

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Old Spink New Spink

**SD restaurants roll  
with the changes**  
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drought**  
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Joyce Schermer,  
Karisma Tripp and Brad  
and Lori Johannsen are  
shown at Spink Family  
Restaurant in Elk Point

May 22, 1942 - July 12, 2021

# Remembering Adrian 'Adie' Metz

Long time Lake Region Electric employee, Adrian "Adie" Metz passed away July 12, 2021. Adie worked at Lake Region for roughly 40 years. He retired in 2005 but wasn't quite ready to fully retire so he worked part time at LREA until 2010.



**Adie Metz**

*May 22, 1942 - July 12, 2021*

Adie was always a very hard worker. He was dedicated to his job and never turned down the opportunity to help out. "He was always willing to do whatever needed to be done to help the members of Lake Region Electric." He was also known for his willingness to help our fellow co-ops with storm jobs.

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

- Jason & Susan Hurd
- Sandra Lehr
- Mason Kilker
- Travis Nelsen
- Nathan & Vanessa Bloom
- Leah Fool Bear
- Steve Oetken
- Bruce & Karyn Babcock
- Bev Webster
- Toby Smythe
- DM Anderson Lakeview Farms LLC
- Conner Thompson

## OBITUARY

Adrian "Adie" Metz, 79, of Webster, SD, passed away on Monday, July 12, 2021, at Bethesda Home in Webster.

Adrian Duane Metz was born on May 22, 1942, at Peabody Hospital in Webster, SD, to Amos and Grace (Hemmah) Metz. He was baptized and confirmed at Roslyn Lutheran Church.

Adie attended school in Roslyn and graduated from Roslyn High School in 1960. After graduation, he farmed and worked as a lineman and foreman for LREA in Webster.

On May 11, 1963, he was united in marriage to MaryLou Dockett at Roslyn Lutheran Church in Roslyn. To this union four daughters were born: Charlene, Corinne, Ronette, and Stacey. The family made their home in Webster. Adie retired from LREA in 2005 but continued to work part time until 2010. He also continued farming until present time.

Adie loved collecting John Deere tractors, ice fishing with grandkids, auction sales, hunting, and attending grandkids' activities. He loved his family dearly and cherished time spent with all of them.

He will be missed by his wife, MaryLou Metz of Webster, SD; four daughters, Charlene and Rolfe Ludtke and her children, Marcus Schmieg and Ashley (children Sheldon and Khloe), Jessica Schmieg (children Shaela and Tristin), and Cody Engler,



*Adie Metz is shown during poletop rescue training. He served cooperative members for roughly 40 years.*

Corinne Rumpca and her children Ryan Rumpca and Christi and Tanner Christensen (children Brynlee and Brody), Ronette and Ryan Costain and their children Aiden and Bronson, and Stacey and Jason Knebel and their children Madisyn, Gannon, Taelyn, and Grayson. He is also survived by two sisters, Phyllis and Keith Nelson and Joyce and Bob Coyne. He is preceded in death by his parents, brother Ronald Metz, niece Rhonda Coyne, and Godson Todd Storley.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

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## Kilker attends leadership camp

Maggie Kilker of Britton was one of 26 high school students from across the state to participate in Connect Con: A Youth Leadership Experience on July 26-29. Maggie said the most enjoyable part of the trip in its entirety was the people that she met, "Everyone was so nice and we had lots of good laughs and made lots of memories!"

The event was sponsored by Lake Region Electric Association as part of the cooperative's ongoing commitment to education and youth development.

The conference agenda was packed with hands-on activities, social interaction and informational presentations on electrical power production, energy conservation, renewable sources of power and much more. While Maggie enjoyed all of the activities, one did stand out: "My favorite event would have to be the fish hatchery, we didn't have that much time there but the history was very interesting!"

Based at Black Hills State University, the students received a tour of the Spearfish Hydro Plant as well as Butte Electric Cooperative where the young leaders received an electric safety demonstration, learned about various safety equipment typically used by electric utility linemen and were lifted nearly 50 feet into the air in a hydraulic bucket.

LREA General Manager Tim McIntyre said the students learned about the cooperative business model and how electric cooperatives provide safe, reliable, affordable power to more than 125,000 homes and businesses across the state.

"The electric power industry is changing rapidly with new technology being introduced on a regular basis and a greater emphasis on renewable resources such as wind and solar," McIntyre said. "This event was important because one day these



Maggie Kilker, center, participates in a project with her Connect Con cohorts.

students will be involved in the process as ratepayers and as voters."

Delivering presentations to the group were Congressman Dusty Johnson, motivational speaker Scyller Borglum, SDSU Department of Electrical Engineering chairman Dr. Sid Suryanarayanan and leadership coach Malcom Chapman.

