

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota Snowmobiling

Seasonal Fun in the
Snow

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High School Students
Gaining Dual Credits

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2024 Initiatives



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

It is hard to believe, but this year marks the 24th anniversary for Central Electric Cooperative. We would like to express our sincere thanks for the support we continue to receive from our

members and friends.

Financially, 2023 was a challenging year. The weather was moderate in every season, which was terrific for crews to get work accomplished, but it had a negative effect on the cost of wholesale power and revenue. You can see the November financial report on the bottom of page 3 showing 2023 year-to-date margins are well below 2022 margins.

Fortunately, excess revenue from 2022 was deferred to help our operating statement in future years. These funds allowed us to meet the financial requirements of our lenders in 2023. As you know, Central Electric is adjusting electric rates in 2024 due to higher wholesale power costs and increased operating expenses.

Your board of directors and employees are scheduled to go through a strategic planning session in July. We go through this process every two years to identify issues and set goals to improve our operations. Here is an overview of projects already in the works for 2024.

MEMBER PROGRAMS

In 2024, your cooperative will continue the traditional list of offerings for our members. This includes scholarships, the NRECA Youth Tour, rebates, electrical wiring, heating and

cooling services, a member tour of Basin Electric and system maintenance. We also have a short list of new projects for the coming year.

RESOURCE INTERCONNECTION FOR WIND, SOLAR & MORE

Your cooperative will be launching a new internet-based service for members to interconnect an energy resource to our system. Examples of applicable energy resources are solar, wind, batteries, electric vehicles and standby generators. The new service should guide the member and the cooperative through the process of interconnection. The goal is to make the process more consistent, maintain safety, save time and prevent errors that would delay the project or impact reliability.

SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

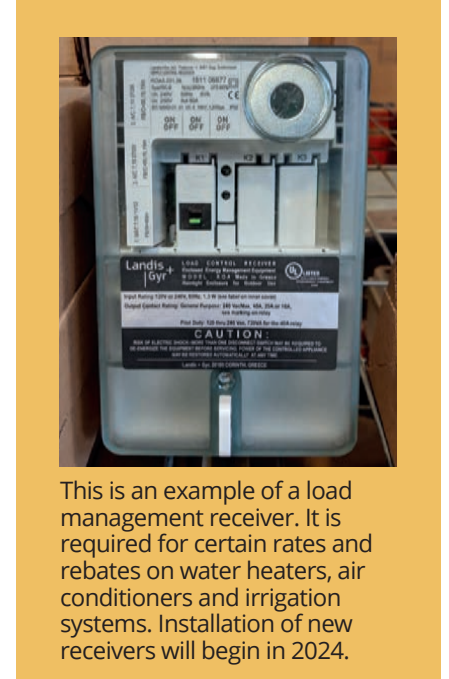
Central Electric expects to replace 55 miles of the distribution system in the areas of Letcher, Pukwana, Fort Thompson, Fedora, Howard and Mitchell. The crews will also make improvements at three substations, build new lines as needed and install the high-voltage system at the new soybean processing facility near Mitchell.

HOWARD OUTPOST

The cooperative is planning to build a new facility in Howard with the hope of starting construction by the end of the year.

LOAD MANAGEMENT

Our load management system allows your cooperative to minimize wholesale power costs by lowering power purchases during peak times. The current system was installed in the 1980s and plans are underway to replace it with newer technology.



This is an example of a load management receiver. It is required for certain rates and rebates on water heaters, air conditioners and irrigation systems. Installation of new receivers will begin in 2024.

We will start a pilot project this spring to test the new technology by replacing 200 load management receivers. We will be looking for member volunteers to assist us with this important testing. Watch for information on the load management pilot in a future newsletter.

THANK YOU

As you can see, it will be a busy year. Thanks for all you do as we work to provide a reliable source of electric energy and excellent customer service to our members.

Until next month, stay safe!

To contact your cooperative with questions, please call 1-800-477-2892 or email cec@centralec.coop.

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

- Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President
Brule County - Bradee Pazour
Buffalo County - Donita Loudner, SDREA Director
Davison County - Jeff Gustafson
Hanson County - Mark Hofer - Secretary & NRECA Director
Jerauld County - Mark Reindl, Treasurer
Miner County - Robert Banks - Director
Sanborn County - Todd VanWalleghen, Vice President
Director-At-Large - Merl Bechen



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 cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.centralecc.coop.

