

## Cooperative Connections

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H.S. events**

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forge the future  
of cooperatives**

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## Living co-op principles in the time of a pandemic: **Focus on our Members**



**Ken Schlimgen**

General Manager

**Despite the challenges, electric cooperatives are keeping the lights on, working with members on payment plans, accelerating capital credit retirements, and some are even expanding broadband access.**

**Save the Date:**  
**September 29**  
**20th Cooperative Annual Meeting**

It is clear that the pandemic has changed our perception of normal. As concepts such as “social distancing” first circulated among health officials, electric cooperatives looked ahead to identify and confront the possible impacts of COVID-19.

As our South Dakota co-ops responded to local concerns and circumstances, co-ops across the nation all worked together to present a unified front to our political leaders in Washington and urged them to address the specific needs of our members. In collaboration with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) in Washington, D.C., we informed policymakers about the challenges being faced on the ground by electric cooperatives across the country.

One of the first things NRECA looked at was the projected economic impact of COVID-19 on individual co-ops and their consumer-members. NRECA projected that lost electric sales and unpaid bills would total a staggering \$10 billion through 2022. Central Electric's sales through the end of June are \$1.8 million below budget expectations. However, expenses are also below budget resulting in a positive bottom line through the end of June.

Despite the challenges, electric cooperatives are keeping the lights on, working with members on payment plans, accelerating capital credit retirements, and some are even expanding broadband access. But we feel the federal government has a role to play, as well.

Among the policy responses sought by NRECA and their member electric cooperatives is the ability to refinance loans from the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Central Electric and many other electric cooperatives deliver essential services in the most rural and impoverished parts of the country. Many electric cooperatives meet that challenge, in part, with low-cost financing from the RUS.

However, the RUS does not permit borrowers to adjust or refinance existing loans simply to take advantage of lower rates, and penalties are significant in the narrow circumstances that allow for refinancing.

NRECA and its members are pressing for federal legislation that would allow electric co-ops to adjust RUS debt to current market rates, providing greater cash-flow flexibility to meet the needs of rural consumers in these challenging economic times and allowing co-ops to be part of the long-term recovery.

Electric co-ops nationally could realize \$10.1 billion in net present value savings from the repricing of \$42 billion in RUS loans. If Central Electric could refinance its current debt at today's interest rate, we estimate it would save the cooperative approximately \$450,000 annually.

One of the Seven Cooperative Principles—Concern for Community—is looming large right now in our minds and the minds of America's electric cooperatives. It has guided our response to the pandemic, and will continue serving as our primary focus as we navigate through these uncertain times.

Please remember to mark September 29th on your calendar to attend your cooperative's annual meeting. Watch your mail and next month's newsletter for more details on the time and location for the meeting.

Until next month, take care and be safe!





A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

(USPS 018-963)

## Board of Directors

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Todd VanWalleghen - Vice President  
Bernetta Burghardt - Secretary  
Mark Reindl - Treasurer  
Mark Hofer - NRECA  
Roger Campbell  
Donita Loudner - SDREA  
Darwin "Butch" Morrison  
Jim Headley

**General Manager:** Ken Schlimgen

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CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Central Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at [www.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop).

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Postmaster: Please send address changes to Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301 Telephone: (605)996-7516; Fax: (605) 996-0869; e-mail: [cec@centralec.coop](mailto:cec@centralec.coop); website: [www.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop).

## Office Information

M-F 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516  
[www.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop)

**Our office is closed to the public until further notice due to COVID-19.**

## Mission Statement

Provide Reliable Energy & Services  
with a Commitment to Safety and  
Member Satisfaction

## CO-OP NEWS

# Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met on July 20, 2020 at the Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting.

The board approved the June meeting minutes and safety meeting minutes. The board then reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and the financials.

## Board Report

Manager Schlimgen updated the board on the following:

- Strategic planning session to be held later that day.
- Update and usage on commercial accounts.
- Review the power bill and power factor.
- Basin Electric FERC filings.
- Requested attendance for the SDREA Board Leadership Training.

Director VanWalleghen gave a report on the SD Association of Cooperatives meeting.

Attorney Petersen reported on the SDREA Legal Seminar.

Director Wolbrink reported on the East River Electric board meeting.

Director Loudner reported on the SDREA board meeting.

Director Hofer reported on the NRECA board meeting.

## Board Action

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved a member request to install distributed generation.
2. Approved to file to intervene in support of Basin Electric's FERC filings.
3. Approved additional board members to attend the SDREA Board Leadership Training.
4. Approved Inventory of Work Orders No. 232 for \$513,669.52.

