

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Anglers from across the region compete in the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year to try their luck and test their skills

Hook, line and auger

Inside the Mobridge ice fishing tourney
Pages 8-9

Shake the blues with winter outdoor fun
Pages 12-13

Balancing budget, reliability and electric rates



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

Central Electric Cooperative's board of directors and employees wish our members and their families a very Merry Christmas and a blessed 2023. In the spirit of giving, your cooperative is passing on a gift in the form of a bill credit to our members this month.

Central Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit organization. Any profits earned, also known as margins, are allocated to members as capital credits in proportion to the electricity you purchased during the year. The cooperative uses capital credits to fund operations, and it later returns this capital to the membership. Capital credits reflect your ownership or investment in Central Electric.

This year, the board approved a \$600,000 capital credit retirement and is passing through an additional \$652,027 capital credit retirement received from East River Electric and Basin Electric Power Cooperative. You should have seen a credit on the electric bill you received in December. That means \$1,252,027 will stay in our members' wallets in 2022.

Management presented the 2023 budget to the board in November. The budget includes forecasted energy sales, projected costs to maintain and operate the system and a list of additional assumptions expected for 2023.



Central Electric's rates have not changed since 2019. Rising costs of equipment and materials, compounded by higher interest rates, prompted the need for a rate adjustment in 2023 to avoid a budget shortfall.

Summary of 2023 Rate Adjustment:

- \$2 facility charge increase
- \$2 charge on electric heat submeters
- \$0.003 increase on residential and farm energy usage over 1,200 kilowatt hours

Central Electric completed a cost-of-service study that supports the forecasts and projections in the budget. The study evaluated projected revenues for each type of electric service, evaluated related costs to provide service and it provided strategic direction for the future. The cost-of-service study results and preliminary budget indicated a shortfall of \$434,000 for 2023 and further shortfalls in 2024-2026 if no rate changes were implemented.

While our goal is to maintain stable electric rates, we must also maintain a reliable electric system. Maintaining an aging electric system comes with a cost. Central Electric invests an estimated \$6 million in system improvements annually so we can keep your lights on. This investment, compounded by inflation and higher interest rates, is impacting the cost of operating the cooperative.

We are proud of our employees who work hard to control costs, and the fact that electric rates have remained the same since 2019. However, a rate adjustment is needed for the cooperative to continue providing safe and reliable electric service while maintaining financial integrity.

Adjustments include a \$2 increase in the facility charge on all accounts, a \$2 facility charge on electric heat submeters, and a minimal increase of \$.003 on residential and farm kilowatt hours purchased over 1,200. These adjustments add up to a modest 1% overall increase in total revenue. The impact of the adjustments on individual bills will vary for every member. Central Electric will implement rate adjustments on electric bills received in February 2023 for energy consumed in January 2023.

The board, employees and I are thankful for the opportunity to serve you. We will continue working hard on your behalf to provide safe, reliable and affordable electric service. Have a blessed and joyful holiday season. Until next month, stay safe!

Take Control of Energy Usage with SmartHub.

View energy usage and billing history. Visit www.centralec.coop to learn more.

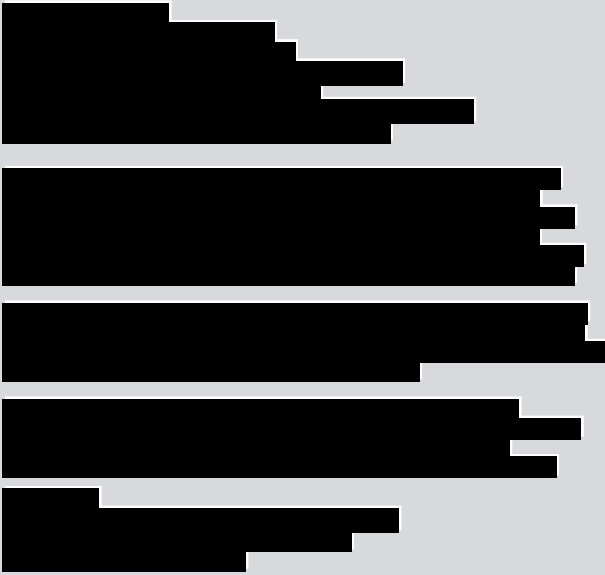


CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

- Duane Wolbrink - President (Aurora County)
Todd VanWalleghen - Vice President (Sanborn County)
Mark Hofer - Secretary & NRECA Director (Hanson County)
Mark Reindl - Treasurer (Jerauld County)
Donita Loudner - SDREA Director (Buffalo County)
Roger Campbell - Director (Brule County)
Jeff Gustafson - Director (Davison County)
Robert Banks - Director (Miner County)
Merl Bechen - Director At Large (All Counties)



Our Mission

Provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. Central Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The board of directors met Oct. 17, 2022, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management, including details on operations, service department, member services, communications and financials.

BOARD REPORT

General Manager Schlimgen updated the board of directors on the East River managers' meeting, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Rural Electric Economic Development fund. Schlimgen reported there will be increases to S.D. Rural Electric Association (SDREA) dues, East River Electric's base power rate and East River Electric's substation fees.