Subscription information: Central Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents of each monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301, and additional mailing offices.

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@centralecc.coop; website: www.centralecc.coop.

Contact Us

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Phone: 1-800-477-2892 or 1-605-996-7516

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 on Nov. 20, 2023, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

BOARD REPORT

General Manager Schlimgen updated the board of directors on the East River Electric Managers Advisory Committee, Basin Electric activities, Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) fund, employee benefits and other management activities.

General Manager Schlimgen and Manager of Finance and Administration Uher shared details from the most recent cost of service study and presented 2024 proposed rate adjustments.

Mitchell Area Development Corporation (MADC), Mitchell Area Housing Inc. (MAHI) and Chamber of Commerce CEO Gerri Beck shared information about a local housing project. Chamber Workforce and Housing Development Director Mike Lauritsen shared future industrial project plans.

BOARD ACTION

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2024 budget. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to approve rate adjustments effective January 1, 2024. Motion Carried.
A motion was made and seconded to eliminate Policy 823 - Security Lighting. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to adopt changes to Policy 822 - Outdoor Area Lighting. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to adopt changes to Policy 112 - Directors' Fees and Expenses. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to adopt changes to Policy 306 - Interconnection of Distributed Resources. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to support MAHI's \$2 million REED loan application for workforce housing. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to support MADC by making an application for up to \$2 million in USDA economic development loan funds. Motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for Dec. 18, 2023.

Table with 3 columns: FINANCIAL REPORT, YEAR TO DATE NOV. 2022, YEAR TO DATE NOV. 2023. Rows include Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales, Electric Revenues, Total Cost of Service, and Operating Margins.

Cooking Safety

Watch What You Heat: Cooking is the Number One Cause of Home Fires

Plan A: Primary Prevention

- The best time to cook is when you are wide awake, and not drowsy from medications or alcohol.
- Always wipe clean the stove, oven, exhaust fan to prevent grease buildup.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Keep a pan lid and dry potholders or oven mitts near you EVERY time you cook.
- Turn pot or pan handles toward the back of the stove.
- When heating food in the microwave, use microwave- safe cookware that allows steam to escape.
- Allow food to rest before removing from the microwave.
- When frying, use a pan lid or splash guard to prevent grease splatter.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you to check on your cooking.
- After cooking, check the kitchen to make sure all burners and other appliances are turned off.

Plan B: Secondary Prevention

If your food does catch on fire...

1. Cover the pan with its lid. A cookie sheet works too. Leave covered until the pan is cool. NEVER move the pot or carry it outside - the pot is too hot to handle and the contents may splash, causing a severe burn.
2. Turn the heat off. With the lid on and the heat off, the fire should quickly put itself out. NEVER use water to put out a kitchen fire. Water will cause the

oil to splatter and spread the fire, or scald you as it vaporizes.

3. If the fire is inside the oven or microwave, keep the door shut and turn it off. Keep closed until the oven is cool.
4. If the fire gets out of control- get out, stay out and call 9-1-1. Don't return inside for any reason.

STATS

- 47% of all home fires are caused by cooking
- Preventing a burn injury is always better than the pain and trauma of medical treatment afterward.

National Burn Awareness Week (Feb. 4-10, 2024) is a window of opportunity for organizations to mobilize burn, fire, and life safety educators to unite in sharing a common burn awareness and prevention message in our communities.

Source: American Burn Association



Call 811 Before You Dig

Lillee Pannell, Age 10

Lillee Pannell instructs readers to call 811 before digging. Lillee is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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.

BRUNCH SPECIALS

FRENCH TOAST SUPREME

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter
 2 tbsps. white corn syrup
 1 cup brown sugar
 5 eggs
 1 cup Carnation milk
 1 tsp. vanilla
 1/4 tsp. salt

Method

Boil together butter, corn syrup, and brown sugar for one minute. Grease a 9x13 pan and put the caramel mix in bottom. Slice French bread about one inch thick or use Texas toast. Put slices close together on top of the caramel sauce. Beat together eggs, milk, vanilla, and salt. Pour on top of bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. When ready to serve, turn the pieces over and caramel will be on top. Best served warm.