The next board of directors meeting will be held August 17, 2020 at the Betts Road Service Center.

*Please contact the cooperative office for more information regarding the board meeting.*

Financial Report	June 2020	Year-to-Date
kWh Sales	24,740,964 kWhs	163,416,504 kWhs
Electric Revenues	\$2,616,471	\$16,343,903
Total Cost of Service	\$2,479,121	\$15,573,736
Operating Margins	\$137,350	\$770,167

# Office Closed

Our office will be closed on Monday, Sept. 7 in observance of Labor Day.

In case of an outage or emergency, you can reach us at anytime at 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516.



## Recreational Boating: Stay Safe on the Water

With more than 11 million recreational vessels registered in the U.S., millions of Americans are enjoying time on and in the water.

Each year, roughly 4,000 boating incidents occur, causing more than 2,500 injuries and about \$46 million in property damage. Stay safe by being prepared and using the appropriate equipment, whether enjoying a ride on a motorized boat, paddling a kayak or wakeboarding.

Life jackets are at the core of safe boating, whether using a motorized or non-motorized vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard reports 76 percent of boating deaths in 2017 were due to drowning, and 84 percent of the victims were not wearing a life jacket.

While regulations on life jacket use vary from state to state, the Wear It program of the National Safe Boating Council promotes boating safety by encouraging boaters to wear life jackets any time they are on a boat, motorized or non-motorized.

Good swimmers still need life jackets. When people fall off a boat, they may become disoriented, injured or unconscious. Life jackets can keep victims' heads above water so they can breathe and be rescued more easily. Every child should wear a life jacket at all times when boating.

Choose the right life jacket for the activities you will be doing. Double check to make sure the life jackets are U.S. Coast Guard approved and fit correctly:

- Make sure the jacket is a proper fit for your size and weight
- Make sure the jacket is properly fastened
- Hold your arms straight up over your head, ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings and gently pull up; make sure there is no excess room above the openings and that the jacket does not ride up over your chin or face.

The National Safe Boating Council encourages following these boating safety tips to help minimize risks:

- Take a National Association of Boating Law Administrators safety course
- Be familiar with the boating state laws
- Know the "Rules of the Road"
- When operating a motorized boat, know about carbon monoxide; this odorless, colorless poisonous gas is emitted by all combustion engines and onboard motor generators.

## Taggart, Schmidt win Glenn English scholarships

Anneliese Taggart of Vermillion recently landed a \$10,000 scholarship award presented by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Carter Schmidt of Colman also won a \$1,000 scholarship through the Glenn English Youth Tour Alumni Scholarship program.

Taggart and Schmidt were participants in the 2016 NRECA Washington Youth Tour. Taggart was sponsored by Clay-Union Electric Corp., while Schmidt was sponsored by Sioux Valley Energy.

Taggart was elected by her peers to join the Youth Leadership Council. She participated in a grassroots panel discussion at NRECA's Annual Meeting last year and also helped teach a

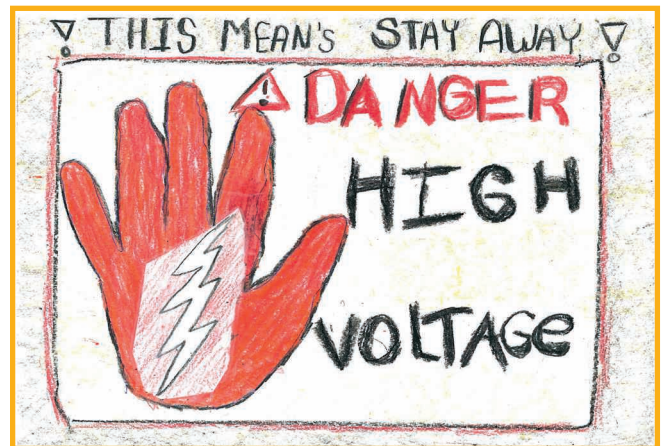
course called "Bridging the Gap" to encourage young adults to vote.

Now in its fifth year, the Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation has awarded nearly \$100,000 in scholarships to NRECA Youth Tour alumni.

The Glenn English scholarships are one of the few sources of private scholarships for college students. Applicants are required to have completed one year of college as a full-time student.

Glenn English, former CEO of NRECA, spent his career championing the co-op business model and fighting to improve the quality of life for all Americans. A native of Oklahoma, he served 10 terms in Congress.

## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Danger! High voltage! This means stay away!"**

**David Biggins, 10 years old**

David Biggins is the son of Jessy and Katie Biggins. They reside in Gregory, S.D., and are members of Rosebud Electric Association.

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.

# Goodies from the Garden

## Mashed Potatoes with Kale

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 4 med. potatoes      | 1/4 c. grated cheese<br>(cheddar or Colby)     |
| 2 Tbs. butter        |  |
| 1 Tbs. milk or cream | 1-1/2 c. chopped raw kale,<br>mid-ribs removed |

Peel potatoes if desired, cut into chunks, boil until tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain, mash and add remaining ingredients. Stir until well combined. Serve with sea salt and pepper. *Mary Jessen, Holabird, SD*

## Cabbage Salad Bowl

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 cups shredded cabbage | 1/2 tsp. salt        |
| 1 c. shredded carrots   | 2 Tbs. sugar         |
| 2 Tbs. tarragon vinegar | 1/2 c. light raisins |
| 1/4 c. mayonnaise       | 1/4 c. orange juice  |

Soak raisins in orange juice while preparing vegetables. Combine cabbage, carrots, sugar and salt in a bowl. Add mayonnaise along with raisins and juice. Toss lightly. Refrigerate until time to serve. Serves 8. *Verna Knapp, Waubay, SD*

## Balsamic Vegetable Salad

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 3 lg. tomatoes, wedged                         | 1/4 c. balsamic vinegar            |
| 3 med. cucumbers, peeled,<br>halved and sliced | 3 Tbs. water                       |
| 1/2 c. olive oil                               | 1 envelope Italian dressing<br>mix |

In a salad bowl combine tomatoes and cucumbers; in another small bowl whisk oil vinegar, water and dressing mix. Pour over vegetables and toss to coat. Yields: 6 servings. *Jane Barthel, Elkton, SD*

## Rhubarb Upside Down Cake

- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Yellow cake mix         | 3-4 c. sugar          |
| 4-6 c. rhubarb, chopped | 1 pint whipping cream |

Mix cake mix as directed. Put in a 9x13-inch pan. Mix rhubarb with sugar; pour over cake. Pour whipping cream over mixture and bake at 350 for 30-45 minutes. *Shirley Dreher, Clark, SD*

## Zucchini Dish

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1/4 c. cooking oil                       | 1/2 med. green, red or<br>yellow pepper cut in thin<br>strips |
| 1 lb. unpeeled thinly sliced<br>zucchini |   |
| 1 lg. carrot, coarsely<br>shredded       | 1/4 tsp. dried basil, crushed                                 |
| 1 lg. onion, chopped                     | Dash of pepper  |
| 3/4 c. chopped celery                    | 1/2 c. taco sauce   |
| 1/2 tsp. garlic salt                     | 2 tsps. prepared mustard                                      |
|  | 2 medium tomatoes, cut in<br>wedges                           |

Heat cooking oil in a 10-inch skillet. Add sliced zucchini, shredded carrot, chopped onion, chopped celery, pepper strips, garlic salt, basil and pepper. Mix well, cook covered, over medium-high heat 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine taco sauce and mustard; stir into vegetables. Add tomato wedges, cook uncovered, 3-5 minutes or till heated through. Makes 4-6 servings. Optional: sprinkle with shredded cheese of your choice. *Rachel Brezczinski, Marshall, MN*

## Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 24-28 cherry tomatoes                          | 1 medium cucumber, peeled<br>and diced |
| 1 package (8 ounces) cream<br>cheese, softened | 2 teaspoons minced dill                |
| 2 tablespoons mayonnaise                       | fresh dill, for garnish                |
| 3 green onion stalks, diced                    |  |

Cut thin slice off top of each tomato. Scoop out pulp. Invert tomatoes on paper towel to drain. In medium bowl, combine cream cheese and mayonnaise until smooth. Stir in cucumber, green onion and dill. Spoon mixture into tomatoes. Top with fresh dill. Refrigerate until ready to serve. [www.culinary.net](http://www.culinary.net).

Please send your favorite pasta recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.





# TAXES FOR SCHOOLS

Local schools receive over \$1 million in tax revenue from electric cooperative

Central Electric Cooperative pays taxes on the total kWhs (kilowatt hours) sold annually to members. In 2019, these taxes amounted to over \$1 million, and that tax revenue is paid on behalf of the schools based on where the kWhs were sold.

