

Cooperative Connections

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

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

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**Upgrade
Electronics to
Save Money**

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Wrapping up 2020, Preparing for 2021



Ken Schlimgen

General Manager

**The board has decided
to postpone the
District Meetings until
April or May of 2021.**

Holiday Office Closings:

Thanksgiving

November 26-27

Christmas

December 24-25

New Year's Day

January 1

I am writing this message in late October, and if you ask, most people are ready for 2020 to be part of our history. The fall weather has been good for harvest with the exception of a few days of cold along with some snow. By the time this magazine arrives at your door, the presidential election will be decided, but I won't make that prediction.

This year has certainly been challenging. Who would have predicted a pandemic in 2020 that would significantly change the world economy? Your cooperative has managed surprisingly well so far. We have been successful at keeping our employees safe from the virus although we do not have a perfect record. Our Kwh sales and revenues are down roughly 10% but our expenses are also down, resulting in stronger margins than budgeted.

We have been extremely busy with requests for new electric services throughout most of the year and that trend continues. Given the pandemic and a downturn in the economy, who would have predicted that?

If you have a project that requires a new electric service or an increase in the size of your current electric service, please contact us. We have a backlog of requests now, and we will address them in the order that they are received. Mother Nature will determine how late into the fall we can install buried cables. Once there is significant frost in the ground, we will stop to prevent damaging our equipment.

The Operation Round-Up committee will meet on November 17th to review applications for grants for community projects in our eight-county area. The grant funds come from those members who voluntarily round up their main electric bill to the nearest dollar. This should average less than 50 cents per month and can make a huge difference to our area communities, first responders, and others.

November is when your cooperative creates the budget for the following year. It is a complicated prediction trying to guess the weather, the economy, and how they will impact Kwh purchases. We already know the wholesale cost of the electric power will see a very minor increase. Wholesale power costs represent over 70% of our total expenses so the fact that there is little change is very good news.

We replaced almost 70 miles of aging line this year and will continue this work in 2021. Lower interest rates are helping to minimize the impact on rates. We will use a normal weather pattern as part of our prediction on how 2021 will look on the cooperative's operating statement. Our budget and plan of work will be presented to the board this month for approval.

Mother Nature gave us a taste of winter already in late October. Take time now to prepare for the potential of bad weather. Inspect and test your generators. Stock up on supplies like batteries, canned food, and bottled water. If a winter storm hits our area, let's all be ready in advance.

Looking ahead, January is usually when the cooperative would host District Meetings. The meetings are an opportunity to provide you with more detailed information and to hold Director Elections. Due to the increased number of active COVID-19 cases across our service area, the board has decided to postpone the District Meetings until April or May of 2021. The nicer weather during these months will give us more flexibility in hosting our meetings.

Your employees and directors would like to thank our Veterans for the service they have provided our country. They also wish all of you a Happy and Safe Thanksgiving. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you each and every day.

Until Next Month, take care and be safe!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

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

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Office Information

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 800-477-2892 or
 605-996-7516
www.centralelec.coop



Mission Statement

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

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met on October 19, 2020 at the Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting.

The board approved the September 2020 meeting minutes. The board then reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department, IT and the financials.

Board Report

Darrin Lynch with National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation reviewed the key ratio trend analysis of Central Electric.

Manager Schlimgen updated the board on the following:

- East River Managers' and Basin Electric Managers' meetings reports.
- Basin Electric Annual Meeting logistics.
- Reviewed an execution plan as a follow-up to the Strategic Planning session held earlier this year.
- Presented options for district and annual meetings in 2021.
- Gave an update on REED Fund activities, including a local business who recently received funding.
- Reviewed 2021 SDREA dues.
- Reviewed market rate members.

Director Wolbrink gave an update on the East River Electric Cooperative Board Meeting.

Directors gave a report on the NRECA Region 6 meeting.

Director Hofer reported on the NRECA Board Meeting.