Brigitta Hofer
 Bridgewater, S.D.

MINI FRITTATAS

Ingredients:

8 eggs
 1/4 cup milk
 1 1/2 tps. Italian seasoning
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
 1 cup crumbled cooked bacon
 1 med. onion, finely chopped
 1 med. zucchini, finely chopped
 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat eggs, milk, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper in medium bowl until well blended. Add bacon, onion, zucchini and 1/2 cup of the cheese; mix well. Spray one (12-cup) muffin tin generously with no stick cooking spray. Spoon about 1/4 cup egg mixture into each cup. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake 20 to 22 minutes or just until eggs are set. Run small knife or spatula around each cup to loosen mini frittatas. Let stand five minutes before serving.

McCormick.com

CINNAMON PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 cups pancake mix
 1 tsp. cinnamon
 2 eggs, beaten
 1 cup milk
 2 tbsps. vegetable oil
 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Method

Stir pancake mix and cinnamon in large bowl until well blended. Stir in eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla just until blended.

Pour 1/4 cup of batter per pancake onto preheated lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook one to two minutes per side or until golden brown, turning when pancakes begin to bubble. Serve pancakes with Spiced Syrup, if desired.

Kitchen Tip: To make flavorful Spiced syrup, mix one cup pancake syrup, one teaspoon pure vanilla extract and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon in a small microwave-safe bowl and microwave on HIGH for one minute or until warm, stirring once.

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.

Swenson Named Scholar of the Week

Central Electric Cooperative and Woonsocket High School are pleased to recognize Rain Swenson, the daughter of Todd and Jill Swenson of Wessington Springs, as the Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week for Jan. 14-20, 2024.

Woonsocket Superintendent Dr. Rod Weber said Swenson is a great role model for other students. She is active with National Honor Society, Girls State, golf, oral interpretation, school play, art club, choir and student council. Swenson volunteers for Feeding South Dakota and assists with community clean-up activities. She also works as a cashier at Woony Foods. After high school, Swenson plans to study advertising at South Dakota State University.

“We recognize Rain Swenson for excelling in the classroom and making a difference in the community,” said Tara Miller of Central Electric. “She definitely has a bright future.”

Swenson received a \$250 scholarship from Central Electric Cooperative and is eligible for additional scholarships this spring at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet. She was featured on Dakota News Now on Monday, Jan. 15. You can find the story online at www.dakotaneWSnow.com by typing Rain Swenson 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.



Rain Swenson (center) accepts the Scholar of the Week award from Woonsocket High School Superintendent Dr. Rod Weber and Tara Miller of Central Electric.



Ages 3-4
Eddie Tuttle
(Ethan)



Ages 5-6
Callie Austerman
(Howard)



Ages 7-8
Hannah Pollard
(Mount Vernon)



Ages 9-10
Keilissa Drapeau
(Fort Thompson)



Ages 11-12
Leafie Drapeau
(Fort Thompson)

Coloring Contest Winners Announced

Central Electric recently published a coloring contest in Cooperative Connections magazine and online at centralec.coop. The focal point of the contest was the co-op's new Polaris Kinetic electric side-by-side.

The electric side-by-side was purchased in 2022 to study agricultural uses for electric utility terrain vehicles and to better understand the impacts of home charging.

An external judge selected the winners published here after reviewing more than 150 submissions. Winners will receive a prize of art supplies for their efforts.

We sincerely thank all the parents and teachers who brought this activity into your homes and classrooms. Your work is developing future community (and maybe cooperative) leaders!

Education Milestones

The cooperative principle of “Education, Training and Information” serves as a framework for fostering a collaborative learning environment. At its core, this principle emphasizes the collective contributions and efforts aimed at achieving common objectives. Electric cooperatives recognize education, training and information as essential for professional growth.

Central Electric honors Director-At-Large Merl Bechen and Manager of Communications Tara Miller for achieving educational milestones through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).



Board President Duane Wolbrink (left) recognizes Director Merl Bechen for completing NRECA’s Credentialed Cooperative Director Program in 2023.

Bechen Receives Board Certification

Director-At-Large Merl Bechen of Mitchell recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from NRECA.

