to the details they need to service your account.
- Demands for immediate payment by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, gift cards or cash reload cards should immediately raise red flags.



## Don't fly kites near trees and power lines

**Annette Tschetter, 7 years old**

Annette is the daughter of Elaine and Ryan Tschetter of Revillo. They are members of Whetstone Valley Electric based in Milbank.

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.

# SUMMERTIME DESSERTS

## WHOOPIE PIES

Ingredients:

- 1 box spice cake mix
- 1 1/2 cups apple butter
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 2 eggs
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### METHOD

Heat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. In large bowl, whisk spice cake mix, apple butter, oil and eggs. With ice cream scoop or large tablespoon, spoon batter into rounded heaps, about 2-3 inches in diameter, onto parchment paper. Space spooned batter 2 inches apart. Bake 14 minutes. Let cool. In large bowl, beat cream cheese, butter and powdered sugar until smooth. Add milk and vanilla; beat until blended. Frost flat sides of pie halves and place halves together. Refrigerate and store in sealed container.

Culinary.net

## ROCKY ROAD ICE CREAM

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1 -14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup half & half
- 1 TBS vanilla
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows

### METHOD

In a small saucepan put in cocoa and whisk in sweetened condensed milk until smooth. Cook over low heat, whisking constantly until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Transfer to a bowl and stir in both creams and vanilla. Pour mixture into ice cream maker and freeze. Stir in pecans and marshmallows halfway through freezing process. Transfer to airtight container and put in freezer to harden, about an hour. Makes 2 quarts.

Joan Antonen, Arlington, SD

## PRALINE PECAN CRUNCH

Ingredients:

- 1 21 oz. box Quaker Oat Squares cereal (about 8 cups)
- 2 cups pecans
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/2 tsps baking soda

### METHOD

Heat oven to 250 degrees. Mix cereal and pecans in 9"x13" pan. Set aside. Mix corn syrup, brown sugar and margarine in glass bowl. Microwave on high 1-1/2 minutes. Stir, microwave 1 to 1-1/2 minutes more or until boiling. Stir in vanilla and baking soda and pour over cereal mixture. Stir to coat evenly. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 20 minutes. Spread on baking sheet to cool. Break into pieces and store in air tight container.

NANCY STENSON, FORT PIERRE

## MAMA'S CARAMEL PUDDING

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar - melt in skillet until golden brown
- 2 cups milk - stir until sugar is dissolved
- 4 tsps. corn starch stirred into a little milk

### METHOD

Cook until thickened. Serve with whipped cream.

Elaine Rowett, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite dairy 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, phone number and cooperative name.

# New Cooperative Connections features modern design and information about LREA

This issue of Cooperative Connections is different.

It is different because the publication has been undergoing a behind-the-scenes makeover for the past several months and this is the first issue the new design is being unveiled to you - our readers. We hope the simple design brings a more modern look to the magazine and incorporates design elements that make the pictures pop and the articles effortless to read.

The entire goal of Cooperative Connections is to inform, educate, and entertain electric cooperative members across South Dakota. Cooperative Connections was first published in the year 2000 when the 31 electric cooperatives across the state joined together to print one unified publication which included statewide content from the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and local content from each individual co-op.

Before that time, co-op members in South Dakota received a statewide publication and a separate local co-op publication in their mailboxes every month. Some members received even more reading material because wholesale generation and transmission cooperatives also sent out magazines. Cooperative Connections was developed more than 20 years ago to be a one-stop shop for electric cooperative information. This is only the fourth time during the past two decades that the design has been changed.

Cooperative Connections is currently one of the largest publications in the state of South Dakota with more than 120,000 copies mailed every month. It is important to keep co-op members across the state informed about the operation of their cooperative because every member who buys electricity from the co-op is a partial owner of the cooperative.

The monthly publication not only informs members about the finances of the co-op but it also provides notices about running for the board of directors and details about the cooperative's annual meeting. It is important information for members who would like to become more engaged in their local co-op.

The last redesign of this publication was about four years ago. We thought it was time for another refresh because the world continues to change at a rapid pace. We want to keep our communication channels clear, concise, and up to the modern-day design standards that our members expect.