Our wholesale power suppliers, East River Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative, also pay tax on the amount of kWhs purchased by Central Electric Coop-

erative. The tax paid for school districts grows as members use more electric power and more members receive service. This is just one way in which the electric cooperative benefits its local communities.

The amounts listed below include the contributions from Central Electric Cooperative, East River Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

## KWH Tax Received Listed by School District

<b>BRIDGEWATER-EMERY</b>	\$ 7,171
<b>CHAMBERLAIN</b>	\$ 103,182
<b>CORISCA-STICKNEY</b>	\$ 18,810
<b>ETHAN</b>	\$ 17,696
<b>HANSON</b>	\$ 49,399
<b>HOWARD</b>	\$ 320,407
<b>HURON</b>	\$ 1,976
<b>KIMBALL</b>	\$ 57,369
<b>MADISON CENTRAL</b>	\$ 495
<b>MCCOOK CENTRAL</b>	\$ 1,036
<b>MILLER</b>	\$ 287

<b>MITCHELL</b>	\$ 268,389
<b>MOUNT VERNON</b>	\$ 34,502
<b>OLDHAM-RAMONA</b>	\$ 1,492
<b>PARKSTON</b>	\$ 5,100
<b>PLANKINTON</b>	\$ 49,560
<b>PLATTE-GEDDES</b>	\$ 14,334
<b>SANBORN CENTRAL</b>	\$ 38,568
<b>WESSINGTON</b>	\$ 53,539
<b>SPRINGS</b>	\$ 20,614
<b>WHITE LAKE</b>	\$ 20,545
<b>WOONSOCKET</b>	<b>\$ 1,084,468</b>

# Employee Years of Service



**Jon Reichert**

Journeyman Lineman  
September 1 - 10 years



**Ryan Mueller**

Systems Coordinator  
September 1 - 5 years



**John Vetch**

Journeyman Lineman  
September 6 - 32 years



**Dave Henkel**

Journeyman Electrician  
September 10 - 2 years



**Andrew Baier**

Materials & Plant  
Supervisor  
September 12 - 4 years



**Lincoln Feistner**

Sales/Project Manager  
September 17 - 19 years

## Local Discounts with your Co-op Connections® Card



Your cooperative membership earns you discounts at local participating businesses.

Simply show your Co-op Connections Discount Card and save.

- 1) **Hair Expressions Salon, Chamberlain, SD;**  
\$25 off 1st set of eyelash extensions; \$20 off spa facial with microdermabrasion.
- 2) **Ken's Service, Gann Valley, SD;**  
10% off tire repair services.
- 3) **M & H, Mitchell, SD;**  
\$.05 off a gallon of gas.
- 4) **Merchandise Outlet, Mitchell, SD;**  
10% off pair of boots - some exclusions apply. Not valid with other discounts.
- 5) **Miedema Sanitation, Mitchell, SD;**  
10% off rolloff construction boxes.
- 6) **Mitchell Econolodge Motel, Mitchell, SD;**  
10% discount.
- 7) **Mitchell KOA, Mitchell, SD;**  
10% discount May 1 - October 30, excluding holiday weekends.
- 8) **Mueller Lumber Company, Mitchell, SD;**  
\$15 off regular priced hardware store merchandise and lumber; excludes power tools.

For a full list of ways to save, visit [www.connections.coop](http://www.connections.coop).

To request a card or become a participating business, visit [www.centraleco.coop](http://www.centraleco.coop) or call 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516.







Sioux Valley Energy donated food and helped raise more than \$3,000 for booster clubs in Brandon, Hartford and Pipestone, MN.

## Local Co-op Events Provide Fun, Food and Festivities for Sports Fans

**Ben Dunsmoor**

Contributing Writer

In northwest South Dakota, clashes on the football field between rival schools are the main attractions on Friday nights. It is where community members can count on connecting with friends and neighbors. It is also a place where high school sports fans can count on seeing employees from Grand Electric Cooperative cooking up a pre-game meal.

“We see people of all ages at the tailgate parties,” Grand Electric Cooperative Marketing/Tech Specialist Rachel Eggebo said.

The Bison based cooperative began hosting block parties in the summer months nearly 20 years ago to reach out to the community. In 2009, Grand Electric transitioned to serving up brats, hot dogs, and chips before high school football games to reach families that were busy attending school activities. The co-op says it has been a great way to serve the community and show support for local schools.

“It gives us an opportunity to show our membership that we are there for them. Occasionally, it might be the only time we have to communicate with our busy members,” Eggebo said.