The Credentialed Cooperative Director program requires demonstrated understanding of basic competencies in five core courses: Director Duties and Liabilities, Understanding the Electric Business, Board Operations and Process, Strategic Planning and Financial Decision Making.

Bechen’s dedication to furthering his industry knowledge benefits the membership and helps ensure strong governance.



After completing 110 hours of coursework, Tara Miller earned NRECA’s Certified Cooperative Communicator designation.

Miller Receives Communications Designation

Manager of Communications Tara Miller recently earned the Certified Cooperative Communicator designation from NRECA after completing 110 hours of coursework and several writing assignments.

The Certified Cooperative Communicator program strengthens the role of communications professionals. The cohort-based learning program aims to develop communicators into strategic thinkers, planners and contributors for the cooperative.

Miller is one of six electric cooperative employees in South Dakota known to hold this designation.

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 DSSHeat@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 dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energy_weatherization_assistance.aspx
- Visit your local Department of Social Services office to obtain an application.

2023-2024 HEATING SEASON INCOME LIMITS

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MAXIMUM 3-MONTH INCOME
1 Person	\$7,290
2 Person	\$9,827
3 Person	\$12,140
4 Person	\$14,452
5 Person	\$16,764
6 Person	\$19,077
7 Person	\$19,510
8 Person	\$19,944
9 Person	\$20,887
10 Person	\$22,815



A group of Black Hills Snowmobile Club members enjoy a ride through the snow covered pines.

SOUTH DAKOTA'S SNOWMOBILE CLUBS

Snow Lovers Create Trails and Lifelong Friendships Through Club Membership

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Being a member of one of South Dakota's many snowmobiling clubs is more like being a member of a big, adrenaline-loving family.

Being a part of a snowmobile club provides the opportunity to meet likeminded individuals that can easily turn into some of your best friends. That's the case for Mike Boock, of Rapid City, who is a longtime member of the Black Hills Snowmobile Club (BHSC).

"Most of the friendships that I have today are because of the snowmobile club. Many of us even camp together during the summer at the lake," Boock said.

Boock said the club boasts up to 70 members in all. While he primarily rides the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, Boock loves riding in Black Hills when the area receives enough snow.

There are a total of 416 miles of groomed snowmobile trails

in the Black Hills National Forest, making it a pristine spot for snowmobiling.

The snowmobile clubs in the Black Hills have it a little easier than those out east as they don't have to mark, install, groom or repair trails.

"The state takes care of that," Boock said. "This allows clubs like the BHSC to become more of an educational and community support organization."

This allows club members more free time to volunteer or participate in community events, such as the Festival of Lights Parade and Storybook Island Christmas Nights of Light.

Kelly Weaver is the President of the South Dakota Snowmobile Association and a member of the Aberdeen Drift Busters Snowmobile Club.

The Aberdeen Drift Busters maintain what's called the Dakota Midland trail system, which connects Aberdeen, Mina Lake, Richmond Lake, Westport, Frederick and Columbia.

"This provides about 75 miles of riding in a safe, marked, and groomed corridor," Weaver said.

There are rules governing the trail system. While there are no posted speed limits on the trail, when the trail is located in a road right-of-way, the speed limit of the road applies.

There are also laws governing the type of vehicle that can be ridden on a snowmobile trail. Machines must meet the state definition of a snowmobile. ATV's and other motorized vehicles do not typically meet that definition.

Aberdeen Drift Busters has held the title of being the largest snowmobile club in the state for several years. It was established in 1969, the same year the South Dakota Snowmobile

Association was established.

“Currently, our membership is right around 100 families,” Weaver said. “The club has been as large as 225 members but membership has slowed over the past decade due to the lack of snow and the growing number of activities that families have an opportunity to participate in.”

Anyone can join a snowmobile club and snowmobile ownership is not a requirement.

“You are connected with very experienced snowmobilers who can provide information about machines, riding ventures and how organized snowmobiling operates,” Weaver said. “It is a way to connect with people who have a shared passion for the sport.”

Weaver had her first taste of snowmobiling as a young child with her father and neighbors.

“When I was young, I only rode as a passenger, which I found was not to my liking. When I met my future husband, he also had a snowmobile and I had to ride as a passenger once again,” Weaver said.