Director Loudner shared SDREA updates. Steve Barnett was hired as SDREA's general manager and is expected to start by the end of the year. Discussion followed.

Director Wolbrink reported on the East River Electric board meeting. Discussion followed.

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

BOARD ACTION

The board took the following actions:

- A motion was made and seconded to support a Basin Electric deferred revenue cap of \$400,000,000. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve a resolution supporting Basin Electric's load forecast. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to support the REED loan application for 281 Meats. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve a member loan for service work and materials. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve the third quarter expenses and legal fees. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve third quarter general manager and director expenses. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve a full-time IT systems assistant position. Motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. Contact the office if you have questions about the board meeting.

Table with 3 columns: FINANCIAL REPORT, PRIOR YEAR TO DATE OCT. 2021, YEAR TO DATE OCT. 2022. Rows include Kilowatt Hour (kWh) sales, Electric Revenues, Total Cost of Service, and Operating Margins.

Tips to use your electric blanket wisely

Heating pads and electric blankets cause around 500 fires throughout the U.S. each year. Almost all of these fires involve electric blankets more than 10 years old.

Learn how to stay safe and injury-free.

- Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.
- Do not plug electric blankets into an extension cord or power strip, as they could overheat and cause a fire.
- Look for dark, charred, or frayed spots or electrical cords that are cracked or frayed. Replace any worn or old heating pads or electric blankets.
- Never fold electric blankets when in use. Folded or tucked-in electric blankets could overheat and cause a fire.
- When purchasing electronics, including electric blankets, be sure to only purchase from reputable retailers. Purchase devices that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Do not allow anything to rest on top of a heating pad or electric blanket when it is in use. It may cause the device to overheat.
- There are two types of personal heating appliances: electric blankets and heating pads that are placed directly on the mattress. They are not meant to be used interchangeably or at the same time.

Gums wins Connections annual recipe contest

Lily Gums of Clear Lake has been selected winner of the annual *Cooperative Connections* member recipe contest.

Gums submitted a beverage recipe she calls "Swamp Water" that was published in the April 2022 issue of the magazine. She received a \$25 gift card for her submission. Congratulations, Lily!

She is a member of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

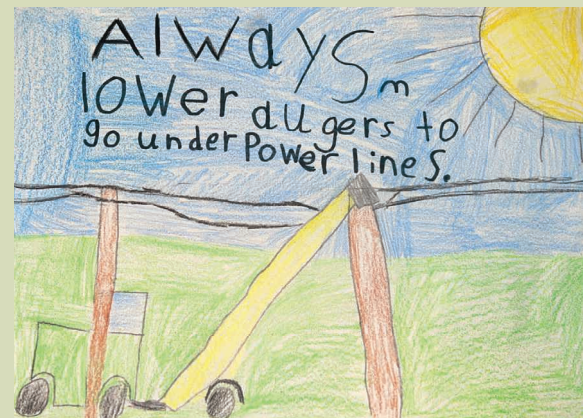


CO-OP LEADERS SERVE THEIR MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENTS



Ryan Maher is both a state senator and a board member at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative in Timber Lake. He is one of three cooperative leaders who play unique roles in serving their co-op consumers while also serving their constituents as state lawmakers during the legislative session in Pierre.

To view the comments and insights of these lawmakers and learn more about how electric cooperatives work to improve our communities, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Be safe around power lines

Weston Kling

Weston Kling, age 7, urges equipment operators to always lower augers to accommodate for overhead power lines. Weston is the son of Tyler and Alexis Kling of Rapid City. They are members of West River Electric based in Wall.

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.

SUPER SOUPS



VEGGIE CHEESE SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1/3 c. shredded carrots
- 1/3 c. chopped celery
- 3/4 c. broccoli flowerettes (fresh or frozen)
- 2 tbsp. diced onion
- 1/4 c. butter or margarine
- 6 tbsp. flour
- 2 c. chicken broth
- 2 c. milk
- 2 c. Velveeta cheese, cubed

METHOD

Cook carrots, celery and broccoli in 1 cup water until tender crisp. Saute onions in butter. Add flour to blend. Add milk and stir to make white sauce then add cheese and stir until melted. Add chicken broth and vegetables in remaining water. Blend until smooth.

Nancy Stenson, Fort Pierre

CHEESEBURGER SOUP

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. ground beef or ground chuck
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1/2 med. onion chopped
- 1/2 stalk celery, chopped
- 5 med. peeled potatoes, chopped
- 4 c. turkey or chicken broth
- 3 c. half and half
- 1 tsp. poultry seasoning
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 lb. Velveeta cheese, chunked
- 2 tbsp. butter
- salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Brown ground meat in large pot. Drain and return to pot. Add butter, onion, carrots, celery and potatoes. Cook for 5 minutes. Add broth, poultry seasoning, garlic powder and continue cooking until vegetables are tender. Add half and half and Velveeta cheese and continue heating until cheese has melted. Salt and pepper to taste.