Director Loudner reported on the SDREA Board Meeting.

Board Action

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved officer elections as follows: President - Wolbrink; Vice President - VanWalleghen; Secretary - Burghardt; Treasurer - Reindl.
2. Approved the quarterly finance committee report as reviewed by Reindl, Headley and Campbell.
3. Approved two member loan applications for heating equipment.
4. Approved to move district meetings to April-May and the annual meeting to September of 2021.

The next board of directors meeting will be held November 9, 2020 for the special board meeting for the 2021 Work Plan and Budget report.

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

Financial Report	August 2020	Year-to-Date
kWh Sales	22,964,243 kWhs	241,924,126 kWhs
Electric Revenues	\$2,452,030	\$24,386,650
Total Cost of Service	\$2,127,373	\$22,980,002
Operating Margins	\$285,947	\$1,570,561

Updated By-laws Available

An updated copy of the cooperative by-laws, as approved at the Annual Meeting on September 29, can be viewed at www.centralelec.coop or requested by contacting our office.

Decorate Your Home Safely

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

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

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



Correction: Pheasant bag limit unchanged

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

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Do Not Shoot the Power Line!"

Luke Welsh, 10 years old

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

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Delicious Holiday Desserts

Dorothy's Baked Carmel Corn

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

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

Gloria Puetz, Salem, SD

Chocolate Kissed Macaroons

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

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

Colleen Wolfe, Hot Springs, SD.

Scoops Ah Caramel

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

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

Ginny Jensen, Volga, SD

Reindeer Pecan Brownies

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

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

AmericanPecan.com

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

In Memory of Rural Electric Cooperative Leaders

Tim Johnson Remembered for 44 Years of Cooperative Service



In October, the Central Electric family mourned the loss of colleague and friend, Tim Johnson, after his battle with cancer.

Johnson was born in Mitchell, SD and graduated high school from Columbus, OH. He moved back to Mitchell to attend the Power Lineman Program at Mitchell Technical Institute.

After graduating from the line program in 1976, Johnson moved to Presho and worked for West Central Electric Cooperative for two years and earned his journeyman certificate.

In 1978, Johnson and his wife, Darla (Ward), moved back home to Mitchell, and Johnson joined Intercounty Electric. They raised their family in Mitchell, including children Nicole (Larson), Eric, and Nate.

Johnson was promoted to Mitchell Line

Foreman in 1986 and again to Staking Technician in 2007.

A funeral was held at Holy Family Catholic Church in Mitchell, SD and burial service at the St. Mary of Mercy Catholic Cemetery in Alexandria, SD. A cooperative bucket truck and Johnson's work pick-up led the procession to the cemetery to lay him to rest. A tree will be planted in the lawn at the Mitchell headquarters in memory of Johnson.

In lieu of flowers, Johnson's family requested that memorials be sent to the SDRE Line Patrol fund, which was created to assist cooperative employees and families who undergo a hardship.

Johnson will be remembered among his colleagues for his dedication to his work and love of his family.

Former Intercounty General Manager Loyd Oleson Laid to Rest



Former Intercounty General Manager, Loyd Oleson, passed on October 19 at Avera Brady Health and Rehab in Mitchell, SD.

Oleson began his career with the rural electric cooperatives in 1947 at Spink Electric in Redfield, SD. In 1957, he moved to Mitchell and was hired as Office Manager at Intercounty Electric.

Oleson was promoted to General Manager in 1978 and served as such until his retirement in 1989. Oleson served the electric cooperatives for 42 years and helped oversee the lighting of rural America.

Oleson hired many long-time employees of Intercounty Electric, including former Office

Manager and General Manager Loren Noess and current General Manager Ken Schlimgen. Oleson's impact extends beyond the Central Electric area, as he served as a leader for neighboring cooperatives as well.