Weaver and her husband decided to join the Aberdeen Drift Busters while taking a break from riding for a bite to eat years ago.

“In 1986, my fiancé – now husband – and I were on a snowmobile ride and stopped to eat at a trailside business. Another snowmobiler, who we did not know, approached us and told us we needed to join the club. We did and have been actively involved ever since. That snowmobiling ‘stranger’ became a lifelong friend who we’ve shared many snowmobile memories with,” Weaver said. “Like most things we are drawn to, it is the ability to connect with others who share a common interest that keeps us involved. We have met so many people across the state and the nation through our involvement and have experienced some awesome and fun-filled trips over the years. There are so many ways to be involved that even members who are not avid riders can benefit from and enjoy

being part of the club.”

Once married, Weaver decided she’d need her own sled if she were to continue with snowmobiling. When her husband acquired a new Polaris, she was granted a used Arctic Cat Jag that she described as a “trusty starter sled.”

“Early on in our riding, we were able to make trips to the Black Hills, Big Horn Mountains and West Yellowstone. These venues are even more breathtaking in the winter,” Weaver said.

A long day on the trail in a large riding area might last six to eight hours. There needs to be a minimum of six inches of snow on the ground, depending on the terrain.

It may take several layers of snow to create a base for the trail, which can then be groomed and maintained throughout the season.

With adequate snow and a trail in place, an ideal riding day for Weaver would be sunny skies with a little wind, and temperatures between 0 and 30 degrees.

Over in the southeastern corner of

the state, Duane Duerr, President of the Siouxland Sno Trackers, finds great enjoyment in riding his Ski Doo 900 Ave Four Cycle snowmobile.

The Siouxland Sno Trackers is one of the original snowmobile clubs in South Dakota and has around 78 miles of groomed trails for its 80 members.

Duerr grew up in Minnesota and joined the club in 2006 when he moved to South Dakota. Joining the club helped him to learn the trails and rules, and provided him with many friendships.

“I think snowmobiling has become more popular, but involvement in all organizations is down,” Duerr said. “Many do not realize that snowmobile clubs are why we have a trail system and that they put it in and take it out. Without the clubs, we will no longer have trails in South Dakota. Member support is what makes a difference and too many take that involvement for granted.”

More information on the state’s snowmobile clubs can be found at the SDSA’s website at snowmobilesd.com.



Watertown’s South Dakota Snowmobile Club members take a break during an outing.



Bigge Hired as Electrician

A familiar face has returned to the team at Central Electric Cooperative. Ryan Bigge, former appliance repair technician, rejoined the service department as a journeyman electrician in December.

Bigge is a 2003 graduate of Mitchell Technical College where he earned a degree in electrical construction and maintenance.

Bigge worked for Central Electric from 2014-2018, and he recently moved back to the Parkston area. We are excited to see him return along with the experience he has gained.

If you see Ryan, please say hello and welcome him back home!



Ryan Bigge
Journeyman Electrician

H.S. Juniors should Apply for Youth Tour by Feb. 1

This is the third and final notice that applications are being accepted for Youth Tour 2024. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Central Electric Cooperative invite high school juniors to apply for this educational trip to Washington, D.C.

The educational journey takes place June 15-22, 2024, and travel expenses are paid by participating cooperatives. Attendees will learn about government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification in our nation's capital.

Applicants must be high school juniors during the 2023-2024 school year who permanently reside in Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn County of South Dakota. They do not need to be cooperative



members to apply. Children and legal dependents of cooperative directors and employees are not eligible to participate.

Outstanding juniors chosen as Youth Tour delegates must obtain signed parental consent to attend.

The application includes the following short-answer question: What moment in American history do you wish you had been a part of, and how would you have contributed?

Interested students should visit www.centralec.coop/youth-tour to learn more.

Applications should be completed by Feb. 1. Please call 1-800-477-2892 with any questions regarding Youth Tour.

Central Electric Cooperative engages in youth educational activities to help develop the leaders of tomorrow. Thank you for supporting our youth outreach initiatives.