"I learned a lot from every activity, but my biggest take-away was that you should make sure everyone feels heard and make the effort to listen to everyone's idea. From the electrical/co-op aspect I learned there is so much that linemen have to worry about and factors that go into energy and getting it to homes and businesses."

The original Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. and the annual Youth Excursion to Basin Electric in Bismarck were canceled this year due to COVID-19. Our cooperatives want to continue to offer educational and fun experiences to our young members, so when the South Dakota Rural Electric Association organized this trip, Lake Region was all for it. Maggie highly recommends these programs to other members: "I would 1,000 percent recommend this trip to people! I was a little nervous to go because I went into it knowing nobody, but left knowing so many great people! This trip was such a learning experience, and I loved every minute of it!"

# Be aware of overhead power lines on farms

Powerlines pose a major hazard for South Dakota farmers. Lines over roads and rural areas have a minimum clearance of 18 feet but just 12.5 feet over residential private property.

Before working in a field or around shops or grain bins, always take the time to note the location of your cooperative's power lines so that you can make sure to remain a safe distance from them and stay free from harm. To stay safe around overhead power lines, farm operators and workers must:

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near utility power lines.
- Use extra caution when raising augers or grain truck beds around co-op power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines - at all times, and in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine the proper clearance.
- Always lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it to get added clearance.
- Call your electric cooperative immediately if a power line is sagging or is

hanging too low.

- If contact is made with a power line, remember that it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away and call the cooperative immediately.

- The only reason to decide to make an exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, then remember to jump off the equipment with both of your feet together, avoiding touching the ground and vehicle at the same time.

Then, still keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" away from the vehicle until you reach a safe distance.

If you see someone else's equipment that has come in contact with a power line in your area, the best help you can give will be from a safe distance.

Make sure to yell out to, signal or call the equipment operator to make sure he or she remains in the vehicle, and notify your local cooperative immediately.

Please remember to follow these tips to avoid accidents during the harvest season.

## TIPS FOR A SAFE HARVEST



The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center offers this useful checklist for farm safety called Stop-Think-Act. Take these steps to minimize injury risks during harvest season.

### Stop

- What could go wrong?
- How bad could it be?
- Has anything changed?

### Think

- Do I clearly understand the task?
- Am I physically and mentally ready?

- Do I have the right equipment and tools for the job?

### Act

- Make it safe.
- Use the right tools.
- Follow proper procedures.
- Reduce risks.
- Stop the task if it cannot be done safely.



## You put the 'pow' in power!

### Madilyn Gaikowski

Madilyn sends out a special note of appreciation for line workers across the state of South Dakota. She is the daughter of Gene and Loree Gaikowski. Gene serves as the Wessington Springs line foreman at Central Electric in Mitchell.

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.

# CROCKPOT CRAVINGS

## CROCKPOT APPLE BUTTER

Ingredients:

4 cups of sugar (more or less depending on sweetness of apples)  
 4 tsp. cinnamon  
 ¼ tsp. cloves  
 ¼ tsp. salt

**METHOD**

Fill a 5 quart crockpot full of chopped apples (quartered or smaller), no need to peel, but do remove seeds. Tart apples are best. Top with the ingredients above. Lid won't fit at first but settles down as apples cook. Begin cooking on high and when bubbling, put heat on low and cook all night, or until thick and dark color. Stir occasionally. If need be, blend a few seconds to soften peels. Pour into jars and seal.

**Cherie Leibel, Timber Lake**

## SLOW COOKER BEEF STEW

Ingredients:

3 cups water  
 1 package McCormick® Classic Beef Stew Seasoning Mix Packet  
 2 lbs beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces  
 1/4 cup flour  
 2 cups potato chunks  
 1 1/4 cups carrot chunks  
 1 medium onion, cut into thin wedges  
 1/2 cup sliced celery

**METHOD**

Mix vegetables, water and Beef Stew Seasoning Mix in slow cooker. Coat beef with flour. Stir into ingredients in slow cooker. Cover. Cook 8 hours on low or 5 hours on high until beef is tender.

[mccormick.com](http://mccormick.com)

## CROCKPOT BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH APPLES

Ingredients:

1 ½ to 2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and chopped (about 5 cups)  
 2 to 3 tart apples, chopped (about 2 cups)  
 ¼ c. dried cherries or cranberries  
 1 ½ tsp. grated fresh ginger  
 ½ tsp. salt  
 1/8 tsp. pepper  
 ½ tsp. cinnamon  
 ¼ tsp. nutmeg  
 ½ c. apple cider  
 ¼ tsp. salt

**METHOD**

Combine all ingredients in your slow cooker and stir together. Cover and cook on low 3-4 hours or until squash is tender, then turn to warm until serving. Can also be baked in conventional oven at 325 degrees until fork tender. Sweet potatoes can be used instead of butternut squash if desired.