Grand Electric is taking a cautious approach to its tailgate parties this year due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. But, if the players are on the field, the co-op is committed to serving up free food at five different games this fall. Grand Electric will make some modifications to the tailgate parties by packaging the food and making it a “grab-and-go” style event for fans.

Grand Electric is not alone in its efforts to partner with local schools and reach out to the community with fun pre-game events. Butte Electric plans to host a tailgate party before the Belle Fourche and Spearfish game this fall. West River Electric holds a tailgating event before the Wall and New Underwood football game and sponsors a basketball tournament in Union Center every November.



Arm wrestling contestants square off during a tailgate party and family fun day hosted by Grand Electric.

Sioux Valley Energy in Colman is also on the tailgating bandwagon. Sioux Valley started hosting events before football games to help its local schools raise money.

“As school funding becomes tighter, booster clubs - and other school organizations run by parents - serve an important purpose,” Sioux Valley Director of Communications and Government Relations Carrie Vugteveen said. “Sioux Valley Energy feels that supporting these efforts helps the co-op live out its guiding principle of ‘commitment to community.’”

Sioux Valley hosted three tailgate parties in 2019 to raise money for booster clubs in Brandon, Hartford, and Pipestone, MN. Sioux Valley bought all the food and asked for a free-will





Lyon-Lincoln Electric Co-op in Tyler, MN, helped to host a tailgate party where the main attraction was the co-op's Tesla electric vehicle.

donation from fans during the meal. The three events raised more than \$3,000 combined for the booster clubs.

FEM Electric Association in Ipswich also partners with local schools to raise money during athletic events. FEM Electric donates 60 cases of bottled water to each school district within its service territory every year. The schools can sell the water in their concession stands and keep all the profits. Each water bottle has an electrical safety message printed on the label which translates into a big win for both the school and the co-op.

**The schools can sell the water in their concession stands and keep all the profits.**

"We wanted to contribute something to help out the various school programs and at the same time get our safety message out to kids and everyone," Carol Schaffner with FEM Electric Association said.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative in Tyler, MN, hosted a "Tailgating with Tesla" party before the Minneota and Canby football game last fall. The co-op partnered with a local youth group to host

the event. The co-op bought all the food and the youth group kept all the proceeds from the tailgate party to help pay for a mission trip. It was an opportunity to raise money for a good cause and for Lyon-Lincoln Electric to showcase its Tesla and talk about the benefits of electric vehicles.

"These events are a win-win for the cooperative and the community," Lyon-Lincoln Electric Manager of Marketing and External Relations Brian Jeremiason said. "The co-op is able to deliver a message to a targeted audience and visit about other topics that community members may have. The community benefits by having a face-to-face opportunity to visit with their co-op."

Electric co-op participation in school events is widespread across South Dakota. Northern Electric Cooperative in Bath, Dakota Energy in Huron, Charles Mix Electric in Lake Andes, and Central Electric in Mitchell all participate in local homecoming parades. Lacreek Electric in Martin sponsors a t-shirt toss during basketball and football games. Dakota Energy also hosts "co-op night" during local basketball games. And, Central Electric hosts free popcorn nights at high school basketball and football games to promote electrical safety and give back to the school and community.

So, whether it is a tailgate party, a fundraiser, or a t-shirt toss, it is likely that electric co-ops will be supporting their

local schools and communities this fall and winter.

"High school sports are wonderful opportunities to reach out to our communities," Jeremiason said. "Young and old all attend and we can communicate with families as a unit which can be difficult sometimes with the busy lives most families are living."

FEM Electric Association donates bottled water with unique labels to raise funds for schools in the co-op's service area.



## 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, the State High School Rodeo finals and grain bin safety. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



# Co-op Rebates

Your cooperative offers several rebates to promote energy efficiency and bring value to your cooperative membership.

## Electric Water Heaters

Earn a rebate of \$9 per gallon on qualifying lifetime warranty water heaters connected to load management.

## Non-Residential Lighting Upgrade

Earn a rebate of \$50-\$1000 when you replace inefficient lighting systems in a nonresidential setting with energy efficient lighting.

## Electric Heating System

Earn a \$600 rebate on a new Energy Star heat pump system, minimum of two ton. A 5% loan is also available to qualifying members.

## Irrigation Management System

Earn a \$750 rebate for a qualifying third-party remote managed irrigation system that connects with load management.