A funeral was held at Holy Family Catholic Church in Mitchell, SD and burial service at Calvary Cemetery in Mitchell. He was preceded in death by his wife, Maxine, and survived by children, Stephanie (Long), Doug, Tim, Pat, Mary (Weiss), Alan, and Mark.

Oleson will be remembered for his love of music, musical talent, service to the Mitchell community, and contribution to the rural electric cooperatives.

Employee Years of Service



DeEtte Bohr
Accounting/Customer
Service Supervisor
December 1 - 23 years

*Thank you for
your service to the
cooperative!*

Roth Promoted to Area Foreman

Tony Roth, journeyman lineman on the Mitchell crew, was recently promoted to Area Foreman for the Mitchell area.

Roth joined Central Electric in 2005 and earned his journeyman certificate in 2007. He has experience on both the Kimball and Mitchell line crews.

Roth's work ethic, experience, and leadership will continue to be an asset to the cooperative and membership.



Farewell, Deinert



Central Electric sends best wishes to Manager of Communications Courtney Deinert as she begins a new position with the Mitchell Catholic Parishes as the 7-12 Director of Religious Education.

Deinert was hired in 2014 as the Administrative/Communications Assistant and promoted to Manager of Communications. She will maintain cooperative communications until the position is filled.

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) **Williams Musical and Office Equipment, Mitchell, SD;**
10% off regular price.
- 2) **605 Vision, Chamberlain, SD;**
15% off services and materials; Cannot be combined with insurance or other offers.
- 3) **AAA South Dakota, Mitchell Branch;**
Save \$15 on new membership by waiving entrance fee for SD residents only. Free atlas with insurance quote.
- 4) **Aero Dyna Kleen Services, Mitchell, SD;**
\$20 off on furnace and duct cleaning; 10% off on carpet cleaning.
- 5) **AmericInn Lodge & Suites, Chamberlain, SD;**
10% off rack rate (not valid with any other offer).
- 6) **America's Mattress, Mitchell, SD;**
Free sheets with qualifying purchase of \$500 or greater (1 set).
- 7) **Blessings Repeated, Inc., Plankinton, SD;**
20% off a purchase of \$10 or more.

For a full list of ways to save, visit www.connections.coop.

To request a card or become a participating business, visit www.centralelec.coop or call 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516.





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

CHRISTMAS IN SD

COVID-19 Hasn't Stopped Christmas from Coming

Billy Gibson

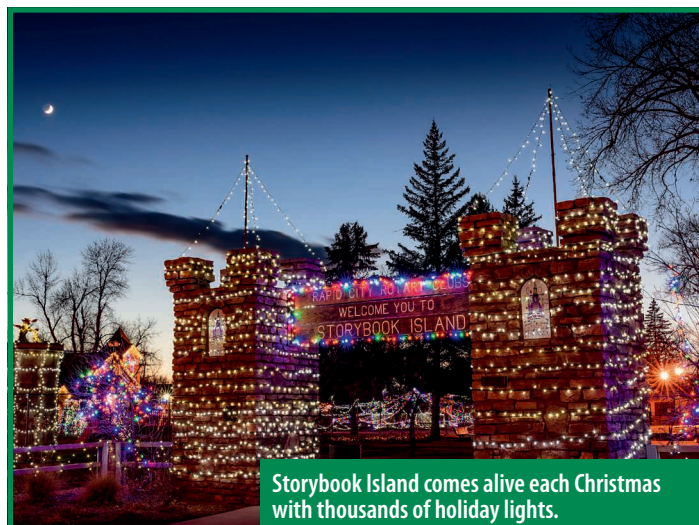
billy.gibson@sarea.coop

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Before scheduling a visit, check for the most recent updates at www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol.



The Pumpkin Carriage is a popular attraction at Storybook Island.

Erickson Tree Service Contracted for Annual Tree Maintenance

Tree Trimming Begins

Central Electric Cooperative contracted with Erickson Tree Service for the annual tree trimming maintenance. Erickson began in late October and will work in the following areas through the end of the year:

- north, east, and south of Mount Vernon;
- north of Stickney; and
- north, west and east of Letcher.