Scholarship Deadline Feb. 1

This is the third and final notice to parents and teachers of high school seniors that their students can apply for cooperative scholarships. Central Electric Cooperative is offering the following scholarships to members or their dependents in 2024:

- \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship (Must be the legal dependent of a member with primary residence served by Central Electric Cooperative)
- \$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship (Must be the legal dependent of a member with primary residence served by Central Electric Cooperative and pursuing a bachelor's degree in an ag-related field)

Basin Electric and Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship applications are due on Feb. 1, 2024. Complete eligibility requirements and applications are available online at www.centralec.coop/scholarships. Recipients are selected by external judges not affiliated with Central Electric Cooperative.

Advocating for Cooperative Members

Tara Miller

Manager of Communications

Central Electric hosted its annual legislative luncheon on Dec. 18, 2023, to engage in discussions with elected officials before the 2024 legislative session begins. Your co-op board of directors uses opportunities such as the legislative luncheon to stand up for issues affecting the membership.

Those in attendance included District 8 Rep. Tim Reisch, District 19 Rep. Drew Peterson, District 20 Rep. Lance Koth, District 20 Rep. Ben Krohmer, District 26 Sen. Shawn Bordeaux, District 26B Rep. Rebecca Reimer, East River Electric Chief Member and Public Relations Officer Chris Studer, East River Electric Business Development Director Mike Jaspers, East River Electric General Manager Bob Sahr and S.D. Association of Cooperatives Executive Director Brenda Forman.

Central Electric Board President Duane Wolbrink started the meeting with introductions. General Manager Ken Schlimgen and Chris Studer of East River Electric gave a presentation about industry happenings. Lawmakers each took a moment to share their perspectives on upcoming legislative issues.

The cooperative will continue the dialogue throughout the legislative session to ensure we are aware of any bills that could affect our membership. Please contact General Manager Ken Schlimgen if you have legislative issues to discuss.

The S.D. Legislative Session runs from January 9 through March 7, with Veto Day on March 25. To find contact information for your legislators, use the interactive map at www.sdlegislature.gov.



Central Electric Cooperative's Board President Duane Wolbrink kicks off the discussion at the legislative luncheon. Legislative advocacy is a key priority for electric cooperatives as the industry faces regulatory challenges.

Employee Years of Service



Ken
39 years on Jan. 28



Tony
19 years on Jan. 3



Kevin
18 years on Jan. 16



Cody
9 years on Feb. 9



Brandon
5 years on Feb. 4



Joey
2 years on Jan. 3



Jocelyn Cihak takes a dual-credit calculus class offered by Northern State University. *Photo courtesy of Northern State University*

DUAL-CREDIT

High Schoolers are Gaining College Credits

Scott Waltman

Some graduates of South Dakota high schools are showing up on college campuses with a semester's worth of credits.

Sometimes even more.

The dual-credit program has proven to be both beneficial and popular since it was introduced by Gov. Dennis Daugaard in 2014.

It's easy to understand why. Here's how the program works. High school juniors and seniors at any South Dakota high school can take classes for which they get both high school and college credits. There are scores of

classes to choose from, and the cost to take them is steeply discounted.

For instance, once a student enrolls at any of the state's six public schools or universities, they pay between \$253.85 and \$260.55 per credit hour. That cost for a high school student taking a college-level class through the dual-credit program? It's a mere \$48.33 per credit hour.

That's why education officials in South Dakota love the program.

Nathan Lukkes, executive director and chief executive officer for the South Dakota Board of Regents, said providing an affordable education has been a priority for the regents in

recent years. Tuition freezes and an increased number of scholarships are part of that work. But so are dual-credit classes, he said.

Most of the dual-credit courses are general education classes – or generals, as college students often call them – he said. Through the program, students can have some of those courses out of the way before they even get their high school degrees.

The work done by the regents and the universities resulted in Forbes naming South Dakota the most affordable state in which to get a high school education, Lukkes said.

All six South Dakota public universities offer dual-credit classes, and the number of high school students taking advantage has been going up in recent years.

The number of students taking dual-credit classes changes throughout

the year, but there were 1,223 taking classes at Northern State University in Aberdeen in fall 2023 compared to 1,141 the year before. And at South Dakota State University in Brookings, the number jumped from 903 to 1,031 in fall 2023, according to statistics from the board of regents.