## Energy Audit

Members can earn back 10% of remitted costs for energy improvements made following an energy audit. Minimum rebates are \$50 and up to \$500. A 5% interest loan is also available to qualifying members for energy efficiency improvements.

For full details on rebate requirements, visit [www.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop) or contact our office.

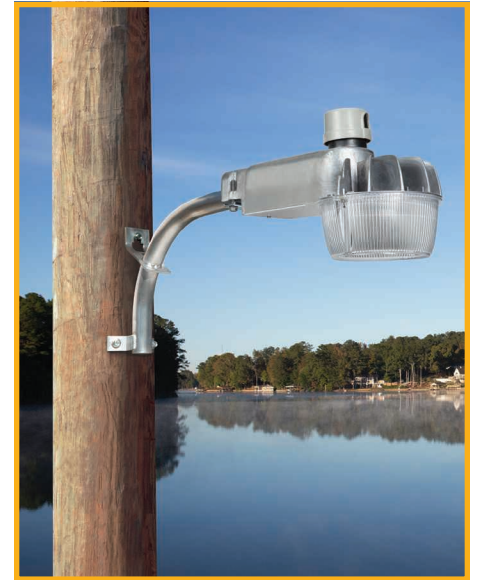
# Pricing & Maintenance Update Security Lights

As a reminder, beginning this year, Central Electric discontinued complimentary security light repair and maintenance. Previously, your co-op provided replacement of bulbs and photo eyes or cells at no cost to the member for labor, equipment, or materials. However, this service has become cost-prohibitive for your cooperative.

This tradition began when security lights utilized more electricity, which resulted in additional kwh sales and revenue to the cooperative. Also, operating costs, including labor, equipment, and materials, were lower as well.

Recently, this service averaged over \$100,000 in annual expense to the co-op, which needed to be recovered through electric rates, or members' electric bills. Now, Central Electric asks individual members to pay for the cost of their service.

Please note that the "cost" of this service has not changed, nor are we generating a net profit from this service. However, the way in which your co-op recovers the revenue to cover this expense has now changed as a way to more fairly distribute the expenses to our members.



Your co-op also offers LED security light options, which utilize less energy, have a longer life expectancy, and require less maintenance, as an effort to help our members save money. Approximate estimates are below.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. Your co-op is committed to serving our members and managing the financial operations as fairly and prudently as possible.

New Installation	Approximate Cost*
70 watt LED light	\$345
90 watt LED light	\$515
Photo Eye or Bulb Replacement Only on Existing Light	
LED photo eye/cell or bulb	\$200
150 watt high pressure sodium bulb	\$205
*These prices are approximate and subject to change, as material cost can fluctuate.	
*Estimates include materials, labor, and bucket truck equipment charges. No mileage is charged in order to fairly serve members no matter their location.	



# SMART LIGHTS OUTSHINE TRADITIONAL BULBS

*Smart lights are growing in popularity and it's easy to see why! Compared to their traditional counterparts, smart lights offer:*



Savings on your energy bill thanks to increased efficiency



Longer life span to save you money and the time of replacing them



Syncing capabilities with your home theater, stereo or computer for a fully immersive experience



Easily customizable options to suit your preference from moment to moment



A better sleeping experience through slow-light fading shut off and turn on times



Increased home security







South Dakota's Rural Electric Cooperatives are adapting to the expectations of the next generation of co-op members.

# NEXT GENERATION

## Young adults figure prominently in the future of the rural electric cooperative movement

**Billy Gibson**

Contributing Writer

It's getting harder and harder to find people who can provide a first-person account of what it was like when electrical power came to their communities.

The nation's rural electric program sprang to life more than 80 years ago when an executive order by President Franklin Roosevelt created the Rural Electric Administration (REA). The REA issued low-cost loans that gave local communities the ability to build out power delivery systems to serve their own farms, homes and businesses.

But relatively few of the members served by those cooperatives today actually witnessed the transformation that took place when thousands of small towns and hamlets across the country began

enjoying the benefits made possible by electrical power.

Though many characteristics of electric co-ops have stayed the same – democratic control, focus on quality service, accessibility, commitment to community – other elements have certainly changed over the decades. For instance, some cooperative service areas that were once rural have become suburban as population centers have expanded into spaces that were once sparsely populated farms and fields.

Cooperatives are also taking advantage of modern technology to broaden their menu of services available to members, such as online account management systems, energy audits, pre-pay programs, automated meter reading, renewable power and more.