**Linda Sherry, Sioux Falls**

**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.**

# Unclaimed capital credits: Help us get our member's money to them



One thing that sets Lake Region Electric Association apart from other Electric companies is that we are a member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative. LREA allocates any excess margins to our consumers after paying all the bills, reinvesting in infrastructure, and meeting our financial obligations. Lake Region tracks the allocations and refunds the money, back to our member-owners, as cash positions allow.

Active Members saw their refund as a credit on their May billing that was sent out at the beginning of June. Inactive members were mailed a check in June. A number of checks were returned to Lake Region as undeliverable by the post office. We are asking for your help getting these payments to these previous account holders. If you know the current address or phone number of anyone listed here, please notify them to contact us or contact Lake Region Electric Association by calling 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869 or by sending an email to lakeregion@lakeregion.coop. Thank you for your help!

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy used for cooling and heating your home makes up the largest portion of your monthly energy bills.

By combining regular equipment maintenance and upgrades with recommended insulation, air sealing and thermostat settings, you can save about 30% on your energy bills while helping our environment.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

Last Name	First Name	City/State
Ackerman	Paul / Barbara	Philipsburg, MT
Azure	Venique	Veblen, SD
Baum	Robert	Chester, SD
Brown	Doris	Lynwood, WA
Buettner	Larry	Bristol, SD
Cavalier	Teresa	Claremont, SD
Chase	Shawn / Karla	Redfield, SD
Davis	Karen	Redfield, SD
Farness	Al	Garden City, SD
Gonsoir	Randy	Webster, SD
Haber	Denton	Sioux Falls, SD
Hanson	Joseph / Donna	Sioux Falls, SD
Harder	Brian / Michele	Grand Forks, ND
Hoisington	Harley K.	Eden, SD
Jandahl	Gary / Martha	Yoncalla, OR
Jepsen	Robert / Lillian	Aberdeen, SD
Johnson	Hazel B / Terry	Webster, SD
Johnson	Theodore C.	Agency Village, SD
Johnson	Tom	Shakopee, MN
Kaul	Jean	Rapid City, SD
Kurkowski	David	Waubay, SD
Larsen	Lance	Bath, SD
Lesnar	Richard / Stephanie	Alexandria, Mn
Nelson	Kerry / Laurie	Britton, SD
Nordling	Donald / Corrine	Aberdeen, SD
Ogren	Ehlert / Joyce	Langford, SD
Owen	John / Beverly	Watertown, SD
Parker	James / Susan	Sioux Falls, SD
Parrow	Mike / Leona / Dennis	Britton, SD
Privatt	Carl	Advance, MO
Rickert	Craig	Sioux Falls, SD
Rickert	Paul / Marie	Sioux Falls, SD
Rohl	Robert / Roberta	Aberdeen, SD
Rosand Robert	or Linda Stanfill	Gainesville, FL
Satterlee	Lisa	Miller, SD
Scotting	Gaylon / Patsy	Baltic, SD
Shepherd	Raymond	Agency Village, SD
Sichmeller	Mrs. J S	Webster, SD
Sterzinger	Joe	Aberdeen, SD
St John	Elmer	Veblen, SD
Svare	Allen / Harriet	Lakeville, MN
Swanson	Adeline	Brookings, SD
Thompson	Stan	West Fargo, ND
Waddle	Emma	Webster, SD
Walker	Geraldine	Waubay, SD
Business/Org.	Contact Name	City/State
Wayne Bowers Est.	Kay Marie Bowers	Montrose, CO
David Kellen Est.	Marilyn Kellen	Hartford, SD
Lew Marian Estate	Tammy Paul	Anchorage, AK

# REZA BURNS

## Brookings native and rising magician puts SD on the entertainment map

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

While most of his peers at Brookings High School were playing sports, hunting and entering rodeo events, Reza Borchardt was venturing off in a completely different direction.

He was pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a magician and master illusionist in the style of his idol David Copperfield. From the time Reza (pronounced ray-zuh) got his first magic kit, he was determined to make a life and a living in the world of entertainment.

Today, Reza is on the tail end of a 140-day stretch captivating audiences at Branson's Famous Theater and making a big name for himself across the globe. In addition to touring extensively to more than 30 countries, Reza has made appearances on A&E's popular Duck Dynasty show and the CW network's Penn & Teller: Fool Us.