Here's how the systemwide numbers are trending based on the number of students taking dual-credit classes, according to the 2023 South Dakota Board of Regents Fact Book, which was issued during summer at the end of the most recent fiscal year.

2021-2022: 4,300

2020-2021: 3,919

2019-2020: 3,781

2018-2019: 3,168

The 10 most popular classes all had more than 150 students.

College algebra: 990

Fundamentals of speech: 905

Composition I (English 101): 830

General psychology: 513

U.S. history I: 379

American government: 317

Music appreciation (Music 101): 280

Introduction to sociology: 241

Biology survey I (Biology 101): 157

Biology survey lab: 156

In 2021, there were 9,523 dual-credit courses taken by South Dakota high school students, according to information from the regents. That number includes summer courses and students who took more than one course.

At Northwestern High School in Mellette, Superintendent Rob Lewis said about 25% of the juniors and seniors are taking advantage of dual-credit courses. One student has taken a full semester's worth, he said.

Do the math over the course of a semester, and that's a savings of north of \$2,300. And that doesn't take on-campus housing and food into account.

That's just a great deal for high school kids, Lewis said.

Chris Ulrich, the middle school and high school principal at Northwestern, agrees.

"It's a nice opportunity for kids

to get not only college credits, but also experience what college is like," he said.

And they get to do it within the comfort of their high school, Ulrich said. The program is a great transitional step leading from high school to college, he said.

AP, or Advanced Placement classes, were great, but dual-credit classes are even better, Lewis said.

AP classes are college-level courses taught by high school teachers. But they don't always equate to college credit. Dual-credit courses are taught by college instructors and professors and always result in college credit, if a student passes.

In South Dakota, dual-credit courses can be taken on any of the six public university campuses, in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Huron, Pierre, Watertown and online.

And there's another benefit, Lukkes said. Dual-credit classes create a tie between South Dakota high school students and the regental schools. Any chance a high school student has a chance to engage with a state school creates a bond that could help keep that kid in South Dakota, he said.

Perhaps a Spearfish High School student takes a dual-credit class at Black Hills State University and it's a good experience. Maybe that high school graduate stays in town and enrolls at BHSU.

Lewis, too, said the program is a great way to keep students in South Dakota for college and perhaps beyond.

That's also a focus for the Aberdeen Development Corp., which is starting a program aimed at keeping more Northern graduates in town to start their professional careers.



Rhianna Troske, a student at Northwestern High School in Mellette, takes a dual-credit class while at school. Photo by Scott Waltman



Basin Electric Security and Response Services dispatchers take calls from rural electric cooperative members at Basin's headquarters in Bismarck, N.D.

SRS Dispatchers Keep Watch Over South Dakota Linemen

Shannon Marvel

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No matter the time of day or night, nor outdoor conditions, members can be assured their calls will be taken during an outage thanks to the Security and Response Services (SRS), a 24-hour dispatching service provided by Basin Electric in Bismarck, N.D.

When a rural electric cooperative is closed, the SRS team takes incoming outage calls from members. "Safety is the reason we exist," said Chad Reisenauer, Director of Community and Member Relations for Basin Electric.

The SRS program started in 1992. Reisenauer has been in charge of the

dispatch team for just over a decade.

"We started with one or two cooperatives that were asking us to monitor alarms and dispatch linemen. Back then it was nothing but a phone and a computer screen where we typed notes. Now we're integrated into outage management systems, we're doing all sorts of things to predict outages and this technology has grown leaps and bounds," Reisenauer said.

The team is comprised of 22 dispatchers total, with 18 of those positions dedicated to dispatching full time, while the other four dedicate half their time to dispatching and the other half to alarm monitoring. Each dispatcher works 12 hour shifts with

four to six dispatchers working per shift, depending on what they're expecting for the day. These shifts begin at 4 p.m. and end at 4 a.m.

"Our job is to be the cooperative during the hours they are closed," said Jolene Johnson, dispatch supervisor.

"We'll back them a little bit if they have a safety meeting or a funeral where they're shutting the office down. We oversee 18 cooperatives in South Dakota. We're a little bit of feast and famine," Johnson said.

Overall, Basin SRS oversees 13 states, from Washington to Illinois to Texas. On any one day, dispatchers could be dealing with a blizzard in the Dakotas, freezing rain in Nebraska and a tornado in Texas.