Crews will trim in the right-of-ways and contact property owners when needed to access areas.

Tree trimming plays an integral role in power reliability. Clearing the areas around power lines lessens the chance of tree-related power outages and makes it easier and safer for crews to restore power. Thank you to our membership for their cooperation with this annual maintenance.



BENEFITS OF TREE TRIMMING

Clearing trees and overgrown vegetation is vital to provide safe, reliable power to our consumer-members.

We clear certain areas in our service territory, known as rights of way, to:

- Keep power lines clear of tree limbs
- Restore power outages more quickly
- Keep crews and members of our community safe
- Reduce unexpected costs for repairs

**Vegetation management
improves service reliability for
you – our members!**



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

Central Electric Hires Two Apprentice Linemen

Central Electric welcomes two full-time apprentice linemen, Chase Phillips and Davis Mathison.

Phillips is originally from Mitchell and earned his associate degree from MTI in 2013. He worked for Central Electric in 2013 and 2015 as an 1,000 hour employee. He has also worked for Dakota Energy, Larson Digging, MP Nextlevel, and most recently, Telcom Construction as an aerial line foreman. Phillips began work with the Mitchell crew on November 2.

Mathison is originally from Madison and graduated from MTI in 2013. Davis currently works with the Howard crew as an 1,000 hour employee and has previously worked for the City of Madison, Southeastern Electric, and Karian Peterson Powerline. He has been hired as a full-time apprentice lineman on the Howard crew and will assist other crews as needed. Mathison will begin that role on December 1.



Chase Phillips was hired as a full-time apprentice linemen for the Mitchell crew.



Davis Mathison will finish his 1,000 hours with the Howard crew and move into a full-time position with the cooperative.



RE-ENERGIZING EFFICIENCY

EASY ENERGY WINS START HERE

Join your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative's Load Management Program to save at home, on the farm and on the job.


- Lower wholesale power costs for your electric cooperative means savings are passed on to you.
- Reduced energy is not only budget-friendly, it's environmentally friendly, too.
- Get special rebates on select new equipment, including electric water heaters.

Total load management savings in our region = \$231,000,000 and growing



Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives

To participate in the load management program, contact your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative today.



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

Cut Energy Consumption

Upgrade Electronics for Energy Savings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Safety

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Power Partner



Patrick Soukup

Manager of Member Services/
Marketing

Farmers have enough to worry about without having to think about energy bills.

Save the Date:

Livestock Seminar, Mitchell, SD
December 8
9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
Davison Co. Fairgrounds
Free to Attend
Register at info@agunited.org

Farmers have enough to worry about without having to think about energy bills. That's why your local electric cooperative is your partner in power, walking alongside you, dedicated to helping your farm or ranch become more energy-efficient. When your energy bills are lower, it means more of your money stays where it belongs: in your pocket.

With that in mind, here are eight tips for energy-efficiency:

1. Swap Your Bulbs

If you're still using incandescent or CFL bulbs, consider swapping them out for LEDs. These bulbs use considerably less energy and can last up to 50 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs and eight to ten times longer than CFL bulbs. If you do continue to use incandescent bulbs, keep in mind that dirty bulbs and fixtures can reduce light levels, and things like moisture and dust can shorten the bulb life to less than its estimated "rated life."

2. Upgrade Ventilation

Whatever kind of livestock you run, quality ventilation is vital. Even in buildings without animals, such as your shop or storage buildings, replacing older ventilation fans with high-efficiency options can reduce energy use. Be sure to keep your fan blades clean from dust, feathers, hair and other things, which can reduce efficiency. You may also want to add Variable Frequency Drives to inverter-duty fans. This may not only increase efficiency, but also improve the motor life.