Kathleen Meier, Firesteel

CHICKEN FAJITA SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 med. green bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1 med. red bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1 sm. onion, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 pkg. McCormick® Organics Fajita Seasoning Mix
- 3 c. chicken stock
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 c. frozen corn
- 1 c. tortilla strips

METHOD

Heat oil in large saucepan or Dutch oven on medium-high heat. Add peppers and onion; cook and stir 2 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook and stir 2 minutes. Stir in chicken, Seasoning Mix, stock, tomatoes and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 20 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with tortilla strips. Serve with desired toppings.

mccormick.com

Please send your favorite 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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Scholarships Available

Central Electric Cooperative is offering the following scholarships to members or their dependents in 2023:

- \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship (Must be the dependent of a member with primary residence served by Central Electric)
- \$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship (Must be the dependent of a member and pursuing a bachelor's degree in an agriculture-related field)
- Two \$500 Central Electric scholarships (Must be a member or the dependent of a member in a specified major at Mitchell Technical College)

Basin Electric and Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship applications are due on Feb. 1, 2023. Mitchell Technical College scholarships are administered by the school during the enrollment process.

Complete eligibility requirements and applications are available online at www.centraleccoop.com/scholarships. Recipients are selected by external judges not affiliated with Central Electric Cooperative.

H.S. Juniors can apply for Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.



For the first time since 2019, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Central Electric Cooperative are inviting high school juniors to apply for a trip to Washington, D.C.

The educational trip takes place June 17-23, 2023. Participants will meet for orientation in Sioux Falls on Saturday, June 17, fly out on Sunday, June 18, and return on Friday, June 23. A commercial bus will be used for transportation while in the nation's capital.

Applicants must be high school juniors living in Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn County. Interested students should complete an application online by February 1: tinyurl.com/YouthTour2023.

Woonsocket Senior Named Scholar of the Week

Central Electric Cooperative and Woonsocket High School were pleased to recognize Tristan Jensen, the daughter of Terry and Sarah Jensen of Woonsocket, as the Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week for Nov. 6-12, 2022.

According to Woonsocket High School Superintendent Rod Weber, Jensen is a great role model for younger students because she is involved in a number of school and community activities.

At school, Jensen volunteers to help elementary school staff and participates in volleyball, basketball, student council, National Honor Society, choir and drama. In her community, Jensen is active with youth group, church, blood drives and other volunteer activities. After

high school, Jensen plans to pursue a degree in nursing at Mitchell Technical College.

“Motivated students like Tristan prove there is a bright future ahead. She should be proud of her accomplishments in the classroom and community,” said Tara Miller, Central Electric Cooperative’s manager of communications.

Jensen receives a \$250 scholarship from Central Electric Cooperative and is eligible for additional scholarships that will be given away this spring at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet.

Jensen was featured on Dakota News Now for her accomplishments, and you can find the story at www.dakotanewsnow.com by typing Tristan Jensen in the search tool.

The Scholar of the Week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now, Central Electric Cooperative and other local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that captures the commitment electric cooperatives have to the communities they serve.



Woonsocket senior Tristan Jensen (right) accepts the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week award from Tara Miller of Central Electric Cooperative.

\$1.25 Million Capital Credit Refund Approved

Tara Miller

Manager of Communications

Central Electric Cooperative's board of directors recently approved a \$1.25 million capital credit general retirement, refunding past margins back to cooperative members. The total retirement includes \$600,000 of Central Electric capital credits and \$652,027 of East River Electric and Basin Electric Power Cooperative capital credits.

Any profits earned by a not-for-profit cooperative are allocated to the cooperative's member-owners. These excess profits, also referred to as margins, are allocated to members as capital credits in proportion to the amount of electricity billed during the year. Because capital credits are based on electricity purchases, each member's refund is different.

Capital credits are fundamental to the cooperative business model and a financial benefit to the membership. Capital credits are retained by the cooperative to maintain cash flow and ensure good financial standing.

Members with active accounts received their refund as a credit on November bills received in December. Inactive members are mailed a check to the current address on file. Former co-op members should contact us to ensure capital credit payments are sent to the correct address.

Please keep a copy of capital credit retirements for your records. If you have questions, contact our office or visit www.centralec.coop/capital-credits to view a list of frequently asked questions. Thank you for being a valued member-owner!

Frequently Asked Questions

What are capital credits?

Capital Credits are one of the many benefits of being a member of Central Electric Cooperative. When you have Central Electric as your electric provider, you are part owner of the cooperative. Every time you pay your electric bill, you are investing in the equity of the cooperative. These equity investments are known as capital credits, which are invested back into the company and eventually returned to members.

Am I eligible to receive capital credit refunds?

As either a current member or a former member of Central Electric Cooperative, you are entitled to receive a dividend. Refunds will be issued to the member whose name is on the account.

Is there any reason I wouldn't receive a refund?

The only time a member would not receive the capital credits allocated to them would be if they had a bad debt at Central Electric, including any reasonable interest and late fees resulting from that debt. In this case, Central Electric would deduct what is owed to the coop and the rest of the capital credits, if any, would be refunded at the current refund schedule.