It all began for Reza in elementary school when he was asked to go on stage during a magic act. When he saw the response the magician was getting from the audience, that's when he caught the bug. By the age of 14, Reza was performing magic acts of his own and was inspired after meeting Copperfield in person on several occasions during his youth. By the time he was in college at SDSU, Reza was already touring across the region performing at corporate events and concert halls.

"When I got asked to go on stage and the guy was doing a simple trick with rings, it seemed like a really big deal. The kids were into it," Reza remembered. "That laid the groundwork for me. My parents bought me a magic kit and took me to see professional shows in Branson. I started building props and putting together an act in a warehouse in Brookings and started traveling and having some success."

When he was able to sell 200,000 tickets over 40 shows at a theater in Acapulco, that's when he had a hunch he could make it as a pro.

But Reza is savvy enough to know that the key to sustaining success in the business is reinventing his act and conceiving new ways to keep and hold the attention of audience members. That's how Copperfield was able to reach legendary status, he said.

"You have to find a way to keep making your brand relevant and keep your show exciting. People have so much sensory overload and the ways we receive information is moving so fast. So, I'm constantly updating the show and elevating the art form," he said. "I still film every show and watch it and critique it and look for ways to improve."

On stage, Reza carves out time to mention his South Dakota background and share stories of growing up in Brookings on the "cornfield side of the state." In some ways, he sees himself as an ambassador for South Dakota.

"I want to always remember my humble beginnings and how excited I was to be that kid who had dreams and plans," he said. "It's a vision that I saw happening, and now it has come true. And to think it all started in South Dakota...that's insane."





# RISING FROM THE ASHES

Rhonda Otten, along with her husband and three sons, has worked to keep Spink Family Restaurant open for business.  
*Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Spink restaurant emerges strong from hardships brought by fire and pandemic

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

Old Spink. New Spink. That's how Rhonda Otten variously refers to her restaurant, depending on whether she's alluding to the Spink Café that burned down in 2019 or the Spink Family restaurant that was throttled by the pandemic but is thriving today.

For more than 20 years, the Spink Café was a big draw in the township located in Union County. The eatery was known for its Friday night fish fries during Lent, Sunday dinners and its famous Spinkburger. The 80-year-old structure had recently been re-decorated with a 50s theme, featuring old LPs, vinyl album covers on the wall and pictures of Elvis Presley.

But life for Otten and her husband Sam changed in November of 2019 when the area's most

popular attraction was totally consumed by fire.

The way the Ottens saw it, there was no option but to rebuild. But the planned resurrection of the business wouldn't occur in the confines of Spink. The new iteration, renamed Spink Family Restaurant, would be located in the old American Legion hall in downtown Elk Point.

By all accounts, the "new Spink" wasn't so easy to bring forth from the ashes. Two weeks after working hard to get the new facility ready for business in Elk Point, the pandemic hit and threatened to dash the Ottens' hopes for good.

"The fire was in November, we made the decision to keep going in December, and we re-opened in March. We were open for two weeks when the pandemic hit, Rhonda said. "Those two weeks were very, very busy. It was a madhouse in

here. We had a lot more space and we were finally getting in the groove."

Facing the same problems as just about every restaurant owner in the state and nation, the Ottens were forced to hit the pause button and try to figure out the next step to take. They closed for a month, regrouped, and then returned to offer carry-out service only.

Members of the community rallied to support the restaurant, including employees at Union County Electric located just two blocks away.

According to Union County Electric General Manager Matt Klein, the cooperative always strives to support other local businesses that help the community thrive.

"At lunchtime you're likely to see some of our guys eating there," Klein said. "When they had carry-out, we ordered food for meetings and just did what we could to help — just like we do with other members of the community. We help whenever and wherever we can."



Server Karisma Tripp tends to another satisfied customer at Spink Family Restaurant in Elk Point.

Rhonda said it was inspiring to see the town pull together to face the impact of the pandemic, and also to help the business survive after the back-to-back calamities.



Cody Olson, center, enjoys lunch with his co-workers from Valley Ag Supply.

“The community really supported us and we’re very grateful for that,” she said. “But we’ve seen this many times before; people watching out for each other and helping when there’s a need. That’s what really pushed us through.”

One regular patron who is happy to see the new Spink succeeding is Joyce Schermer. She occupied a table in the restaurant one recent lunch hour along with her son Brad Johannsen and his wife Lori. The Johannsens are regular visitors to the

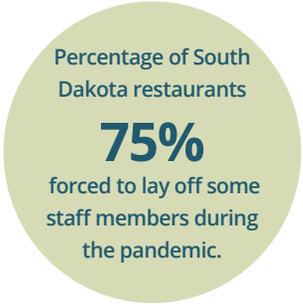
area from Sedona, Ariz., and always make a point to stop at Spink, preferring the hot beef sandwich and the prime rib sandwich.