Yet another change is the generational shift taking place as older board directors, managers, employees and consumers are being replaced with younger folks who have different ideas, different approaches, different plans and different expectations.

In South Dakota, co-op leaders say the changing dynamics present an opportunity to bring innovative ideas and new concepts to the table – all centered around the ongoing mission to deliver power that is safe, reliable, affordable and accessible.

Evan Buckmiller is manager of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative (KEC) based in DeSmet. He is part of a group of younger general managers who have taken the reins at various electric co-ops in the state. He said that over the past decade KEC has seen a 100 percent turnover in personnel and that every current employee



Co-ops will continue their commitment to both personal and digital service.



is under the age of 35. The result is a prevailing mindset that's not averse to searching for new ways to "work smarter."

"Our employees are constantly exploring new avenues to operate more efficiently and effectively," Buckmiller said. "They understand that the money people pay for power doesn't grow on trees. Our members expect value, and it's our job to make sure we're using the latest technology to minimize operating costs while improving service and convenience."

He said one advantage of having a younger work force is a greater acceptance of change, more flexibility and being open to new approaches to addressing issues.

"We've made wise investments in new equipment that we never would have considered in the past," Buckmiller said. "Our employees don't mind trying something new. They don't mind going through the training process. Having grown up in the internet age, they adapt well to learning things like new computer-based applications and software."

Some of those changes include a new barcoding program to track inventory, using iPads for preparing timesheets and taking service orders online.

Jay Spaans, manager of Douglas Electric in Armour, echoed Buckmiller's observations regarding younger employees. Two of his seven staff members are expected to retire in the not-too-distant future. They represent a combined 96 years of service.

"That's a lot of institutional knowledge



Kingsbury Electric Co-op Manager Evan Buckmiller leads a staff of young employees who understand the co-op's mission.

walking out the door, and as a manager you wonder if the next generation will be as dedicated to the co-op as them," Spaans said. "I'm sure that whoever we hire will have grown up with technology and will have new ideas. I see that as a benefit."

When it comes to engaging younger consumers, co-ops across the state maintain social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others. West River Electric based in Wall, is representative of many South Dakota co-ops that use an array of digital tools to track the organization's member engagement.

Public Relations Manager Robert Raker said diversity and the strategic use of various social media channels is the key to making sure the lines of communication remain open across the age spectrum.

"We use Facebook and our printed newsletter to appeal to our older members," he said. "We use Instagram and Tik Tok to reach our younger members, and we're beginning to deploy LinkedIn to interact with our technology and business accounts."

There's even a specific approach to communicating internally, Raker said.

"We're using Snapchat to communicate with some of our crews in the field because

**One advantage of having a younger work force is a greater acceptance of change, more flexibility and being open to new approaches.**

we've found that our young linemen prefer to use Snapchat rather than a conventional email account."

Chad Felderman, CEO/General Manager at Dakota Energy in Huron, said it's important for co-ops to balance their approach so that the interests of all age groups are taken into account.

Part of that strategy of fostering connectedness across generations is to get out of the office and meet members at events that attract a cross-section of people.

"In order to interact with all age groups, we have been present at sporting events, parades and event booths. It's more difficult due to the pandemic, but this is our goal," Felderman said. "This has allowed us to engage with members of all ages and creates an overall increase in knowledge of who we are and what services we provide. Utilizing Facebook, the website and text messaging has been a great way to inform members and makes us more visible in our communities."

Matt Klein, General Manager at Union County Electric in Elk Point, said he has noticed the older generation has been receptive to change, albeit at a more measured pace.

"In general, our older members want to come to the office and pay by check and get a receipt, while our younger members are more comfortable paying online, having us withdraw directly from their bank account, or setting up recurring charges to their credit card," Klein said. "Now that we offer these other payment options, we are seeing more of the older generation using them. So they are clearly becoming more comfortable with this, but are a bit slower to adopt the change."



Younger members expect their cooperative to provide information through social media platforms.

## Tips for Maintaining an Efficient HVAC System

# Heating & Cooling Care



**Lincoln Feistner**

Sales/Project Manager

**Your HVAC system is essential, but also some of the most expensive equipment in your home to repair or replace.**

Your heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system is essential to keeping your home comfortable during summer months, and if it breaks down, it's also some of the most expensive equipment in your home to repair or replace. Luckily, there are simple steps you can take to lengthen the life of your HVAC system.