3. Insulate Buildings

Even the smallest cracks and holes in your buildings can waste energy, especially in the coldest and hottest months of the year. Adding extra insulation and updating your HVAC to more energy-efficient equipment can save you a lot in the long run. Even doing simple things like minimizing drafts by aligning doors and windows can help reduce your energy bill.

4. Manage Water

Keep your livestock hydrated with low-energy or energy-free waterers. These use less electricity while keeping water fresh and preventing freezing. For irrigation in summer months, use low-pressure sprinkler nozzles. These reduce pumping demands without limiting water flow. That way your crops get the water they need at a lower cost and your pumps last longer.

5. Use Heat Reclaimer

Reduce energy waste with a heat reclaimer, particularly on dairies where milk collection and storage use a huge amount of energy. A dairy heat reclaimer allows you to capture waste heat from outdoor milk refrigeration units and uses it to heat water.

6 Use Creep Heat Pads

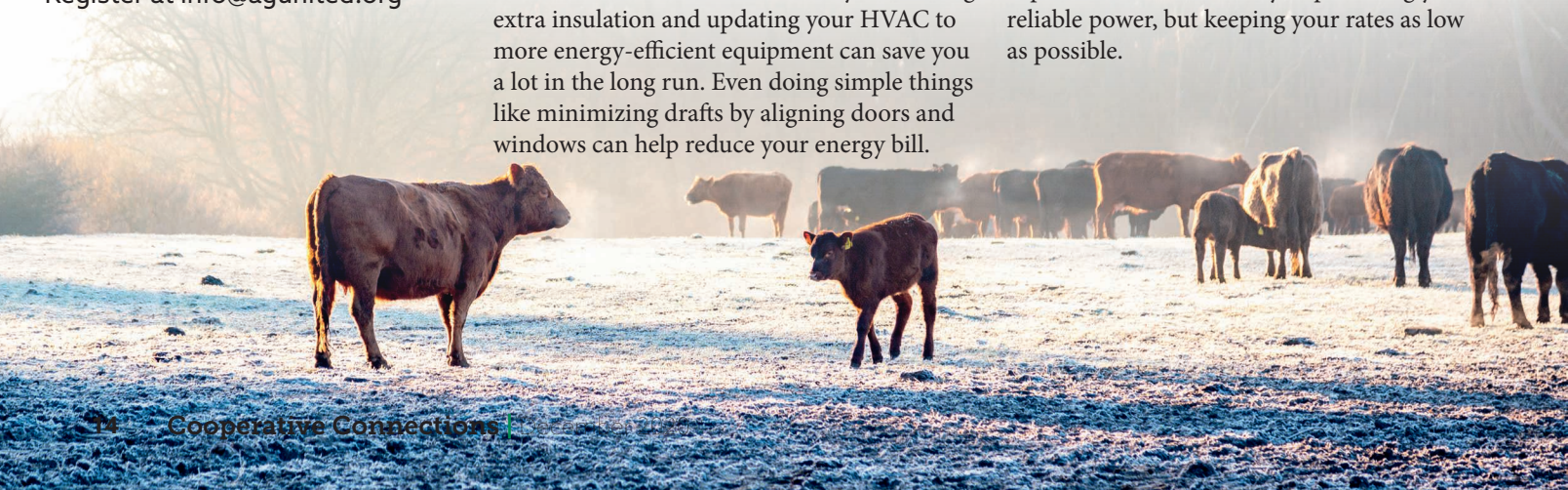
Heat lamps are highly inefficient when it comes to energy consumption. Creep heat pads are essentially blankets that will keep your swine or poultry warm while using much less energy.

7. Keep an Energy Log

Keeping an energy log is an easy and inexpensive method of tracking your energy use. It allows you to study and compare use and costs from month to month. You can track your usage on SmartHub by visiting our website.

8. Contact Your Co-op

Always remember that you can reach out to your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative at any time with questions, concerns or comments. As a co-op member, you have the power of collaboration with a team of energy experts dedicated not only to providing you reliable power, but keeping your rates as low as possible.