“It’s always good every time you come,” said Schermer, a resident of Akron who opted for her go-to French Dip. “You’re never disappointed in the food or the service. It’s wonderful.”

Also enjoying a lunchtime meal were several employees of Valley Ag Supply. The company is located a half mile from the old Spink building that was destroyed by fire.

“We used to go there all the time and we were disappointed when it burned down. You could see our fertilizer plant from there,” said Cody Olson while noshing on the French Dip. “Now there’s no place to go. So, we just drive into town because it’s so good. It’s great that they came back and are still operating.”

As for “old Spink,” the Ottens are still trying to figure out what to do with the heap left in the wake of the conflagration. The building had an upstairs apartment where several members of the family lived at



various times through the years.

“It’s going to have to be torn down eventually, but we just don’t want to let it go,” Rhonda said. “There are so many memories attached to that place; both of our parents were such a big part of it.”

She emphasized that while the restaurant is in a new location, the food is the same as before. The Ottens, who have always used family recipes, depend on all three of their sons – ages 17 through 23 – to handle the cooking to maintain consistency on a daily basis.

“The secret to our success is that the five of us do all the cooking here. We use time-proven family recipes that have been popular for decades,” Rhonda said.



Ongoing training programs keep employees up to date on the latest trends and technology.

# Continuing education is a priority for your cooperative

**Laura London**

Administrative Assistant

Hiring highly skilled and motivated individuals is paramount to building a strong team that can serve the members of Lake Region Electric. Motivated employees value and expect development opportunities that will help them become and remain the best at what they do.

“Education, Training, and Information” is one of the 7 Cooperative Principles guiding Lake Region Electric. In addition to contributing to the education of the youth in the communities we serve, Lake Region provides education and training for its members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of the cooperative.

Continuing education for our employees is essential to keeping our cooperative operating effectively. Educational opportunities are available in abundance through many of our cooperative allies. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) offers a variety of professional

development workshops, training and educational opportunities with the philosophy, “By investing in continuous learning your co-op is making a commitment not only to individual professional and personal growth, but to the future of your co-op and the high quality of service your member-owners expect and deserve.”

South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) offers a majority of the safety training we need to comply with OSHA and other regulations. There should never be compromises made when safety is involved; continuous training is an absolute must. Every year the employees of Lake Region undergo safety trainings, which include refreshers on First Aid, CPR, Emergency Response Management, and more focused training such as Pole Top Rescue and Rubber Gloving.

Management and office staff are offered various educational opportunities to keep up with the latest industry trends, technologies and best practices. Often while at trainings, employees build a support network of people they can reach out to when going through changes and challenges.

Cooperation Among Cooperatives is

another of the 7 Cooperative Principles; when employees build a network of peers throughout the cooperative system, they are more successful on an individual level that strengthens our coop. As technology advances, it creates changes in the way we do things to benefit our members. These advances mean we need to take advantage of training opportunities so employees can be efficient at implementing new things.

Recently, Utility Specialist Nathan Baumgarn attended a Distribution and Engineering course offered through NRECA where he learned about building underground and overhead electrical lines, specifications and design.

“The class was represented by co-ops from all over the nation. Seeing how other co-ops operate shows areas we can improve on, but also points out things we do very well. Especially as technology progresses, these types of training classes are pivotal to stay up to date with the industry. Many of these co-ops in the more urbanized states have 20,000-80,000 members, so I really walked away with an appreciation for our smaller co-op where we know many of our members by name.”

Lake Region has apprenticeship programs for Linemen and Electricians interested in earning their Journeyman’s License. Linemen must attend vocational school prior to being hired as an apprentice lineman at LREA.

They must then work 8,000 hours on the job and complete a company sponsored apprenticeship program on their own. In addition to logging hours, studying and course testing, apprentices must pass a test through the apprenticeship program to obtain their Journeyman's License. Tevin Abeln is currently an Apprentice Lineman at LREA. Apprentice Electricians also must complete 8,000 hours of apprenticeship work but they can be given credit for some of their education hours to complete the required hours. Electricians must pass a test through the State Electrical Commission in order to become licensed electricians. Electricians are required to have a minimum of 16 Continuing Education Hours every two years with half of those hours being "code classes." Vinson Dargatz and Leonard Deibert are both Apprentice Electricians at LREA.