Education is one of the seven core principles on which all cooperatives are built. Informed members are the cornerstone of strong co-ops. And, in the age of digital communication, Cooperative Connections still remains the most reliable way to reach all of our members every single month. So, even though this issue looks different, we hope that this publication continues to provide important updates and interesting articles.

Thank you for reading and enjoy the new design.

## A snapshot of Co-op Life

Want to know more about the electric cooperative scene across the state of South Dakota? Tune in to Cooperative Connections Plus, a YouTube channel featuring personality profiles, feature stories, safety information and much more.

Enter the YouTube search field and look for Co-op Connections Plus to see what's going on throughout our state's electric cooperative network.





Logan Storley of Roslyn, SD, lands a kick against opponent Yaroslav Amosov at Bellator MMA 252 last November. It was Storley's first Bellator loss against 11 wins. *Photo courtesy of BELLATOR MMA/Lucas Noonan*

# LOGAN STORLEY

## Former state champion wrestler seeks to make his mark in mixed martial arts

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

There are many who know what it's like to experience difficult emotional blows in life: broken relationships, medical afflictions, financial hardships and other misfortune. There are fewer who know what it's like to get physically punched in the face, choked, kicked in the jaw and thrown to the ground with violent force.

And still fewer who have experienced both. That's Logan Storley.

Folks around Webster know Storley as a six-time state high school wrestling champion and four-time all-American at the University of Minnesota. The 28-year-old is currently carving out a

career in mixed martial arts, fashioning a record of 11-1 as a competitor in the Bellator MMA program.

And while he's used to punching and being punched, Storley said he recruits the same mental and emotional fortitude to deal with any test of adversity whether it comes in the cage of combat or in the cage of life.

Storley suffered his first loss last November when he dropped a split decision to Yaroslav Amosov, a defeat that was difficult for him to bear. The post-fight video segment shows Storley ripping his hand away from the referee after the verdict was announced.

But the blows to the forehead and kicks to the ribs that rocked his body that evening paled in comparison to

the pain of watching his beloved uncle battle ALS for 10 years before finally succumbing to the dreaded disease in 2019.

"It really hurts to see someone you've love and cared about all your life being sick like that and withering away," Storley said. "But he did a great job keeping his spirits up. He never groaned about how unlucky he was or how unfair it was. He lived a great life, he had a lot of good people around him and I was fortunate to know him. Now he's in a much better place."

Storley said that while hardships in life and contrived combat in the confines of a cage may be different types of challenges, they require the same determined mindset to overcome and move beyond.

"When there's a death in the family, or a heartbreak or financial problems, you have to keep showing up no matter what life throws at you. You have to take the time to deal with it, control what you can control and then continue to go on with life."

As far as what it's like to get physically punched in the head and body during the heat of competition, Storley said it's important to first understand, as in real life, there is going to be some adversity and pain.

"You go into the cage expecting that you're going to get cracked. You know you're going to be in a fight," he said. "It's a shock to your system when you feel that thud, but you know you have to respond and keep on fighting. You realize you can get past it and fight on."

Storley's loss in November hasn't deterred him in the least. He stays focused on completing a task left undone when he failed to win a national title in college. His goal is to become the "best fighter in the world."

"It's important to me. My whole life has been wrestling and competing," he said. "I want to win a title, defend it a couple of times and then move on."



# Summer fun awaits off the beaten path

Off-road enthusiasts from far and wide come to ride the Black Hills. Photos by Billy Gibson

## From the Black Hills to Avon, off-road ATV trails attract outdoor enthusiasts

**Billy Gibson**  
billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Generations ago, folks flocked to the tiny hamlet of Nemo to search for gold buried deep in the nooks and crannies of the Black Hills region.

Today they come in search of family outdoor fun and adventure along the hundreds of miles of nature trails that course throughout the craggy terrain.

During most months of the year, Nemo is a quiet outpost with a

smattering of permanent residents who spend their days in unhurried leisure. But the warm summer months bring thousands of visitors seeking to explore the undulating wooded landscape on foot or on horseback, but most of all nestled in the seat of a side-by-side.

The Black Hills area is widely regarded as the state's top draw for all-terrain adventurers, and Nemo stands smack dab at the center of the action.