How do I find out if I have an unclaimed check?

Each spring, the list of unclaimed capital credit checks is published in the newsletter and on www.centralec.coop. If you think you may have unclaimed capital credit checks not listed there, please call our office at 1-800-477-2892 to inquire with the billing department.

For more information, visit www.centralec.coop/capital-credits.

As a Member-Owner of
Central Electric Cooperative,
YOU Get the Credit



ICE FISHING IN MOBRIDGE



The annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament attracts more than 1,000 avid cold-weather anglers. *Photo by Mobridge Outdoors*

Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament offers fun and friendly competition

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Last fall, the world of competitive walleye fishing was shaken with a startling saga of deception and skulduggery worthy of a Tom Clancy novel.

Social media lit up showing the dramatic moment a tournament director in Ohio shouted at the top of his lungs with horror and disgust: “We got weights in fish! We got weights in fish!”

Suspicion had long surrounded a pair of locals who ultimately got nabbed stuffing lead weights down the gullets of their walleye. After the two sparked skepticism with a catch of nearly 36 lbs. - one-third heavier than the runners-up - the director gutted the fish right in front of the entire field of wary competitors and held aloft several shiny orbs the size of steel ping-pong balls.

The viral video received more than 10 million views as cameras captured the chaotic scene with one of the accused hanging his head in shame (his partner had slithered away to his truck) while fellow competitors cursed and threatened to inflict bodily harm upon the sly anglers who were later indicted on four felony counts.

Vinson Dargatz is pretty sure nothing close to that degree of high drama will be replicated at the 22nd Annual Mobridge Walleye Ice Fishing Tournament set for Jan. 14. Based on his experience participating in the event over the past 12 years, this competition is more fisherman-friendly and the atmosphere is much more focused on fun.

Dargatz, an apprentice electrician at Lake Region Electric based in Webster, has continued to make the four-hour trip from his home to Mobridge mostly

because of the fellowship and the relaxed, laid-back vibe of the festivities.

He typically gets together with his two brothers and three cousins for the tournament that he describes as a “yearly ritual.”



Vinson Dargatz is shown with one of his prize catches.

“We always have a lot of fun” he said. “We used to just bring a portable shack out on the ice and sit on some buckets while we fished. But now that we’ve gotten older, softer and a little smarter, we have an Ice Castle and we fish and hang out and grill some burgers.”

Number of two-person fishing teams competing

551

in last year's Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament

Dargatz confesses that the purchase of the 8 x 16-foot Ice Castle was actually his wife's idea. When it's time for an outdoor fishing excursion, the entire family with two boys and a girl always likes to come along. And mom insists on having adequate accommodations.

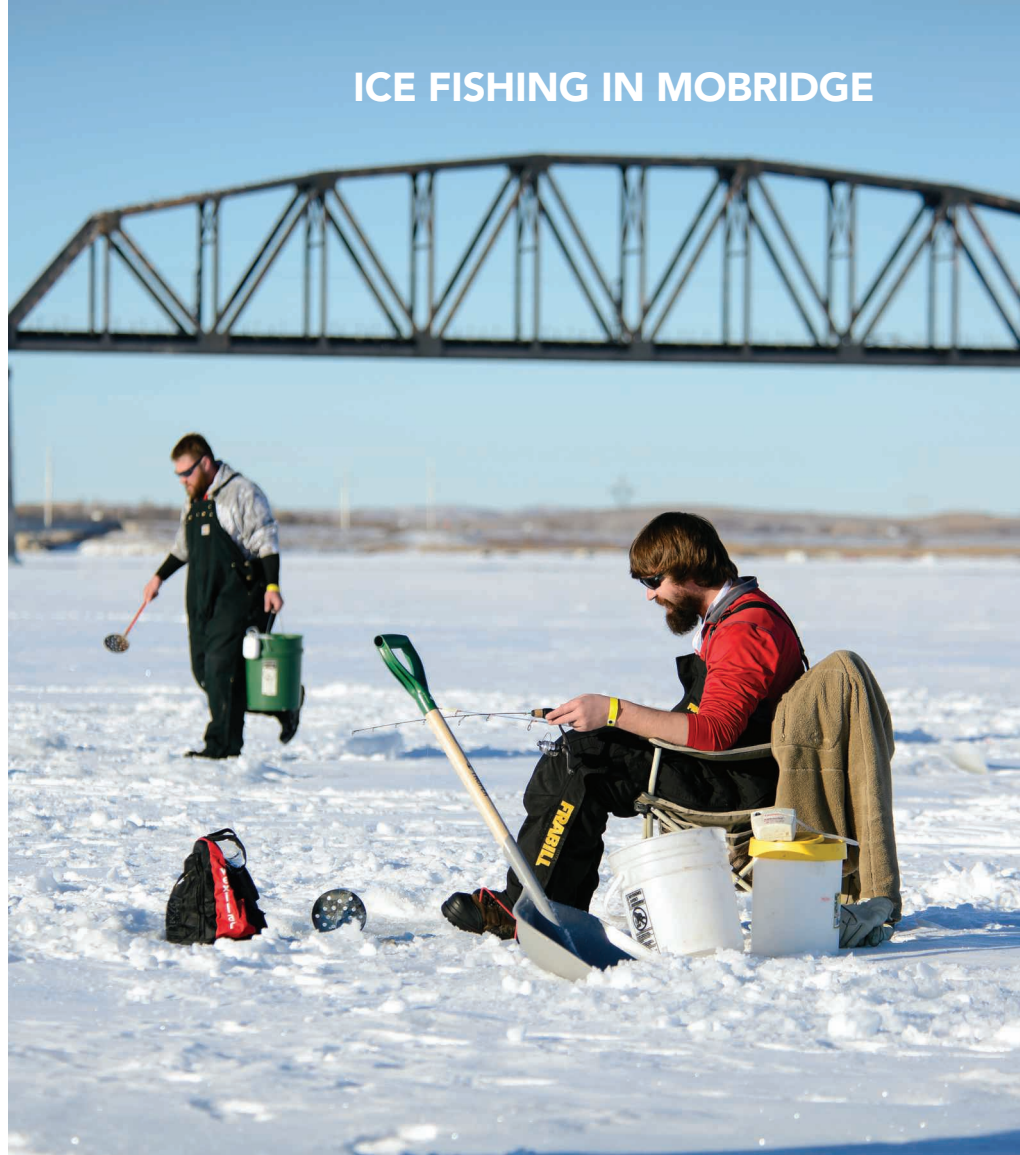
But Dargatz said when it comes to the annual winter escapes to Mobridge with the fellas, the family has to find something else to do. Besides, the town already doubles in size during tournament weekend and if every angler brought hangers-on in tow, Mobridge might expand to the size of Sioux Falls.