On a light day, the SRS team will receive 600 to 700 calls for assistance. That number quells in comparison to the number of calls SRS dispatchers receive during major storm events, such as the winter storms events in April of 2021, when a couple of huge blizzards came through the Northern Great Plains region. During that storm, the

SRS team took in around 33,000 calls for service in a 24-hour period.

“That’s a stressful day for our dispatchers. They’re getting beat up continually, then they have to get onto the next call and maintain the safety of the linemen,” Reisenauer said.

“The other type of stress is if Bismarck is getting hit by a blizzard. Then there’s the stress of employees getting into work.”

A new dispatch center equipped with a sleeping room for dispatchers was recently built at the headquarters in Bismarck, which has no windows and a locking door so dispatchers can get as good of sleep as they’re going to get if the weather prevents them from traveling back home.

Dispatchers are also trained to remain calm under high stress situations, especially when the caller on the other end has lost power and is having a stressful day as a result.

“We reassure them that crews are working on it. We do call backs to make sure they’re not left in the dark, no pun intended. We just remain calm, we can’t

let them get us worked up,” said Seth Neer, lead dispatcher.

“No one ever calls us to tell us thanks for keeping the lights on,” joked Reisenauer. “It’s the worst day in the world for them if they’ve got water freezing and pipes bursting. They’re mad about the situation and we stress to our dispatchers that we’re just the voice on the phone and focal point of their anger.”

Neer added that it’s one of those jobs where you have to have the right mentality and the calls are something you cannot take personally.

Dispatchers must successfully pass a training program, which is self-directed.

From the time the dispatcher is hired to the time they are allowed to go live on the phones typically takes two months.

Reisenauer said he wouldn’t put anyone on the phone that he feels wouldn’t be able to handle an emergency.

“This is lineman safety. We literally have their lives in our hands,” he added.

Johnson said the SRS dispatchers are

also taken out into the field to visit local member cooperatives, such as Moreau-Grand Rural Electric, so they can go out and see what linemen are looking at.

“It’s hard for any dispatcher to get a call about a transformer if they don’t know what a transformer looks like,” she said.

Dispatchers track the locations of all linemen and check in with them every 90 minutes. If they miss a status check, dispatch will be sending someone their way. Their duty is to keep track of linemen at all times.

“We’re talking to them everyday. They do get to be family in some ways,” Reisenauer said.

“It’s funny when we bring operations and linemen in and they’ll go ‘I recognize that voice!’ And it turns out they’re good friends with the dispatcher but they’ve never met in person before,” Reisenauer said.

For more information on the SRS team, including quarterly newsletters on the department’s activities, go to Basin Electric’s website – www.basinelectric.com.





FEB. 24, 2024
Nemo 500 Outhouse Races & Chili Cookoff
 10 a.m.
 Nemo Guest Ranch
 Nemo, 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.

FEB. 3
Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby
 11 a.m.
 City Boat Landing
 Hendricks, MN

FEB. 9-10
Mardi Gras Weekend
 Historic Downtown Deadwood
 Deadwood, SD

FEB. 10
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
 11 a.m.
 Main Street
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 11
Beadle County Humane Society Bingo, Silent Auction & Bake Sale Benefit
 2 p.m.
 Huron Community Center
 Huron, SD

FEB. 18-20
MASC presents Disaster! the Musical
 Vesta Community Center
 Vesta, MN

FEB. 22
The Starlets: Pop Female Trio
Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center NSU
 Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 23-24
Women in Blue Jeans Conference
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

MARCH 1-3
National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic
 Denny Sanford Premier Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 2
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 7
Elevate Rapid City Economic Summit
 8 a.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed & Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy & 3rd Annual Shamrock Gala and Benefit Auction
 5 p.m.
 Alex Johnson Ballroom
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 11-15
Black Hills Institute's 50th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWFT 31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 16
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 16-17
Hill City Antiques, Railroad & Collectibles Show & Sale
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 17
St. Patrick's Day Green Pancakes and Sausage
 8:30 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 20-23
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Hill City Children's Easter Egg Hunt
 Visitor Info Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 24
Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 24
Run for the Rangers
 Hill City, SD

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