Beyond the scholarship opportunities offered to area students, youth can request an internship at LREA through their schools. Internships generally last a few weeks with students working with each department to gain a better understanding of the electric industry and how a cooperative works.

Another way LREA contributes to the education of area youth is by offering jobs as Summer Help. Summer help positions can be part time or full-time hours, depending on the needs of the co-op and the availability of the applicant. Through Internships and Summer Help programs, youth get hands on learning that can help them make career choices and set future goals. LREA Lineman Bryce Jorgensen worked as a summer hire while he was in high school then returned to become a full-time lineman.

While many graduates are taking the last summer off before moving on to college, Hayden Reints of Pierpont chose to come to work at LREA. Hayden has been spending about 40 hours a week with the Operations Department learning what it takes to be a lineman. Hayden plans to attend Mitchell Technical Institute this fall to study Powerline Maintenance and Construction; working for Lake Region is giving him a head start. On a very hot day this summer, Hayden was out with a crew upgrading infrastructure in the field, he was asked if this is what he wants to do the rest of his life; he nodded and said, "Yep."

Continuing education through all levels is important to keep things running smoothly. Directors hold regular meetings to discuss the affairs of LREA as well as trends in the industry that affect the way we operate. It is important that the directors continuously educate themselves on developments that have an affect on the industry in order to make decisions that allow us to operate in a manner that provides our members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. Directors attend statewide, regional and national meetings and workshops. Additionally, courses are offered to become Credentialed Cooperative Directors. The Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program offered through NRECA consists of five courses that focus on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their members. Directors Wismer and Kilker completed CCD training in 2019.

Our equipment and infrastructure are quite valuable but the biggest asset we have is our people, and it makes sense to invest in them. Whether that is an investment of time or cost for classes, it is well worth it to our cooperative.

## School is in session: LREA employees are always learning

Parents are getting ready to send the kids back to school and teachers are preparing their classrooms and lesson plans. All of the

normal things that should be happening in late August and early September are happening, in order to get the kids ready for a successful year.



**Tim McIntyre**  
General Manager

Here at Lake Region Electric, we don't wait for fall; school is almost always in session. Quite often people think that once you land a job with an organization like Lake

Region Electric, that's it, you're done. You are set up and ready to work. While you may have received a diploma, degree or certification that helped you qualify for your position, that isn't quite enough to keep you employed long-term without continuing your education. Employees at Lake Region regularly attend a variety of classes, trainings, workshops, and seminars in order to keep up with the latest technologies and keep their skills sharp.

Our board of directors is responsible for overseeing the affairs of the cooperative to ensure that we are able to provide reliable power to our members at a competitive, yet affordable rate. To do this, they need to stay on top of the latest trends, regulations and other business topics relative to create policy at your electric cooperative. In order to successfully fulfill their duties as directors of Lake Region Electric, they must attend meetings, trainings and workshops.

We take education seriously. From the Board of Directors on down to our summer help, school is always in session for the people of Lake Region Electric.

Thank you & God Bless,  
Timothy McIntyre

# LEARNING FROM ADVERSITY

The Dakota Lakes Research Farm produces information helpful to farmers and ranchers dealing with drought. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## SDSU agriculture researcher Dwayne Beck looks for better ways to gain higher yields through crop rotations and other techniques

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The drought conditions that gripped the state through the summer months caused difficulty for farmers and ranchers. The drought in 2012 also made it difficult to grow and harvest a productive crop.

But it's the drought that occurred in 1988 that Dwayne Beck remembers most. Beck, 70, is a researcher with SDSU who runs the Dakota Lakes research farm near Canning.

According to the National Integrated Drought Information System, as of June 23 more than 97 percent of South Dakota and all of Minnesota were categorized as "abnormally dry."

As someone who considers himself a seasoned investigator and problem solver, Beck looks at the current drought conditions as an

opportunity to learn.

So, what exactly did the farming and ranching community learn in 1988 when adverse weather conditions caused an estimated \$60 billion in agricultural damage across the U.S.?

"We learned not to do tillage," Beck responds without hesitation. "This drought is about the worse I've seen since 1988, and we learned then that in this part of the country if you till, you're screwed. No-till gives you a chance to have a decent crop and run a viable farming operation."

And the key to succeeding without tilling is proper crop rotation. That's what keeps Beck and other researchers busy.

On a recent afternoon, Melanie Caffe and her assistant Nick Paul were operating a small combine to gather their test crops laid out in strips measuring five feet wide by 20

feet long. Caffe, a native of France, is an ag professor at SDSU, while Paul is a local farmer and research technician.

The two-member team moved from section to section, cleaning out the collection bin as they went to keep the samples from being contaminated and corrupting the research data. The samples were



Dwayne Beck runs the Dakota Farms research facility near Canning.