FILLED TO CAPACITY

Lately, the walleye population is standing less of a chance for survival against the increasing number of competitors testing their luck and skill in the annual tournament. The field has ballooned to the point of being capped at 551 two-person teams with fishermen swarming in from 16 different states.

Only so many humans can be stuffed into the town's expo center where the group events are held.

All of these developments have bewildered Jeff Jackson, one of the tournament's founders and owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge. He recalls more than two decades ago sitting around the table with a group of town leaders who were trying to figure out a way to attract visitors to the area and capitalize on all the outdoor adventure the Missouri



The Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament draws eager competitors from 16 different states.

Photo by Travel South Dakota

River and Lake Oahe have to offer.

In the first year, 50 eager contenders were lured to the event by the opportunity to claim the super grand prize of a Mr. Heater. These days, the prize list represents more than \$225,000 in assorted items such as Ice Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, clam shacks, \$8,000 worth of outdoor gear from Scheel's and Runnings, and more.

Anglers can keep their spot in the field if they register early in mid-July, otherwise their spot will be thrown into a lottery. Three guaranteed positions are drawn each year for those who participate in the town's summer fishing tournament, the Annual Denny Palmer Memorial Walleye Classic. Three spots are auctioned off on Ebay, which typically fetch up to \$4,000 apiece, while a

final spot is raffled off.

Last year's winners were Travis Bergstrom and Tate Merchant, who registered four fish weighing a total of 15.8 lbs. including one lunker that tipped the scales at 9.33 lbs. Jason Converse and Josh Spilde finished second with five fish weighing in at 13.4 lbs.

Dargatz already has the July 2023 registration date on his calendar and reminder notifications set to make sure he doesn't miss out. He's anticipating another adventurous outing in this year's tourney.

"I think it's great for the town to have so many people visiting and spending money. It's pretty wild that a small town can pull something like that together. They run it like a well-oiled machine and make sure everyone has a good time."

Heating assistance available

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) helps eligible South Dakotans pay for home heating costs. Energy assistance may not pay for all your home heating costs, but it could help ease the strain of the heating season. Energy assistance is available from October 1 to May 15.

The program may also help if your heating costs are included in the cost of your rent or if you pay heating costs directly to your landlord in addition to your rent.

Eligibility is based on:

- Number of people in household
- Gross income of everyone in the household
- Your home's main heat source type
- County you live in

How to apply:

- E-mail LIEAPApp@state.sd.us to either request an application or e-mail a completed application.
- Call toll-free at 1.800.233.8503 to request an application be mailed
- Complete an application online at <https://dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energyassistance/lowincome.aspx>
- Visit your local Department of Social Services office to obtain an application.