One of the town's busiest denizens during the summer crush is Dane Hilger, who runs D&K ATV

Rentals in Nemo. Hilger does a brisk business pairing up riders with fully licensed and permitted machines that allow visitors to free-range along the trails and take in the breathtaking vistas. His fleet of more than a dozen two-seaters and four-seaters gets snapped up quickly as the town is completely transformed during the summer season, which typically kicks off with the annual Black Hills ATV/UTV Rally held in mid-June.

"There are so many people in town it seems like it's hard to get around sometimes, but it's very family-oriented and everybody gets along and has a good time getting out and enjoying the great outdoors."



Vacationers and even day-trippers have access to everything they need during a visit to Nemo with the Brandin’ Iron restaurant, camping sites, a general store and lodging.

Adam Rice, a native of Rapid City, owns and operates the Brandin’ Iron in addition to another restaurant in Arizona. Soon after high school, he headed to Arizona for culinary school and later opened his business there. But two years ago, Rice was lured back to South Dakota and decided to resettle in Nemo.

“The town just has an aura about it. It’s pristine and gorgeous. There’s no better way to see the Black Hills. You can get to a lot of cool places through the trail system that goes literally thousands of miles and you never have to get on the road. You can get to Deadwood, you can get to Mount Rushmore, you can get to Sturgis. I go out into the woods just about every day. There’s always something interesting to see.”

Larry Kaiser owns the Nemo Merchantile store where visitors will find fuel, snacks, beverages, clothing and an assortment of dry goods.

He laments that during the summer he is often too busy to ride the trails, but he enjoys supplying the provisions visitors need.

“It’s just a lot of fun. You meet the most interesting people and everybody’s having a good time.”

**“It’s just a lot of fun. You meet the most interesting people and everybody’s having a good time.”**



## TOP ATV TRAILS IN SD

- 1. Centennial Trail**  
West of Rapid City
- 2. Northern Black Hills**  
West of Rapid City
- 3. Southern Black Hills**  
Southwest of Rapid City
- 4. Buffalo Gap National Grassland**  
Southeast of Farmingdale
- 5. Bear Lodge Mountains**  
North of Sundance
- 6. Oahe Downstream OHV Area**  
North of Pierre
- 7. Talsmas ATV Trail Park**  
South of Avon
- 8. Reveheim Bay OHV Area**  
Southeast of Mobridge

They bring their kids, the grand parents and the dog and they just relax, unwind and have fun.”

While Nemo may be considered the mecca of ATV riders, there are several other prime spots in South Dakota open to the public.

In the southeastern region of the state near Avon, Jerry and Tina Talsma welcome ATV riders to their Trails End Ranch situated alongside the Missouri River.

The third-generation land owners opened Talsma’s Trail Park in 2005 with several hundred acres open to the public and trails that range from novice to extreme.

There are climbing hills, creek crossings, deep brush, open prairie land, river bottom terrain and expansive scenic bluffs overlooking the Missouri. There are also several play areas for riders to kick up some mud.

There are different fees to enter the park depending on the mode of transportation and special discounts for groups of 10 or more machines



Many ATV trails across the state have access to fishing, scenic vistas and places to pull over for refreshments such as the Merchantile store in Nemo shown above.

as well as multi-day and seasonal passes. Camp sites are available at a rate of \$20 per night with electricity and \$10 without.

The Talsmas have big plans for the summer with a Customer Appreciation Day on Aug. 14, a fundraising event for Horse Haven on Sept. 11 and a Halloween Scare Ride on Oct. 9.

For more information on the private park, visit [talsmastrailpark.com](http://talsmastrailpark.com). For more information about riding in the Black Hills, visit [blackhillsatvally.com](http://blackhillsatvally.com) and [custersd.com](http://custersd.com) where you’ll find details about ATV activities in the Custer area.



# 80th LREA Annual Meeting

## Lake Region Electric Manager of Member Services Brett Kwasniewski congratulates Leonard Alberts on winning the Food Pantry Drawing

**Laura London**

Administrative Assistant

The Annual Meeting was held in style, drive-in style that is, for the second year in a row. Meetings have changed over the past 80 years; however, this type of meeting is new to us. Like we often do in this territory, we adapted and made changes to make things happen. It was quite a success, as the final count came to 105 registered members, many of whom brought guests for a total attendance of 156.