Melanie Caffe and Nick Paul collect samples from a field at the Dakota Farms Research Station near Canning.

bagged and taken into the lab where Caffe and Paul planned to perform fertility experiments with the goal of developing varieties with higher yield, higher quality and stronger drought resistance.

Much of the research centers around maximizing yields through effective crop rotations. Beck has spent much of his career considering the ways farming was conducted 100 or more years ago and how it can be improved.

“The Natives grew crops before the Spaniards came and brought horses. They were all no-tillers because they didn’t have cows and horses to pull the plows. They grew 13 different kinds of corn, beans, squash and sunflowers. They were very successful. The settlers never asked anyone how to grow crops here, they just got out their plow and started turning over the soil.”

Beck has seen the wonders of crop rotation in his research. Some of his fields are rotated five ways.

“Good rotations can produce a lack of disturbance in places where you don’t have a lot of water. Our research shows 99 percent of resistance issues could be solved with better crop rotations. There are fields where we haven’t used insecticides for 18 years.”

Beck said his methods aren’t always adopted by industry but he continues to gather data and push out the information obtained through research.

“The nice about being a research guy is you always have more things to learn,” he said. “The more you research, the more you don’t know, but we’re always looking for answers.”

## HOPS GROWERS NAVIGATING THEIR WAY THROUGH CHANGING INDUSTRY

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

In many ways, Ryan Heine is like the average South Dakota farmer. He frets about the weather, plans for the future, worries about finances, watches the markets and is constantly trying to find a buyer for the crop he hopes will make.

But his crop is unlike most of the others that emerge from the South Dakota soil. Heine is owner of 6th Meridian Hop Farm near Yankton. His is one of six such farms left in the state growing hops for brewers to transform into craft beer.

Heine also sees his work as different compared to most farmers – he relies on his nose a lot.

“There’s a lot of experimenting with different aromas.

There are so many flavor profiles and varieties of hops that are used in creating craft beer,” he said. “There’s a vast palette of different aromas, and the market will dictate what consumers prefer.”

Ryan and his wife Michelle launched their hop operation in 2014, leaving Omaha and returning to the small family farm near Yankton in pursuit of a more grounded lifestyle for their five children.

“We wanted to get out of the city and back to our farming roots,” said Ryan, who works remotely as an electrical engineer for a company out of Minneapolis.

Ryan’s interest in growing the essential elements of craft beer began when he was a student at Parks College in St. Louis, Mo. He went out with his friends and found most of what was offered at bars, pubs and restaurants was bland and uninspiring. He knew he liked the flavor of beer and he knew he liked the simplicity of the farming lifestyle.

“So I started doing some home brewing and found that it was a fun hobby to pursue. Now we have one of the biggest operations in the state,” he said.

Heine’s time on the farm is spent fussing over flavor and aroma profiles, acid levels, yeast growth, oil content, insect invasions, disease infections and more. He and Michelle do all the growing, harvesting, processing, drying, pulverizing, preserving, pressing and packaging.

He finds markets by visiting with brewers, forging relationships across the region and even keeping in touch with his college buddies.

“There are some college roommates I’ve kept in touch with who are brewers and we’re always talking about how to improve our products,” he said. “Hops growers are down to just a handful in the state, but for those who have survived, I think the outlook is good.”



# BULLISH ON BEES

## Beekeeping industry struggles with drought and other obstacles along with overall agriculture sector

**Billy Gibson**

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

Becoming a beekeeper wasn't something Chad Holbrook dreamed about back when he worked as a farm loan officer in Texas.

But he decided it might be an interesting hobby, so about 10 years ago he bought himself a hive just for the fun of it.

As things sometimes tend to go, one hive led to two, two hives led to four and before he knew it, Holbrook was giving his day job the boot. Goodbye business suit, hello beekeeping suit.

These days, Holbrook manages about 3,000 hives out of his main headquarters in Fairfax, MN, although he still has some hives back in Texas. A member of Renville-

Sibley Co-op Power, he ships his hives for pollination purposes all across the Midwest and to other regions as well to help growers gain higher crop yields.

"After I got my first bee hive I just really enjoyed doing it, and it snowballed and just kept increasing every year," Holbrook said. "I finally quit my day job to run the business in January of 2017, which is something I never thought I'd do."

That's a move that took some courage because Holbrook knew from his brief experience that while bees can be tough buggers, they also have plenty of obstacles threatening their place in nature and their very existence.

After all, some of the boxes, frames, pallets and extraction equipment he purchased to start

his own operation were acquired from beekeepers making a bee-line straight out of the business.