2022-2023 HEATING SEASON INCOME LIMITS

| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | MAXIMUM 3-MONTH INCOME |
|----------------|------------------------|
| 1 Person | \$6,795 |
| 2 Person | \$9,155 |
| 3 Person | \$11,501 |
| 4 Person | \$13,692 |
| 5 Person | \$15,883 |
| 6 Person | \$18,074 |
| 7 Person | \$18,485 |
| 8 Person | \$18,895 |
| 9 Person | \$19,306 |
| 10 Person | \$21,026 |

Employee Years of Service



Davis
2 years on Dec. 1



Chandler
1 year on Dec. 16



Joey
1 year on Jan. 3



Tony
18 years on Jan. 3



Kevin
17 years on Jan. 16



Ken
38 years on Jan. 28





Grant Recipients Announced

Central Electric Cooperative is awarding \$13,100 in Operation Round-Up grants to support area projects. Through Operation Round-Up, participating cooperative members round up their monthly electric bill to the next whole dollar. Contributions averaging 50 cents per member are pooled together to support local causes through the grant program. Several Central Electric Cooperative employees also contribute to the fund.

Upon reviewing applications from organizations across the service territory, the Operation Round-Up board of trustees approved the following grant awards.

November 2022 Grant Awards:

- \$1,400 – Aurora County 4-H Leaders (facility wiring and improvements)
- \$2,000 – Dacotah Tipis Habitat for Humanity (tools and supplies)
- \$1,500 – Fedora Volunteer Fire Department (rescue equipment)
- \$1,000 – Kimball Backpack Program (youth nutritional support)
- \$1,500 – Kimball Center Food Pantry (building improvements)
- \$1,000 – Little Tikes Daycare (appliance upgrades)
- \$500 – Sanborn County 4-H Leaders/Hudson Foubert (outdoor learning space)
- \$1,000 – Servicemen’s Memorial Cemetery (shelter, parking improvements)
- \$700 – Town of Fulton (automated external defibrillator)
- \$2,500 – Wessington Springs Athletic Boosters (tables and chairs for community events)

“Residents and non-profit groups in each county we serve are benefitting from current and past Operation Round-Up grants. Since 2015, the program has generated more than \$170,000 to support local projects,” said Tara Miller, manager of communications at Central Electric.

Trustees represent the eight-county territory, consisting of Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner and Sanborn Counties. Trustees are Julie Dykstra of Stickney, Jill Ekstrum of Kimball, David Jorgenson of Mitchell, Amber Kolousek of Wessington Springs, LeAnn Moe of Alexandria, Tami Moore of Howard, Ellen Speck of Gann Valley, Dawna VanOverschelde of Letcher and cooperative director-at-large Merl Bechen of Mitchell.

Grant applications are accepted every six months. The next deadline is May 1, 2023. For more information, please call 1-800-477-2892, visit www.centralec.coop/operation-round-up or contact your local trustee.

Thanks to participating members for making this program possible!

Since Operation Round-Up launched in 2015, the generosity of our members and employees has enabled us to generate more than \$170,000 to support local projects. If you are a community-minded individual and want to contribute extra to the fund, there are options available. Call 1-800-477-2892 with any questions.

____ Contribute on all accounts. (Members with more than 1 meter have the option to round up each account.)

____ Contribute extra to the Operation Round-Up fund on my bill each month. (Specify amount \$ _____)

____ Send a one-time contribution to the fund. (Specify amount \$ _____)

Name on Account: _____ Phone: _____

Mail to: Central Electric Cooperative, [REDACTED]



WINTER OUTDOOR FUN

The chill of winter doesn't keep outdoors enthusiasts from finding adventure at Farm Island Recreation Area. *Photos by Travel South Dakota*

Winter adventure-seekers find wonder in the chilly outdoors

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Mental health counselors have discovered that seasonal affective disorder can be much more than just a harmless case of the blahs - it's a real condition that afflicts millions of people when the daylight diminishes and the temps turn colder.

They also agree that one way to defend against the winter doldrums is to get out of the house, embrace the crisp invigorating air and enjoy all the season has to offer.

It doesn't take much time or effort to create a list of fun things to do to get the blood pumping and the spirit soaring. Stepping away from a stuffy den and going outside to build a snowman, hike a nature trail, roast marshmallows over a bonfire and engage in other activities with family and friends can help bring back some

mental and emotional balance.

Nick Harrington of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks said his department is eager to accommodate anyone looking to extract some fun from the chill of winter.

Harrington notes that many of the state's 50-plus public camping and recreation areas are open for attendance during the long winter months, although some facilities are closed in an effort to protect delicate nesting habitats

for eagles and other species of wildlife.

Some comfort stations may close down during winter but the state has modern lodges available with amenities such as heaters and running water, including cabins, suites and group lodges for cold-weather outdoor vacationing.

Harrington said that while many vacationers from far and wide flock to South Dakota in the summertime, the state boasts more than 1,500 miles of nature trails for cold-weather adventurers to discover and is one



Fat-tire biking in Spearfish Canyon

8 WINTER WONDERLANDS FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- * Wind Cave National Park, Hot Springs
- * Snake Creek Recreation Area, Platte
- * Palisades State Park, Garretson
- * Custer State Park Spur, Custer
- * Randall Creek SRA, Pickstown
- * Pelican Lake, Pelican Township
- * Farm Island SRA, Pierre
- * Oakwood Lakes State Park, Bruce



Time spent outdoors during the winter can be beneficial to mental and physical well-being.

of the nation’s top attractions for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hiking, fat-tire biking and many other off-season outdoor adventures.