Planning the Annual Meeting takes coordinated efforts from the Board and all the employees. According to the Lake Region Electric Association Bylaws, “The annual meeting of the members shall be held at such time and place within a county served by the Cooperative, as selected by the Board of Directors and which shall be designated in the notice of the meeting, for the purpose of electing directors, passing upon reports for the previous fiscal year and transacting such other business as may come before the meeting...” We all know how things took a fast turn last year as COVID-19 hit the country hard and cases

started ramping up. In an effort to keep everyone as safe and healthy as possible, the Board weighed different options and decided to postpone the Annual Meeting. After some deliberation, the meeting was scheduled later in the summer at Fort Sisseton in a drive-in fashion; it was quite successful. This year, the board was presented with a similar dilemma. While vaccinations are available and many members developed antibodies after having been ill with COVID-19 or were exposed, there is still some risk to having a large gathering indoors. Taking the risk into consideration along with the success of last year’s meeting, the Board decided to host a drive-in style meeting again. The directors choose the location of the meeting so that it takes place in different areas of our territory than the year prior. Langford was chosen as this year’s location. Brett Kwasniewski and Tim McIntyre visited with the Langford City

Council to get approval to host our Annual Meeting on Main Street and the planning began.

It was warm for the beginning of June, with temps hovering around 90 degrees. Members were able to attend the meeting from the comfort of their vehicle where they could control their own air conditioning; several attendees remarked this was better than a hot auditorium. The meeting was broadcast over short-wave radio. Bob Gale, Audio Visual Coordinator from East River Electric, facilitated the broadcast. Bob regularly travels to annual meetings for cooperatives in the East River Electric territory to provide sound and video support. Bob uses a “low power FM transmitter” that broadcasts a radio signal a short distance. Once he is set up, he chooses the station with the best signal. Lake Region employees handed out cards with the radio station so that members could tune right in.

The stage was set up towards the west end of Main Street and Lake Region employees directed traffic that entered from the east side where registration took place. Technology has come a long way, as the IT Department has incorporated our software so that registration can take place



President Kermit Pearson at 6:36 p.m. Pearson then explained that motions and voting would take place via honking of car horns.

Secretary Tom Steiner verified 101 Registered Members in attendance at the start of the meeting, constituting a quorum. According to the LREA Bylaws, “In case the total number of members shall exceed one thousand, fifty (50) members, present in person, shall constitute a quorum.” Steiner then presented Proof of Mailing of the 2021 Annual Meeting Notice as well as the Unapproved 2020 Minutes. A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2020 minutes.

Pearson then gave the annual President’s Report. He went over the 2020 financial report, which was approved by motion of the attendees. Pearson discussed the East River substations, the rebuilding of lines between Britton & Langford, as well as other infrastructure improvements. Pearson talked about our energy partner, Basin Electric, and the cold weather extremes experienced in the south this past February. Extreme weather events highlight the value of belonging to a cooperative and rate stability. Pearson continued his report by highlighting the growth at East River Electric. He took a moment to explain the lawsuit that East River is going through with Dakota Energy wanting to leave East River, breaking contracts that they recently renewed. Pearson continued the President’s Report by discussing new regulations coming out of Washington D.C. and how that could affect us here in Lake Region territory. One big focus is continued improvements

and conversion to renewable energy. He concluded his report by sharing with the membership that Ed Anderson, who has led our statewide organization SDREA, will be retiring at the end of this month. The newly hired General Manager is Trevor Jones, former Cabinet Secretary for the state’s Dept. of Public Safety in Gov. Daugaard’s administration. The President’s Report was accepted by the members in attendance.

Attorney Dan Smeins then took a vote for the director spots up for election. Incumbent Andrea Kilker ran unopposed to serve the membership for District One. Incumbent Amy Kuecker ran unopposed for District 7. Both Incumbents were re-elected by unanimous vote of the attending members.

General Manager & CEO Tim McIntyre gave the Manager’s Report. He thanked the members, staff, employees and the Board for everything they do for our cooperative. McIntyre also thanked Mayor Orrie Jesz and the City of Langford for hosting our meeting and talked about the positive relationship Lake Region and the City have. He reported that Lake Region remains in a strong financial position. We are continuing on an aggressive work plan, including the conversion of overhead to underground wire. He recognized the scholarship winners, Colin Frey and Rana Hegg. McIntyre discussed Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) available through Lake Region and other ways we are working to support clean energy.