Give Santa a break this year. *Let us help!*

Appliance Sales & Service

GE Appliances • Repair Service
Limited "Lifetime" Water Heaters
SpeedQueen Laundry



Brandon Auch
Appliance Repair Technician

Electrical Wiring Services

Residential • Ag Buildings
Kohler Generators
Grain Handling Systems • Lighting
Trenching Equipment
Electric Heating Systems



Dwight Keegel
Lead Electrician



Kevin Johnson
Journeyman Electrician



Heating & Cooling Sales & Service

Ductless Systems • Geothermal
Duct Work Design & Installation
Mini-splits • Small Commercial



Rodney Weber
Journeyman Electrician



Dave Henkel
Journeyman Electrician



Donn Koster
Lead Technician



Aaron Punt
HVAC Technician



Wade Brozik
HVAC Technician

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

November 20-21

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

November 21-22

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

November 24-December 26

Christmas at the Capitol, Free Admission, Pierre, SD

November 27

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

November 27

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

November 27

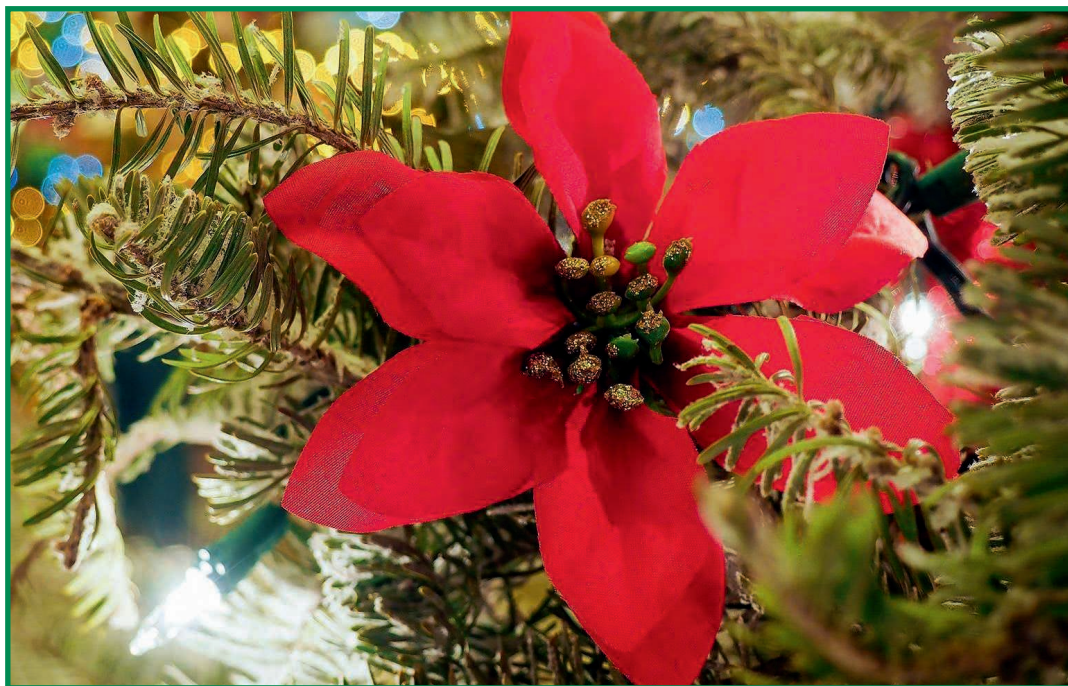
Annual Sioux Falls Parade of Lights, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Phillips Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 605-338-4009

November 28

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

November 27-December 27

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



December 4

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

December 4-5

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

December 4-6 and 10-12

Same Time, Next Year, Dramatic Comedy by Bernard Slade, Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, www.pierreplayers.com

December 5

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

December 5

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

December 5

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

December 5

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

December 6, 20

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

December 12

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

December 12

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

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.