“Some people just enjoy getting out in the cold weather. They like the changing of the seasons we get in our region and they’re always looking for new opportunities to explore what we have to offer without a lot of crowds,” Harrington said. “It’s already a beautiful state, but winter really changes the look of the landscape and is a big draw for many people looking for outdoor fun.”

World-renowned summertime attractions such as the iconic Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse destinations take on an entirely different appeal during the snowy season. The Badlands geological formations, Ponderosa pine forests, open prairies, secluded lakes and

scenic waterways become even more alluring for landscape photographers, bird-watchers, hikers and wildlife enthusiasts when set against a charming and aesthetically pleasing wintry backdrop.

One of the most highly-attended state park destinations during both the summer and winter is Custer State Park with its 71,000 acres of trails, spectacular vistas and pristine lakes. The site is open year-round and during winter offers a wide array of things to see and do.

But there is still lots to explore across the state, including the more centrally situated Farm Island Recreation Area located four miles east of Pierre. Considered one of the park system’s best-kept secrets, Farm Island sits nestled along the banks of Lake Sharpe

and the Missouri River and welcomes many winter guests who enjoy majestic glowing sunsets, ice fishing, eight miles of hiking trails, cross-country skiing and exploring the perfect natural habitat for birdwatching. There’s also RV, primitive and cabin camping opportunities available.

For more ideas on how to plan trip and shake off the winter blues, check out this handy guide: www.travelsouthdakota.com/winter.

And after deciding on your winter vacation plans, don’t forget to pack the following along with the rest of your cold-weather gear:

- Wool base layer
- Fleece mid-layer
- Windproof outer layer
- Waterproof boots
- Warm hat, scarf, gloves and socks.



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Habitat for Humanity is active in all 50 states and 70 countries around the world. *Photos by Habitat for Humanity*

Habitat for Humanity builds homes and hope one family at a time

Billy Gibson

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Habitat for Humanity homes have walls that can talk. Well, they don't actually vocalize, but they do carry messages of hope and inspiration.

There's a time-honored tradition that calls for Habitat volunteers to take a break from their carpentry work and jot down personal notes on studs and sheets of plywood before the materials are nailed into place.

The simple scribbles are intended to infuse the space with messages of hope, harmony and good fortune showered upon those family members who will soon call the dwelling home.

"May all who enter this home as guests, leave as family," reads one brief affirmation rendered in green with a fat felt-tipped marker.

"Smile through the darkness. It will always bring light," reads another message of encouragement.

Some notes are based on Biblical scriptures: "Walk by faith, not by sight."

Still others recite Bible verses verbatim such as John 3:16, Jeremiah 29:11 and other familiar passages that share the promise of a bountiful future.

School-age volunteers are also quick to get in on the act. While the adults are busy at work with nail guns and power saws, the kids are taking permanent markers and drawing colorful images of sunbeams, flowers, hearts, backyard playgrounds, church crosses and whatever comes to mind. Inside the walls of one Habitat home in Mitchell there happens to be a sketch of a Happy Meal from McDonald's, complete with a fully-dressed hamburger, fries and a drink.

If nothing else, these personal postings serve as reminders of the passion that Habitat volunteers put into their work.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Board Member Rick Cheloha currently has a compensated "retirement job" as a construction supervisor with his local affiliate but plans to step down soon and continue on as a volunteer.

Before moving to Tabor several years ago, he volunteered with the affiliate in Columbus, Neb., while working full-time as a construction manager with Loupe River Electric.

"I've been involved in 10 projects and none of them would have been possible without the help of volunteers and others who support the program in so many ways. Some people think we build free houses, but that's not true. They have to pay for the house, but they can qualify for a zero percent loan."

Patrick Soukup, manager of member services and marketing at Central Electric in Mitchell, is president of his local Habitat affiliate. Mitchell Regional HFH is one of eight affiliates in South Dakota, representing the global program that was founded in 1976 and serves in all 50 states and 70 countries.

Soukup said the Mitchell crew is on the cusp of completing its ninth home. He remembers the smile on the faces of new homeowner Sonja Wells and her family when they participated in a "nail pounding" ceremony during the construction process last November.

Volunteers, family members and supporters were on hand as Fr. Yamato



Above/left, Patrick Soukup works at the Mitchell Regional HFH plant sale, while volunteers write special messages to future homeowners.

Icochea prayed over the property, the Wells family and the many participants who donated their time and resources to make the project come to fruition.

Soukup said he is sold on the merits of the ecumenical Christian housing ministry, which conducts thorough screenings of housing candidates and requires homeowners to invest considerable “sweat equity” into the homebuilding projects.

“It’s very fulfilling for everyone involved to see a home build take shape and to see so many people put their

hearts and souls into something like this to improve the lives of others. It really makes a difference, it has a direct impact, and you can get a sense of that as you get to know the homeowners and the volunteers during the different stages in the process.”