The meeting was concluded by drawing for a \$50 gift card, tickets were given to those who brought donations for the food pantry. Leonard Alberts was the winning ticket holder. After a motion to adjourn, Lake Region employees directed traffic and a smooth exit was made by all.



GM Tim McIntyre, Board Secretary Steiner, Attorney Smeins, Board President Pearson.

electronically and we can have an accurate accounting of attendees. Members who attended received a gift bag at registration, which included a handy roadside flashlight tool. In lieu of a hot meal, the Board approved giving members a meal voucher that can be redeemed at participating local restaurants. Some restaurants faced struggles due to the pandemic and this is a great way to support our local businesses and communities. Snacks and cold water were given to all attending members and guests.

The meeting was called to order by



# SENSIBLE SOLAR

## South Dakota's electric cooperatives promote fair, sensible solar policies

**Billy Gibson**

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

With summer in full swing, the sun is bearing down on South Dakotans. But that wasn't the case just five months ago when an unexpected polar vortex covered much of the country in a blanket of snow and ice.

As co-op members now reach for the sunscreen and a cold beverage, it's easy to forget that back in February the same solar panels that are streaming torrents of ions today were reduced to a trickle when a convergence of circumstances caused a series of rolling blackouts.

That historic event alerted policymakers from Texas to the Canadian border to hit the pause button and take another look at how renewable power fits into the national grid-based energy picture.

Across the country, the solar market is facing what can be described as growing pains. Those pains stem from the fact that the nascent stages of solar energy were heavily subsidized through taxpayer dollars, as early adopters benefited from an array of state, federal and municipal government tax credits, exemptions, incentives, rebates and subsidies designed to get the industry off the ground. Tapping into these programs, owners of solar installations have been able to deduct up to half of their costs.

But as more homeowners and businesses opt for solar and as the cost of solar has dropped 80 percent since 2010, those subsidies are shrinking and the industry is in the process of having to eventually stand on its own feet. At the federal level, for instance, the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) established in 2005

has allowed new residential and commercial solar owners to deduct 26 percent of their installation costs from their federal taxes. The ITC is set to be reduced to 23 percent in 2023 and eliminated for homeowners by 2024. The Biden Administration has proposed extending the program for another two years.

According to the Energy Information Administration, direct federal government subsidies for solar alone totaled \$34.4 billion between 2010 and 2019.

As solar subsidies decline, the true costs for ratepayers to have 24-hour access to both intermittent renewable power and more reliable traditional power at the same time are coming to bear.

In Nevada, for example, incentives for homeowners were phased out in 2016 after the state's largest energy company argued that its costs of creating and delivering power weren't being fully covered and the expenses of serving every home and business in the system were being shifted to those exercising their right not to have rooftop panels placed on their homes.

Predictably, once the incentives

*Sensible Solutions for Our Energy Future*



South Dakota's electric cooperatives support reasonable strategies for our energy future that make sense for our members:

- Renewable energy solutions that are both productive and practical
- Rate structures that take affordability into account
- Balanced strategies centered on the best interests of co-op consumers
- Technology-based policies that promote economic development

## **“WE RELY ON INTERMITTENT RENEWABLE SOURCES TO CURB EMISSIONS AND MORE RELIABLE FOSSIL FUELS TO DELIVER THE BASELOAD POWER OUR MEMBERS NEED.”**

ROBERT RAKER

West River Electric, characterized the state's electric cooperatives as being neither pro-renewable energy nor anti-renewable energy.

“We're pro-reliability and pro-affordability for our members,” he explained. “We rely on intermittent renewable sources to curb emissions and more reliable fossil fuels to deliver the baseload power our members

to communicate with one another as each cooperative in the state has its own set of interconnection requirements and policies determined by their management.

“If one of our members wants to get involved in renewable energy, we need to know about it so we can work with the member to make sure the process goes as smoothly as possible,” Raker said.

Chris Studer, chief member and public relations officer at East River Electric, echoed Raker's comments and emphasized another important factor in open member-to-cooperative communication: safety.

“Just make sure to call your co-op. It's a safety issue. Improperly installed equipment could put the homeowner's property and co-op employees who work on the infrastructure at risk and that's what we want to prevent.”

Studer said the state's cooperatives will continue to play an active role as the renewable market evolves.

“At this stage in the emergence of the distributed generation market, the fixed costs that electric utilities have invested in their infrastructure needs to be taken under consideration as more members bring localized solar installations into the system,” he said.