**Change or clean filters.** Dirty filters block airflow, which can greatly decrease the efficiency of your system. The Department of Energy recommends changing or cleaning filters every month or two during the cooling season. If your unit is in constant use or is subjected to dusty conditions or pet hair, consider checking filters more frequently.

**Clean the HVAC unit.** Outdoor condenser coils can become clogged with pollen, dirt and small debris. Use a hose to spray the HVAC unit once each season to ensure maximum airflow. (Warning: Do not use a pressure washer to do this, as it can damage the equipment.)

**Clear space around the HVAC unit.** Dryer vents, falling leaves and grass left behind from the lawnmower can create buildup. Remove any debris around the HVAC unit. If you have foliage near the unit, trim it back at least 2 ft. around the condenser to increase airflow.

If you want to evaluate the efficiency of your HVAC system, follow the steps in the graphic below.

You should also have your HVAC system periodically inspected by a licensed professional. The frequency of inspections depends on the age of your unit. Typically, a unit should be inspected every two years, and to avoid the busy season, I recommend scheduling your inspection in the spring or fall.

When HVAC equipment fails, it's inconvenient and uncomfortable—especially during the dog days of summer or cold of winter. Remember, your HVAC system runs best when it's regularly cleaned and serviced. With a little maintenance along the way, you can add years to your system's lifespan.

### 3-Step HVAC Test

As summer temperatures rise, so do electric bills. Follow these steps to test the efficiency of your HVAC unit.

The outdoor temperature should be above 80 degrees, and you should set your thermostat well below the room temperature to ensure the system runs long enough for this test.

1. Using a digital probe thermometer (about \$12), measure the temperature of the air being pulled into your HVAC filter.
2. Measure the temperature of the air blowing out of your A/C vent.
3. Subtract the A/C vent temperature from the HVAC filter temperature. You should see a difference of about 17 to 20 degrees. If the difference is less than 17 degrees, you may need a licensed technician to check the coolant. If the difference is greater than 20 degrees, your ductwork may need to be inspected for airflow restrictions.







CO-OP SERVICES

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

South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives will not have a booth this year at the state fair due to COVID-19 safety concerns.

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**August 26-30**

Corn Palace Festival, Mitchell, SD, [www.cornpalace.com](http://www.cornpalace.com)  
605-995-8430

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**August 27**

PRCA Xtreme Broncs Finals 7-9:30 p.m., Central States Fair, Rapid City, SD  
[www.centralstatesfair.com](http://www.centralstatesfair.com)

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**August 27-30 CANCELED**

Annual Steam Threshing Jamboree featuring John Deere, Madison, SD  
605-256-3644

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**August 28-29**

Pioneer Museum Excess Sale 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pioneer Museum, Hot Springs, SD  
605-745-4616

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**August 29-30**

Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival, Municipal Airport, Hwy 79, Hot Springs, SD  
605-745-4140

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**September 3-5**

South Dakota State Fair: Perfect Vision of Fun, 1060 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD  
800-529-0900  
[www.sdstatefair.com](http://www.sdstatefair.com)

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**September 6**

Studebaker and Packard Car and Truck Show, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Custer, SD  
605-718-7431



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**August 29-30**

Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival

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**September 7**

Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show, 1 p.m., 47326 183rd Ave., Clear Lake, SD, 605-881-8405

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**September 12**

Central Valley Struttin' Gobblers NWTF Banquet, Dakota Plains Event Center Hartford, SD, 5:30 p.m.  
605-941-4297

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**September 12-13**

Fall Harvest Festival, Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792, [www.twinriversoldiron.org](http://www.twinriversoldiron.org)

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**September 13**

20th Annual Antique Tractor and Car Parade, 1 p.m., Farmer, SD, 605-239-4498

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**September 19**

Health Connect's Human Race, Elmwood Park, Sioux Falls, SD, 8 a.m. 888-761-5437

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**September 19**

Health Connect Fair, Sanford Pentagon, Sioux Falls, SD, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., free lunch, door prizes and flu shots  
888-761-5437

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**September 25-27**

Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Massey Harris Tractors, Meadow, SD, 605-788-2229

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**September 26 CANCELED**

10th Annual ROCS Fall Festival, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Springfield, SD, 605-464-7379

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**September 26**

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD

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**October 3 CANCELED**

Hobo Marlin's Pumpkin Train 11 a.m., Madison, SD  
605-256-3644

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**October 7-8 CANCELED**

Energize! Explore Innovative Rural Communities Conference, Milbank, SD, <https://extension.sdstate.edu>

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**October 31-November 1**

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

**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.**