The list of real and potential apiary antagonists is long. Apiculturists are constantly trying to protect their colonies from various types of threats including several species of mites, insecticides, pesticides, extreme weather and destruction of their habitat.

One pitfall not often discussed in the public discourse is the attrition that takes place from merely moving colonies from one patch of farmland to the next, and in some cases, moving hives from one spot to another to protect them during the inclement non-pollinating months.

Holbrook figures the attrition rate can be up to 10 percent anytime hives are loaded onto a truck and hauled to different locations. It's a significant loss considering an estimated one-third of the world's food supply depends on the pollination work performed by



Honey bees pollinate roughly one-third of the world's agriculture crops.

honey bees. Since 2010, beekeepers in South Dakota, Minnesota and across the country have experienced historically high colony loss rates of nearly 30 percent a year impacting roughly 90 different agricultural crops ranging from almonds and apples on the West Coast to cotton and cranberries in the East.

“Keeping them alive is the hardest thing,” Holbrook said. “There are substances farmers use to manage vegetation and help their crops, but it’s causing a reduction in the forage area for bees. But everybody has to make a living and I don’t fault the farmers...if I were them I’d probably be doing the same thing. But we can all look for ways to be more environmentally friendly because we’re all making a living off nature.”

Holbrook, who describes himself as a migratory commercial beekeeper, typically transports bees to California every January to pollinate that state’s almond crop and then heads to his facility in Texas to extract honey. July is the slowest month of the year, then there’s a short fall season before the bees head to an indoor storage facility in Idaho for protection against the cold.

Despite the drought conditions that have caused stress for farmers, ranchers and apiculturists across the region, Holbrook is bullish on the beekeeping industry. He noted that the city of Sioux Falls recently approved an ordinance that allows residents to maintain hives on their property. Would-be beekeepers must

apply for a permit, take an online class, inform their neighbors of their intentions and adhere to other prescribed guidelines.

Holbrook reports that through the spring and summer seasons - and despite the drought - honey prices have seen an upward shift. For instance, he said the price for honey in the region last year was about \$1.70 per pound but has climbed to more than \$2.25. The international market is expected to expand from \$9.2 billion to \$19 billion by 2028.

“We were fortunate that we’ve had some timely rains and the hot, dry weather hasn’t caused problems for my business. It has been an average crop for me. But you don’t ever really know for sure until the honey is extracted,” he said.



According to owner Kiah Crowley, Sunrise Hives in Spearfish maintains about 400 bee colonies. *Photo by Sunrise Hives*

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South Dakota State Fair  
September 2-6, 2021



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**AUGUST 25-29**  
**Corn Palace Festival**  
604 N Main Street, Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

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

**AUGUST 27-28**  
**Sizzlin' Summer Nights**  
Main Street, Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-3441

**AUGUST 27-29**  
**Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival**  
Hot Springs Municipal Airport, Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

**AUGUST 28**  
**McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Rodeo**  
McCrossan Boys Ranch Campus, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-339-1203

**SEPTEMBER 2-6**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD, 605-353-7340

**SEPTEMBER 9-12**  
**SD State Senior Games**  
Watertown, SD, Contact Howard at 605-491-0635 for more information

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**Mickelson Star Trail**  
Rochford Trailhead, Hill City, SD, register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mickelson-star-trail-night-tickets-140121383831>

**SEPTEMBER 10-11**  
**Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll**  
Main Street, Vermillion, SD, 605-624-2021

**SEPTEMBER 11-12**  
**Fall Harvest Festival**  
Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792

**SEPTEMBER 12**  
**Annual Antique Car & Tractor Parade**  
Main Street, Farmer, SD, 605-239-4498

**SEPTEMBER 17-18**  
**Deadwood Jam**  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

**SEPTEMBER 18**  
**Fort Sisseton Harvest Festival**  
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

**SEPTEMBER 18**  
**Tabor Church Quilt & Craft Sale**  
620 E Highway 12, Webster, SD, 605-880-3377

**SEPTEMBER 23-25**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival**  
13329 US Highway 16A, Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

**SEPTEMBER 25**  
**Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival**  
526 Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

**SEPTEMBER 25-26**  
**Menno Pioneer Power Show**  
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**OCTOBER 1-3**  
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**OCTOBER 8-10**  
**2021 Black Hills Powwow**  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-341-0925

**OCTOBER 9-10**  
**Sioux Falls Quilters' Guild Bi-annual Quilt Show**  
1201 N West Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD, for more info visit [siouxfallsquiltersguild.com](http://siouxfallsquiltersguild.com) or send an email to [sfqg2021show@gmail.com](mailto:sfqg2021show@gmail.com)

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