Local HFH affiliates apply some creativity to raise funds for their projects. The Mitchell affiliate holds an annual plant sale in the town square. The Brookings affiliate stages an annual gala called “Nail the Runway” which is billed as a “construction-based fashion show with a twist.” The twist happens to be that all fashions must be designed from raw construction materials.

Participants try their best to strut down the runway with grace while outfitted in pieces of tile, wood, landscaping fabric, wallpaper, nails and anything else they can drag out of the tool shed. This year’s event is set for March 18 at the Swiftel Center in Brookings.

Dan McColley is Executive Director and Lead Mission Officer for the Brookings HFH. He admits that he stole – um, “admired and acquired” - the fashion show idea from an affiliate in Rochester, MN. McColley got his start with HFH as a volunteer at the Northwoods ReStore in Bemidji, MN. He gave up his financially rewarding day job as an operations manager to

join Habitat full-time and relocated to Brookings six years ago.

For McColley, his work with Habitat is very personal. He chokes up when describing how his father and mother worked multiple jobs to make ends meet for the family of seven.

“We would have qualified for a Habitat home,” he said, noting that the Brookings group has approved 84 homeowners since 1995. “If I can do anything to lift that burden for another family, that’s what this job means to me. Every day, it’s coming to work and trying to give others an opportunity to have the benefit of home ownership. We celebrate what we’ve done, then we look for ways to do more.”

One family that stands out for McColley involved a mother and daughter who lived together. The daughter required ADA accommodations.

“She told us she needed soft carpeting because her wheelchair wouldn’t fit through the front door and she got rug burns having to crawl around the house,” he said. “We were able to build a home that was ADA compliant where she could use her wheelchair, open cabinets easily and cook without getting burned. The work we do transforms the lives of our homebuyers, our staff, our donors, our volunteers and our communities.”

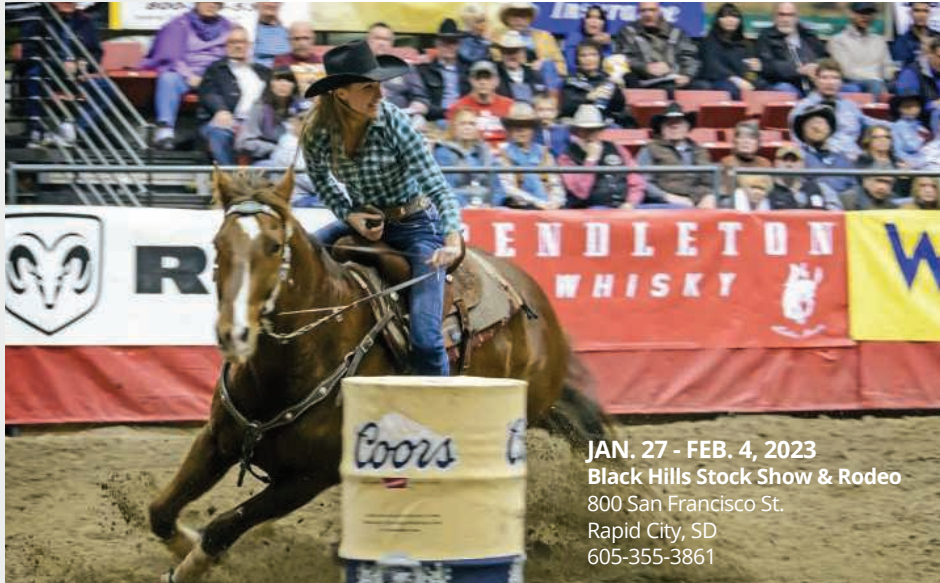


The annual “Nail the Runway” event staged by the Brookings Area HFH is a “fashion show with a twist.”

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth in LaCroix Hall at the Black Hills Stock Show to win an electric snow blower!

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JAN. 27 - FEB. 4, 2023
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
800 San Francisco St.
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

JAN. 27 - FEB. 4
Annual Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairgrounds and The Monument
Tickets may be purchased online and at the gate
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

JAN. 28
K9 Keg Pull
On-site registration
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Deadwood Street by
Outlaw Square
Deadwood, SD

FEB. 3-4
TOOTSIE
Show Dates:
Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.
Feb. 4, 2 p.m.
Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

FEB. 10-11
Mardi Gras Weekend
Mardi Gras Events & Parade
sponsored by Deadwood
Chamber of Commerce
Main Street
Deadwood, SD

FEB. 11
Songs of Romance
7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

MAR. 4
Annual Ag Day
9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 1
American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance Building
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 13-14
ON YOUR FEET! THE MUSICAL
Show Dates:
Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14, 2 p.m.
Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 14
Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.
\$80 for a four-person team
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

JAN. 14
Chinook Days Winter Carnival
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Big Hill
Spearfish, SD

JAN. 20
Rapid Valley UMC Soup Supper
4:30 p.m.-7 p.m.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 21
Lakota Games on Ice
1 p.m.-4 p.m.
Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village
Mitchell, SD

JAN. 27-28
Annual Deadwood Pro Snocross Races
Jan. 27, 12:50 p.m.
Jan. 28, 8:25 a.m.
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds
Deadwood, SD

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.

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