“Other states have addressed this issue by establishing fixed charges for distributed generation owners in a way that was fair for everyone, while also setting up a system to streamline the resolution of any disputes that may arise. We'll continue to serve as an advocate for all co-op consumers.”

were sun-setted and solar owners had to pay for maintaining the same grid that they depend on when their panels aren't producing power, demand decreased.

In South Dakota, where there are no state government subsidies, investor-owned Black Hills Energy has followed Nevada's lead by proposing that the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission institute tariffs on homeowners to compensate the power company for those fixed costs required to keep the system functioning for all ratepayers who use it.

Opponents argue that the tariffs could potentially obliterate the state's growing solar market, which saw 462 MW installed through the first quarter of 2021.

As for South Dakota's electric cooperatives, the system's leaders paid close attention to the polar vortex event and the lessons learned in the aftermath. Robert Raker, public relations manager at

need. It's like a parent trying to determine which is their favorite kid. We favor both of them because we need to help protect the planet but we also need to fulfill our obligation to serve our members whether it's day or night, hot or cold, sunny or cloudy, windy or calm.”

Raker noted that co-ops have embraced the integration of renewable power into the state's fuel mix. Electric co-ops were leaders in introducing wind power, which now makes up roughly 25 percent of the supply while 17 percent comes from hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River. Co-ops are also involved in the construction of Wild Springs solar farm, which is expected to go on-line next year as the largest solar array in the western part of the state.

Without a clear and complete set of rules in place for distributed generation, Raker said it's paramount that members and their cooperatives work together

# Co-ops in the Classroom program makes a triumphant return



## Popular classroom education program teaches students how electricity works and how to practice safety

**Laura London**

Administrative Assistant

Co-ops in the Classroom took a break for a while due to Covid 19; we were, however, able to get a couple of visits scheduled at the end of the school year. Jennifer Gross, Communications Coordinator for our power provider East River Electric, travels throughout East River's service territory in eastern South Dakota and

western Minnesota to teach children about electrical safety, generation, conservation, and economics. Jennifer brings various equipment with her as educational tools. This year, she came to Lake Region Territory and we made a trip to Sunset Colony east of Britton and to Britton-Hecla School. We hope to resume the Coops in the classroom event for all area schools in December.

Jennifer presented to a very attentive group of elementary students at Sunset Colony. Beth Renner has

been teaching at the colony for 23 years. She was very interested in having us visit the school and present to the students. When we arrived at the colony Mrs. Renner and 15 eager students greeted us outside and a few of the older boys helped us take the equipment inside where we set up in the gym. Initially, the students were quietly listening but after a few minutes, Jennifer had them smiling, chatting and willing to participate in the activities and talk about electricity.

This is Jennifer's first visit to Sunset Colony; though she has previously presented at other colonies in East River's service territory. She noted that sometimes though the



Jennifer Gross of East River Electric teaches students about electricity.

younger children don't speak English fluently, as their traditional language is German, they pay close attention to what is going on and they seem to absorb everything. The students at Sunset enjoyed the presentation and even encouraged their teacher to get involved and wanted her to place her hands on the Van de Graaff generator so they can see her hair stand up. When Jennifer started talking about where power comes from, some of the older students shared their stories about generators. The time went quickly and the students seemed disappointed that the presentation had to come to an end but the lunch bell was calling and they had worked up an appetite pedaling Jennifer's special bicycle.

After presenting at the colony, we ventured into town to present to 4th and 5th graders at Britton-Hecla School. Typically, the presentation is given to 4th grade students but many of them missed out last year so we brought in 5th grade as well. A few of the 5th grade students had actually seen the presentation a couple of years before so they knew what was going on. This did not cut down on their excitement and it was a pleasant surprise to see that they retained most of the information they had previously learned.

It's a fun experience to watch the

## THE MOST POPULAR EXPERIMENT IS WHEN THE STUDENTS GET TO RIDE THE BIKE THAT IS HOOKED UP TO A SMALL GENERATOR.

energy in the room as children get absorbed by the topic of electricity and they learn how fun science can be.

A Van de Graaff generator is an electrostatic generator which uses a moving belt to accumulate electric charge on a hollow metal globe on the top of an insulated column, creating very high electric potentials. It produces very high voltage direct current (DC) electricity at low current levels. Jennifer uses a tabletop model that can store enough energy to produce a visible spark. There are several experiments that Jennifer involves the student in to teach them about the habits of electricity. The first lesson is about different types of electricity.

She teaches about "static" electricity, as this is one of the simplest forms of electricity and the one most children are familiar with. Static electricity is demonstrated in many ways, but the kids really get a kick out of choosing the classmate with the most "floaty" hair and giving them a temporary new hairdo. The kids learn about grounding and one of the most important lessons Jennifer teaches is that electricity is lazy and it's always

trying to find the easiest path to the ground. She demonstrates this in a couple of different ways, the most engaging is when the kids get to shock their friends!

The most popular experiment is when the students get to ride the bike that is hooked up to a small generator. Jennifer uses this tool to demonstrate power generation, demand & load and energy conservation. The more electricity being demanded creates a higher load for the power plant, which in this case, is the student pedaling the bike!

Co-ops in The Classroom is a wonderful partnership with East River, Lake Region and local schools to help educate young people about different aspects of electricity. It is evident that more children are learning about renewable and solar energy by the answers to Jennifer's questions and discussions that erupt from question-and-answer sessions. They have many questions about electrocution and how to avoid injury and even about conservation. We are looking forward to getting back to normal and returning to all area schools next December!

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest, Farmfest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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**July 4**  
Independence Day

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.

**JUNE 19-20**  
**Aberdeen Arts in the Park**  
Melgaard Park, Aberdeen,  
SD, 605-226-1557

**JUNE 25-27**  
**Annual Main Street Arts  
and Crafts Festival**  
N River Street, Hot Springs,  
SD, 605-440-2738

**JUNE 30-JULY 4**  
**Annual Black Hills Roundup**  
300 Roundup Street, Belle  
Fourche, SD, 605-723-2010

**JULY 2-4**  
**Custer's Old Time Country  
Fourth of July**  
Various Locations, Custer,  
SD, 605-673-2244

**JULY 2-4**  
**Gold Camp Jubilee Days**  
Various Locations, Lead,  
SD, 605-584-1100

**JULY 2-4**  
**Sitting Bull Stampede Rodeo**  
Rodeo Grounds, Mobridge,  
SD, 605-845-2387

**JULY 4**  
**Fall River Fourth of July**  
Various Locations, Hot Springs,  
SD, 605-745-4140

**JULY 4**  
**Fourth of July Celebration**  
703 Main Street, Deadwood,  
SD, 800-344-8826

**JULY 4**  
**Fourth of July Parade**  
Kemp Avenue, Watertown,  
SD, 605-886-5814

**JULY 9-11, 16-18, 23-25**  
**Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant**  
43379 Rose Lane, De Smet,  
SD, 605-983-5251

**JULY 9-11**  
**Annual Hot Harley Nights**  
J&L Harley-Davidson, Sioux  
Falls, SD, 605-334-2721

**JULY 10-11**  
**50th Annual Brookings  
Summer Arts Festival**  
W Highway 14 and 1st  
Avenue, Brookings,  
SD, 605-692-2787

**JULY 16-17**  
**Storybook Land Festival**  
Wylie Park, Aberdeen,  
SD, 605-626-7015

**JULY 16-18**  
**Gold Discovery Days**  
Various Locations, Custer,  
SD, 605-673-2244

**JULY 16-24**  
**Senior Summer Tournaments**  
Rapid City, SD, Contact Lindsey  
Meyers at 605-394-4175

**JULY 23-25**  
**Arlington Days**  
Various Locations, Arlington,  
SD, 605-983-5251

**JULY 27-31**  
**Days of '76 Rodeo & Parades**  
Various Locations, Deadwood,  
SD, 605-578-1876

**JULY 31**  
**Chislic Festival**  
Freeman's Prairie Arboretum,  
Freeman, SD, 605-496-9946

**AUGUST 5-14**  
**Sioux Empire Fair**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux  
Falls, SD, 605-367-7178

**AUGUST 17-19**  
**Dakotafest**  
2300 E Spruce Street, Mitchell,  
SD, 877-611-8161

**AUGUST 26-29**  
**58th Annual Steam  
Threshing Jamboree**  
Prairie Village, Madison,  
SD, 605-256-3644

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